AN EXPOSITORY COMMENTARY
ZECHARIAH
PROPHET OF NIGHT VISIONS

By
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GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah has been called “the temple builder” and “the seer” (Robinson). Patterson referred to this prophet as “the idealist” while Ward branded him “the enthusiast.” Since such a large part of his book centers on eight visions which he received in one night Zechariah might appropriately be called “the prophet of night visions.”

Meet the Prophet

The eleventh of the Minor Prophets had a very common name. At least thirty individuals in Scripture were called Zechariah.1 The name means Yahweh has remembered.

A. Ancestry

The prophet is said to be the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo (1:1, 7). In the Book of Ezra (5:1; 6:14) he is called simply the son of Iddo. Berechiah may have died young leaving Zechariah to be raised by his grandfather. In Nehemiah (12:4) a priest named Iddo is named among those who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel in 538 BC. This Iddo is said to have had a son named Zechariah (Neh 12:16). It is probable but not certain that the author of the Book of Zechariah is being named in Nehemiah 12:16.

B. Personal Life

Concerning Zechariah’s personal life little is known. That he was a contemporary of Haggai is clear from the date assigned to his first oracle. Assuming that he is mentioned in Nehemiah 12, he functioned as a priest and head of a father’s house in the days of Joiakim who succeeded Joshua as high priest (Neh 12:12, 16). Like Ezekiel, Zechariah reflects familiarity with priestly things.2 Zechariah was probably born and educated in Babylon. This may account for his frequent use of visions and allegories. If Iddo his grandfather was among those who as priests went up with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem, and some sixteen years have elapsed (536-520 BC), Zechariah would be comparatively young at his call.

C. Tradition

In tradition Zechariah is associated with Haggai in the titles of certain Psalms. He is also is said to have made a contribution to the liturgical worship of the

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restored temple. Tradition regarded him as a member of the so-called Great Synagogue, a law-making body which supposedly guided the people of God in postexilic times.

In Patristic tradition Zechariah is said to have exercised his prophetic office in Babylon where he worked miracles. He returned to Jerusalem at an advanced age where he discharged the duties of the priesthood. He supposedly was buried beside Haggai. A careful study of the chronology of the book, however, indicates that Zechariah was a young man when he began to preach.

D. His Ministry

Haggai had been preaching in Judea since August 29, 520 BC when Zechariah joined him sometime in October or November of that same year (1:1). The last dated message in the book is assigned to December 4, 516 BC. No doubt Zechariah lived to see the Temple rebuilt and dedicated (March 12, 515 BC). His ministry, however, probably continued much longer. Zechariah would have been in his sixties when the Persians were defeated in their attempted invasions of Greece in 490 and 480 BC. He would have seen Greece rising steadily on the horizon as a potential enemy of his people.

E. His Death

In Matthew 23:35 Jesus referred to a Zechariah son of Berechiah who was slain in the courts of the temple.

Was Jesus referring to the Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chr 24:17-22)? Evidence supporting this view can be summarized like this: (1) place of death in the Temple is similar in Matthew and Chronicles; (2) the account of this Zechariah's death is recorded in October in Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Bible. Jesus was using a beginning-to-end argument—from Genesis to Chronicles—the last recorded murder in the OT; (3) Jewish tradition indicates this murder was a notable event. According to the Babylonian Talmud, the blood of Zechariah boiled for centuries and was avenged by Nubuzaradan who slew 80,000 priests to atone for his death. Against this view is the phrase son of Berechiah in Matthew’s Gospel for the Zechariah who died in the Temple courts was the son of Jehoiada.

Was Jesus referring to the Minor Prophet Zechariah? (McGarvey). In favor of this view are the following facts: (1) there is a tradition that the Minor Prophet Zechariah also was slain in the Temple. The same tradition also appears in some early Christian sources. However, a contradictory tradition regarding the death of

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3Cashdan, SBB, 269-70.
5Sanh., 96b; Gitin 57b; Midrash Koheleth 3:16.
6Targum to Lamentations 2:20. The passage reads: "Shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?" The Targumist adds the comment: "As you killed Zechariah the son of Iddo, the high priest and faithful prophet in the sanctuary of the Lord on the Day of Atonement because he admonished them not to do what was displeasing to the Lord."
7Epiphanius and Sozomenus. See Migne, Patrological Graeca 43, p. 411, fn. 55; 67, p. 1628ff.
the Minor Prophet Zechariah appears in *The Lives of the Prophets* to the effect that Zechariah died a natural death.\(^8\)

Was Jesus referring to some other Zechariah, someone who lived nearer the time of Jesus and was well known to Jesus' hearers? (John Broadus). In favor of this view are the following facts: Josephus refers to a Zarchias (the son of Barbuch) upon whom they fell "in the middle of the temple and slew him" (*Wars* 4.5.4). But when Jesus spoke the words of Mt 23:35 this event was yet thirty-four years in the future, and Jesus used the past tense. Note also *middle of the Temple*, i.e., the court of Gentiles vs. between the Temple and altar, i.e., in the court of priests. The church father Origen quotes a tradition that the father of John the Baptist was murdered in the Temple.\(^9\)

Most commentators think Jesus was alluding to the death of Zechariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chr 24:17-22). How, then, is the phrase *son of Berechiah* in Mt 23:35 explained. Liberals contend that Jesus simply confused the two Zechariahs (Blank; Peake). For Bible believers, however, there are three viable explanations of the phrase *son of Berechiah* in Mt 23:35. First, Jehoiada may have also had the name *Berechiah* (*Blessed of Yahweh*), possibly given to him for saving his country (Clarke). Second, Jehoiada may be the grandfather (he died at age 130 according to 2 Chr 24:15), and Zechariah's father was Berechiah, not otherwise mentioned in the historical books. Third, Phrase *son of Berechiah* may be a scribal addition to Matthew (Alfred). The phrase is omitted in some NT mss (e.g., Aleph, and four cursives), and the parallel passage in Lk 11:51.\(^10\)

### Examine the Book

#### A. Genre

The Book of Zechariah in its entirety can be classified as apocalyptic literature (Baldwin). Here there is a progression from the local scene to the world scene; from a point in time to the end of time. Visions are prominent along with an angelic interpreter of those visions. Angels are featured prominently. The book reflects determinism—the view that God already had worked out his purposes in heaven, and all that remained was for him to initiate those purposes on earth. Here there is animal symbolism as well as the use of symbolic numbers.\(^11\)

The Book of Zechariah is one of the most difficult of the prophetic books to interpret (Leupold). Much here is obscure and difficult to fit into any system of eschatology. The conflicting interpretations of modern scholars are not just limited to individual words or verses, but to the entire structure of the book. Why is this book particularly obscure? Jews find the book obscure because of its clear depiction of a suffering Messiah, a view that they find repugnant. Zechariah is obscure to rationalists because they will not admit what is manifestly a prediction of a remotely future event. Simple believers find the book obscure for two

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\(^8\)Cited in *Interpreter's Bible*.

\(^9\)de la Rue, 4.845.


reasons: (1) the predominance of symbolical language; and (2) the occasional brevity and conciseness of statement.

One helpful key to interpreting this book is the following principle: What was future to pre-exilic predecessors was now past or present. Zechariah’s glowing accounts of deliverance and enlargement of Israel certainly were not fulfilled in the return from Babylon. The return from Babylon was essentially completed by Zechariah’s day. So he must have been anticipating another and more glorious restoration yet future to him.

B. Style and Form

Zechariah makes use of direct prophetic speech reflecting a wide range of emotion. For example, there are impassioned imperatives like cry out (1:14); flee (2:6); escape (2:7); sing and rejoice (2:10); and be silent (2:13). The prophet records eight visions in which he actively participated. He was fully involved in all that was going on—interjecting remarks, questions, and suggestions. Zechariah performed at least two symbolic acts reminiscent of similar actions performed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Repetition is a characteristic of this prophet’s style, e.g., you shall know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me; and thus says Yahweh of Hosts. This prophet uses bold and frequent declarations of his own inspiration in a variety of formats.

Zechariah's Hebrew is pure, free of Aramaisms. He does, however, display certain orthographic peculiarities.12 Zechariah's poetry, found primarily in chs 9-11, is fine poetry. “But his parallelisms want the neatness and harmony which are found in earlier writings” (Deane).

Baldwin offers this tasty estimate of the contribution of Zechariah: "If Haggai was the builder, responsible for the solid structure of the new temple, Zechariah was more like the artist, adding colorful windows with their symbolism, gaiety and light."

C. Unity

The Book of Zechariah consists of fourteen chapters. The book falls naturally into two divisions. The first part (chs. 1-8) is generally regarded as the work of the postexilic Zechariah who is mentioned with Haggai in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. The second part (chs 9-14) differs from the first in both style and subject matter. For this reason critics have argued that the last six chs must have been written by a different person. Some even regard these chs—sometimes dubbed Deutero-Zechariah—as having been written prior to the exile! Conservative scholars, of course, have defended the unity of the book ably. No insurmountable difficulty stands in the way of accepting the entire fourteen chs as the work of one prophet, Zechariah son of Berechiah.

D. Structure

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12See 12:7, 8, 10; use of 'achat for indefinite article in 5:7; unusual position of 'et in 7:7; 8:17.
Some of the most creative work on the structure of the Book of Zechariah has been done by Meredith Kline. Kline sees Zechariah as a diptych with 6:9-15 as its primary hinge or center passage. The two side panels are also divided by spines (3:1-10; 11:1-17). The two spines and the primary hinge share these qualities in common: (1) Zechariah personally participates in a prophetic action that involves specific historical individuals. (2) These “spine” passages involve a coronation or some sort of investiture to theocratic office. (3) In each “spine” passage a messianic (pre-)figure is commissioned to the royal-priestly task.

Kline regards 1:1-6 and chs 7-8 as the introductions to the two major divisions of the book. These passages have several things in common: (1) an opening date formula (1:1; 7:1); (2) a recollection of lessons from past covenant history with reference to earlier prophets and the exile (1:2-6; 7:7-14); (3) an exhortation for the postexilic community to fulfill its present duties (1:3-4; 8:16-17); and (4) a promise of future blessings upon their repentance and obedience (1:3; 8:2-23).

Kline sees the first diptych (1:1-6:8) as containing seven visions, rather than the traditional understanding that there are eight visions recorded in these chs. He thinks that ch 5 is a compound vision, rather than two separate visions. He sees two triads of visions with the fourth vision being the “spine” between the two sets. Thus he sees the first diptych in the following format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intro.</th>
<th>First Triad of Visions</th>
<th>Central Vision</th>
<th>Second Triad of Visions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1-6</td>
<td>1:7-17</td>
<td>3:1-10</td>
<td>4:1-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:18-21</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:1-13</td>
<td></td>
<td>6:1-8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Klein sees a similar balance in the second main division of the book (chs 7-14). As noted above, he sees chs 7-8 as an elongated introduction to this section. The introduction is followed by two “burdens” beginning in 9:1 and 12:1 with ch 11 being the “spine” between them. The structure of the book developed in this commentary follows Klein in the main. In chart form the contents of the books looks like this:

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| STRUCTURE OF ZECHARIAH |
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14Meyers and Baldwin (*AB*) treat chs 7-8 as the center of the book in its present form and indeed of the entire Haggai-Zechariah-Malachi corpus.
15Meyers eliminates what is traditionally labeled the fourth vision (3:1-10) and joins it to 4:1-14. He regards it as the center of a section consisting of seven visions plus one “prophetic vision.” (*AB*, liv-lviii). Dorsey (*LSOT*, 318) arrives at seven visions by treating the traditional second vision (1:18-21) as the conclusion of vision one.
16Klein observes that 5:5 lacks an introduction that combines the use of ra‘ah (see) and hinneh (behold) as do all the other visions but the fourth (3:1-10).
E. Predictions
Payne finds seventy-eight predictions in the Book of Zechariah involving some 144 verses or sixty-nine percent of the book. The book is rich in personal messianic prophecy.

PART ONE
MESSAGES DURING TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION
Zechariah 1-6

Introduction to Part One
Zechariah 1:1-6

A. Introductory Formula (1:1):
1. Chronology of the prophet (1:1a): In the eighth month of the second year of Darius... Zechariah’s opening message is dated prior to the dating assigned to the final oracles of Haggai (Hag 2:10, 20). So the ministry of Zechariah phased in while that of Haggai was coming to an end. The Temple reconstruction project had begun on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, or at least thirty-six days prior to the deliver of the first message of Zechariah.
2. Claim of the prophet (1:1b-c):
a. Claims divine revelation (1:1b): the word of Yahweh came. This expression appears at least 103 times in OT to point to divine revelation. It occurs six times in this book, two of those times in the first person. The phrase is broad enough to include visional as well as verbal revelation.
b. Claims prophetic authority (1:1c): to the prophet... Masoretic accentuation indicates that the title prophet belongs to Iddo. A prophet and seer by this name recorded the history of the early kings of Judah (2 Chr 12:15; 13:22); but it is very unlikely that he is the Iddo of this text. NIV is

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17Payne, EBP, 450.
correct, however, in referring the title to Zechariah rather than Iddo (Laetsch; Kimchi; L.XX). A *prophet* is a spokesman for another, a messenger (Ex 7:1; cf. 4:11-16).

3. *Identity of the prophet (1:1d): Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo:* On the meaning of the name Zechariah see the introductory notes. This is a more precise listing of the genealogy of Zechariah than appears in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 where Berekiah is mentioned. If Iddo is the priest mentioned in Neh 12:4, 16, then his name alone would have been sufficient to distinguish Zechariah from others who bore this common name.

B. *Introductory Message (1:2-6):* The purpose of the opening message of Zechariah was to set forth the prerequisite for spiritual blessing. This message consists of two parts: an exhortation to be heeded (1:2-3); and an example to be avoided (1:4-6).

1. *Exhortation to be heeded (1:2-3):*  
   a. *Observation (1:2): Displeased has Yahweh been with displeasure concerning your fathers.* Yahweh had been greatly displeased with his people. No one could dispute that statement. The remnant had tasted divine wrath in Babylonian captivity. Some may still have been alive who had childhood memories of the devastating destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

   *Your fathers* refers to the generation of the Babylonian captivity. Zechariah uses a strong verb (r. *qtsp*) and two grammatical devices\(^{18}\) to stress the acuteness of the displeasure. This reminder of an unpleasant recent past serves as theme statement for the first oracle. At the same time it is an oblique warning. Should the present generation continue in the same path as their fathers the anger of Yahweh could lash out against them. The unpleasant reminder of v 2 is the backdrop against which the grace of Yahweh in v 3 shines in greater brilliance.

   b. *Authorization (1:3a): Therefore tell them: Thus says Yahweh of Hosts…* Zechariah is authorized, accredited, or called to communicate to his fellows the revelation he had received. *Thus says Yahweh* is strong claim of divine authority, guidance and inspiration that occurs 415x in OT, 18x in this book. Scholars refer to this phrase as the messenger formula. It was used in the secular setting by messengers who first delivered a message orally before handing over that message to the recipient in written form.

   The divine title *Yahweh of Hosts* appears for the first time in 1 Sam 1:3. It appears 275x in the OT, 82x in the postexilic prophets, 46x in this book. The term *hosts* can refer to the armies of Israel, the angelic armies or the armies of stars that parade with military precision across the heavens in the night sky. Yahweh is commander of all hosts—he is commander-in-chief. In NIV the translators try to capture the meaning of this term by rendering it *Almighty.*

   c. *Proclamation (1:3b): Return to me (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts)…* God sees in the present generation the same root sin as in the captivity

\(^{18}\) (1) the initial position of the verb in the sentence; and (2) the cognate accusative.
generation, viz., disobedience. Returning to Yahweh in this case would manifest itself in the work on the temple. This gracious invitation indicates that people can escape the dreadful reality of divine wrath by getting back on track with the Lord.

*Oracle* (n ‘um) is the strongest term used in the OT to claim divine origin for a statement. An oracle was (usually) in poetic form. It is equivalent to a direct quote from Yahweh. So the invitation in this v comes from God himself. He invites his wayward people to come back to him in their devotion and allegiance. The oracle formula is used 375x in OT, 20x in this book.

Repetition of the divine name serves two purposes. First, it underscores the divine authority of Zechariah’s commission. Second, it stresses the certainty of the result that follows returning to the Lord. The very one who marshals all the forces of heaven and earth is at the same time the blessed God of redemption.

d. Explanation (1:3b): *in order that I may return to you, says Yahweh of Hosts.* Now Zechariah explains the value of repentance. This promise begins with Hebrew *Vav* (and) which here seems to introduce the subordinate idea of purpose, hence *in order that I may return*. The verb is imperfect = progressive action. God will ever and continually return to those who return to him. What condescension! What grace! A change of conduct on the part of the people induces a change of attitude on the part of God. *Says Yahweh of Hosts* is called the declaration formula. It is the third strong claim of inspiration in this single v.

2. Example to be avoided (1:4-6):

a. Admonition to the present generation (1:4a): *Do not be like your fathers* = disobedient. Zechariah cites the fathers as an example of apostasy 4x. He thereby warns his generation not to go down the same path. *Fathers* could be rendered “forefathers” (NIV), indicating pre-exilic generations.

b. Description of the previous generation (1:4b-e):

aa. They had access to powerful messengers (1:4b): *to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, Thus says Yahweh of Hosts...* These words sound very Jeremiah-like (cf. Jer 25:5; 35:15). The *former prophets* are the prophets before the exile, especially Jeremiah. Message of these prophets was mainly threat. *Proclaimed* is lit., *called*. They made themselves heard. Their witness was public, clear, understandable, and available. On *Yahweh of Hosts* see on v 3.

bb. They had received a powerful warning (1:4c): *Turn please from your evil ways and your evil deeds.* This warning has the authority of a divine command, but also an element of tact and grace. Turning to God as in v 3 requires a turning away from what offends God. *Evil ways and deeds* are violations of God’s law. Pre-exilic prophetic texts indicate that idolatry was one of the chief offenses against Yahweh.

cc. They had refused to obey (1:4d): *But they would not listen or pay attention to me...*  *Listen* suggests warm reception or acceptance. *Pay
attention (give heed NASB) suggests implementation or obedience. Rejecting the prophetic word is equivalent to rejecting God himself.

dd. They had rejected a direct message of God (1:4e): (oracle of Yahweh). This is a more threatening expressing than the mere "says Yahweh" in the other two places in the v.

c. Interrogation (1:5-6a): Three thought-provoking questions by the prophet:
   aa. Question #1 regarding the impermanence of life (1:5a): As for your fathers, where are they? They were no longer accessible. They had died.
   bb. Question #2 regarding the impermanence of life (1:5b): And the prophets, do they live forever? The prophets who preached to the disobedient fathers have been silenced by death.19
   cc. Question #3 regarding the permanence of the Word (1:6a): But did not my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your forefathers? But (‘ak) introduces the contrast between the impermanence of life and the permanence of God’s word. My words are the words God put into the mouth of his prophets. My statutes are the divine decrees that threatened punishment. God commanded the prophets to preach these words and statutes. Essentially my words and my statutes are a synopsis of the prophetic message. Prophets are called God’s servants 18x in OT. Overtake (nûg) indicates to reach or catch up with one who has gone away or fled. The word is used in the Bible of both blessing and curse (e.g., Dt 28:2; Ps 69:25). One cannot outrun or outdistance the penalties stipulated in God’s word. Zechariah saw God’s word as an active force in the world.

d. Recognition (1:6b):
   aa. What did they did (1:6b): Then they repented… The fathers who experience exile in Babylon repented. This refers to a change of mind or opinion brought about by conviction of the truth of God's word and his judgment (Cashdan). Prior to 586 BC the Judeans based their theology on the miraculous deliverance from Assyria in 701 BC. The false prophets and priests assured the nation that God would never permit Jerusalem to be destroyed. The painful experience of the exile forced them to abandon that theology.
   bb. What they said (1:6c): According as Yahweh of Hosts purposed to do to us, according to our way and according to our deeds, so has he dealt with us. The present desolate condition of Jerusalem testified to the faithfulness of God's word. In addition the fathers themselves had been forced to confess that God had dealt with them according to their sins. They admitted that their exile to Babylon was an appropriate response to their years of stubborn rejection of God’s word.

First Triad of Visions

19Jewish commentators have suggested that these words are part of a dialogue—the impudent response of the people to Zechariah’s question about their fathers.
Zechariah 1:7-2:13

A. Introduction to the Visions (1:7):

1. **Time of the visions (1:7a): On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius...** The date of this second message is more specific than the notation in v 1. The day as well as the month is noted. On the modern calendar the date of these visions is February 24, 519 BC. This was three months after the first address and five months after the temple work resumed (Hag 1:14, 15). For five months the people had demonstrated their commitment by their arduous labor. Three months earlier Haggai delivered his last oracles. The chronological notation in this v underscores the sad circumstances of God’s people. The prophet was forced to date revelation of Yahweh the reign of a Persian king using the Babylonian calendar that the Persians used. Judah was no longer an independent kingdom, not even a vassal state; she was only a miserable province within the region the Persians called Trans-Euphrates.

2. **Significance of the visions (1:7b): the word of Yahweh came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo.** The revelation claim (the word of Yahweh came) is repeated from v 1 as is the position and ancestry of Zechariah. In vv 2-6 the word of Yahweh refers to oral revelation, here the phrase refers to visions. Each vision has an application to the specific situation of Zechariah’s day, and a wider application to all God’s people. Some of the visions are accompanied by passages that are definitely messianic.

3. **Structure of the visions:** There is some discussion about the number of visions that Zechariah reports, and about the way in which those visions have been arranged in the book. The traditional view is that Zechariah had eight visions. Recent scholars, however, have questioned this view. Some contend that there are but seven distinct visions. For the purpose of this commentary, the eight vision format will be followed. These visions appear to be arranged in a chiastic pattern:

   B. Vision 2: Nations Meet Retribution.
   C. Vision 3: Jerusalem Protected.
   D. Vision 4: Encouragement to the Priest.
   C’ Vision 6: Jerusalem Purified.

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20Petersen, _OTL_, 139.
21Smith, _WBC_, 181; McComiskey, _MPEEC_, 1019; VanGemeren, _IPW_, 193-98.
23H.G. Mitchell (_ICC_, 115) argues that the visions are arranged topically: the first three deal with the return from captivity; the fourth and fifth, the anointed of Yahweh, and the last three, the removal of sin. Joyce Baldwin (_TOTC_, 85) arranges the eight visions in a chiastic pattern: a-b-b-c-c-b-b-a. The first and last deal with horses and chariots patrolling the earth and the earth is at rest. The central visions come in pairs: the second and third deal with the threat of the nations against Judah and God’s defense of his people; the fourth and fifth deal with Judah’s anointed leaders; and the sixth and seventh describe the cleansing of the land.
I saw in the night and behold… Zechariah saw eight visions in one night at short intervals. It is impossible to tell whether he saw with the bodily eyes or whether he was rapt in ecstasy. The text, however, does not call what he saw dreams. Behold signals something unexpected, even shocking. The word is used 22 times in this book, 14 of them in the eight visions. The word is usually left untranslated in NIV.

A. What the Prophet Saw (1:8-9):

1. Saw a mounted man: (1:8a): there before me was a man riding a red horse! This man is most likely an angel, probably the angel of Yahweh mentioned again in vv. 10, 11. He apparently is the leader of the company of horsemen who follow him. He is not to be confused with the interpreting angel who also appears in this vision. No significance is assigned to the color red here.

2. Saw him among the myrtle trees (1:8b): He was standing among the myrtle trees in the bottom. This kind of tree was once common in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Myrtle trees may signify Israel (Leupold, Unger; Laetsch). Prophetic symbolism used the tall cedar to represent arrogant worldly powers. The lowly but fragrant myrtle is an apt symbol for God’s people. The bottom (m-tsul_h) or ravine (NIV; NASB) may point to an ordinary valley near Jerusalem (Cashdan); others think the word is used to denote horrible, inescapable agony; hopelessness. Thus Israel is in deep humiliation (Leupold, Unger, Laetsch). Perhaps the idea is that in that ravine God’s people grow out of the gaze of the world.

24Mark Allen, suggests that the horses Zechariah no doubt saw were a miniature breed averaging 9-11 hands that was popular in the Persian Empire. The breed was considered extinct until a herd of miniature horses was found in Iran near the Caspian Sea in 1965. This breed was surefooted and excellent jumpers—ideal for the rough mountain roadways of Iran. Allen does not take into account, however, that the horses in Zechariah were seen by a Jew in Palestine, and that they are associated with Palestinian geography. “The Background and Use of Equine Imagery in Zechariah,” SCJ 3 (Fall 2000): 243-260.
The man astride the red horse was standing among the myrtles, indicating that the Most High condescends to dwell among and identify himself with those of a contrite and humble spirit (cf. Isa 57:15; 66:2).

3. *Saw a company of horses (1:8c, d).*
   a. *They were behind the first rider (1:8c): Behind him… Behind him* suggests that these horses were under the command of the angel of Yahweh. Horses suggest the swiftness with which God carries out his purposes. Most likely these horses were being ridden by angels. The fact that the riders are not mentioned but the colors of the horses are mentioned suggests that the colors were symbolic.
   b. *They were of various colors (1:8d): were red, brown and white horses.* Some commentators take these colors to signify various lands traversed by them (Keil); more likely the colors point to the different tasks assigned to each group (Barnes). *Red* signifies judgment, blood, vengeance (cf. Isa 63:1; Rev 6:4). Some controversy exists over the color translated *brown.*—a combination of the first and last colors—perhaps indicates a mission of mixed character—one of both judgment and mercy. *White* is the symbol of victory, triumph and glory. The point is that God's agents were on the scene. They were about to move against the enemies of God's people. Certainly these horses and riders were "messengers of vengeance and of victory for the good of God's people Israel" (Rignell). This vision is a way of recalling that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels (Ps 68:17). He has abundant power to deliver his people from whatever situation in which they might find themselves.

4. *Inquiry and answer (1:9):*
   a. Zechariah's question (1:9a): *Then I said, my Lord, What are these?* The question is probably addressed to an interpreting angel who accompanied the prophet throughout all his visions. Zechariah wants to know the symbolic import of what he sees. *My Lord ('ad nî)* is a title of respect without implications of deity. It is used 4x in this book in addressing the interpreting angel.
   b. Angel's response (1:9b): *The angel who was speaking with me answered, As for me, I will show you what they are.* The word *angel* is used 24x in the book, and this particular angel (hammal'kh hadd_bh_r bî) is mentioned 11x. This angel is an interpreting angel assigned to accompany Zechariah through his visionary experience. Some think that this angel is the same as the angel of Yahweh whom the prophet saw standing among

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25Heb s_r_g is rendered *brown* (NIV), *speckled* (KJV) *sorrel* (reddish-brown) in NRSV, NIV, NASB. The related word s_r_g is used of choice vines and graves (Isa 5:2; Jer 2:21) which hints at reddishness. Cognate words in related languages also are connected with reddishness (*NIDOTTE* 3:1295). Those, like McComiskey, who argue that the word denotes spottedness are pressing too hard to make the horse colors in ch 1 conform to those in ch 6. See Allen, "Equine," op. cit., 50.

26Others think the question is addressed to the first rider.
the myrtle trees.\textsuperscript{27} The preponderance of the evidence, however, indicates that the two are distinct heavenly beings.

To the interpreting angel no divine work is ascribed and no divine name. He interprets visions, or at least prepares the mind of the prophet to understand the explanation which is given by the Lord himself. Zechariah’s situation is similar to what Daniel and John experienced when they encountered two heavenly beings in connection with the same vision (Dan 8:16; 10:5-13; Rev 1:1).

In his response to the prophet the interpreting angel makes the first person pronoun emphatic—I, and no one else will respond to your request. The angel does not promise to tell Zechariah what he wants to know, but to show (r. r’h in Hiphil). The interpreting chooses to reveal the meaning of the vision by permitting Zechariah to see more of it.

**B. What the Prophet Heard** (1:10-13): The interpreting angel explains the meaning of the horsemen by causing Zechariah to overhear the conversation of the angel riders.

1. **Explanation of the red-horse rider (1:10):** Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, These are they whom Yahweh has sent to walk to and fro through the earth. The commander of the angelic unit explains their function. The riders are a heavenly reconnaissance troop. They have just returned from their mission and are ready to report to their commander. Walk to and fro is used in a military sense, to patrol, make careful survey. Cf. Job 1:7. Earth in this context refers primarily to the Near East of Zechariah’s day.

2. **Report of the patrol (1:11):**

   a. **They reported to the superior angel (1:11a):** And they reported to the angel of Yahweh who was standing among the myrtle trees... Reported is lit., “answered,” i.e., the horsemen responded to the unexpressed inquiry of the commander. Here for the first time the rider of the red horse is identified as the angel of Yahweh. The OT is full of references to this special angel/messenger. A close examination of the passages where he is mentioned indicates that he is a manifestation of deity, perhaps the second person of the godhead. Yahweh sent these riders out, but they reported to the angel of Yahweh. Here, as elsewhere in the OT, this angel/messenger is Yahweh, yet is distinct from Yahweh.\textsuperscript{28} On the significance of the myrtle trees see on v 8.

   b. **They reported what they had done (1:11b):** We have gone to and fro in the earth... On this language see on v 10. The point is that they had completed their mission.

\textsuperscript{27}The arguments for equating the two angelic beings are these: 1) Zechariah addressed this angel as “my lord” when the only person named previously was the angel of Yahweh; 2) this angel promises to explain the vision, and in the next v it is the angel of Yahweh who gives the explanation; 3) in v 12 the angel of Yahweh offers supplication for Jerusalem, and the answer in the following v is given to the interpreting angel.

\textsuperscript{28}The angel of Yahweh is identified with Yahweh in some passages (Gn 16:11, 13; Judg 6:11, 14, 13:21-22); but in other passages he is distinguished from God because God speaks to him (2 Sam 24:16; 1 Chr 21:18, 27) or because he speaks to God (Zech 1:12).
c. They reported what they had found (1:11c): and behold all the earth sits still and is at rest. On the meaning of behold see on 1:8. Two participles (continuous action) are used to describe the state of things in all the earth. Sits still (r. y_h) when used of a place has a passive force, i.e., to be peacefully inhabited (Ezek 16:42; Jer 47:6-7). At rest (r. _gt) is used of one that no one harasses. Therefore it means to have respite from war. The main point is this: there was no sign yet of Haggai’s predicted shaking. Nations were enjoying security while Judah was in a state of misery and oppression. This report brings to the forefront the sorry state of affairs in Israel. While surrounding nations were enjoying peace and security, the sons of Israel were servants in their own land (Neh 4:36). They were struggling to regain their ancestral inheritance from Gentile interlopers.

3. Intercessory prayer (1:12):

a. Intercessor (1:12a): Then the angel of Yahweh spoke and said… This special angel/messenger appears not only as the representative of God but as the advocate of Israel. He is identified with his people in their suffering, degradation and woe, i.e., he is standing among the myrtle trees in the deep valley. The angel of Yahweh had not appeared in the OT since the days of Hezekiah some two hundred years earlier. His mere presence among the remnant was comforting news; but the fact that he was Israel’s advocate elevated that comfort exponentially.

b. Intercessory address (1:12b): O Yahweh of Hosts… Intercession was offered to the one who had authority over all the armies of heaven and earth, i.e., the all powerful. The angel/messenger now intercedes for Israel.

c. Intercessory method (1:12c-d): Intercession was couched in the form of a question. The intercession implies that the angel of Yahweh was disappointed in the report of his subordinates.

aa. Present pitiful condition (1:12c): How long will you not have compassion on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah… The present peaceful state of the Gentiles and pitiful condition of the restoration community are regarded as evidence that God had withdrawn his compassion from his people. He had not blessed them as he had promised to do in the restoration promises found in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The turmoil that surrounded Darius’ ascension to the throne did not escalate into the international shake-up and overthrow of Persia as promised by Haggai (2:20-23). Whatever the state of international relations (cf. v 11), the situation is viewed negatively if God’s people are not prospering. Saints of all ages can find consolation in the fact that the angel/messenger of Yahweh—the Lord Jesus—intercedes for them with similar compassion and fervency.

bb. Duration of pitiful condition (1:12d): against whom you have had indignation these seventy years? The reference is not to the seventy years predicted by Jeremiah (Jer 25:11; 29:10) because that ended with the fall of Babylon. This is the period of indignation which began with the destruction of the temple in 586 and ended with its rebuilding in 515 BC.
4. Comforting answer (1:13): So Yahweh spoke with good words, even comforting words to the angel who talked with me. Yahweh responded to the intercessory prayer by speaking to the interpreting angel, not the angel of Yahweh since he already knew the answer. Good words indicate that the response to the prayer was positive. Comforting words is the plural of abundance indicating the abundant comfort which the words brought to Israel. The essence of these comforting words is summarized in the message that follows.

C. What the Prophet is to Proclaim (1:14-17):

1. Commissioning (1:14a-b):
   a. By God’s angel (1:14a): Then the angel who was speaking to me said… Neither Yahweh nor the angel of Yahweh directly addresses Zechariah in this vision. His instructions come from the angel who was assigned as his interpreter/guide during the visions.
   b. For proclamation (1:14b-c):
      aa. Preach forcefully (1:14b): Proclaim this word… Zechariah was commissioned to proclaim God's Word. Proclaim is lit., Cry. He is to preach or make public in a forceful way the message that God had for his people in response their discouragement as voiced in the intercessory prayer of the angel of Yahweh. This strong word proclaim appears again in v 17.
      bb. Preach authoritatively (1:14c): This is what Yahweh of Hosts says… This is the first of 4x Zechariah was told to assure the people that his message came from God. Three times (vv 14, 16, 17) he was to remind the Jews that the covenant God Yahweh was the Lord of Hosts with inexhaustible resources to carry out his pledges to Jerusalem.

2. Commitment (1:14d):
   a. Zechariah was to proclaim God's love (1:14d): I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. Jealousy is ardent love that cannot bear to see the object of love injured. The Hebrew sentence is full of devices that underscore the intensity of God's love for Israel. In this sentence Jerusalem probably refers to the physical city, while Zion refers to the people of God. At the time that these words were uttered Jerusalem was still in ruins except for the work that was being done in the temple area.

2. Zechariah was to proclaim hostility to Zion's enemies (1:15):
   a. Declaration (1:15a): and I am greatly displeased with the nations that are at ease. Displeased is a part., indicating continuous action. The

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29 It is also possible that Yahweh here is an abbreviation for the angel of Yahweh (Deane).
30 Unger points out seven syntactical devises used in this v to express the intensity of God's love for Israel: (1) the command to cry out is to call with energy or spirit; (2) the prefixed thus says Yahweh of Hosts; (3) the position of the verb first in the clause jealous am I; (4) the meaning of the root qinn—it = a burning passion; (5) the position of the objects for Jerusalem and for Zion before the adverbial idea of with jealousy; (6) the use of the cognate accusative; and (7) the use of a qualifying adjective modifying the cognate accusative.
31 Unger points out three ways v 15 indicates the intensity of God's displeasure with the oppressing nations: (1) the cognate accusative in the first position; (2) the use of the adjective to modify the noun in the adverbial accusative; (3) the use of the participle with separate pronoun I indicating continuousness of the anger.
nations are those that oppressed Israel. The adjective at ease (אֲנִי) sometimes has overtones of being careless, wanton and arrogant (Amos 6:1; Isa 32:9, 11; Ps 123:4). It is not that the Gentiles are free from strife that displeases Yahweh; it is the pride, insolence and sense of false security that is the irritant.

b. Explanation (1:15b): When, on my part, I was a little displeased then they helped for calamity. On my part indicates the presence of the first person pronoun in an emphatic position in the Hebrew. As terrible as the seventy years of desolation were, they indicated only a little displeasure of the Lord toward his people. Yahweh would unleash the fullness of his wrath against the nations.

They helped for calamity is rendered “added to the calamity” (NIV); “furthered the calamity” (NASB). The idea is that these nations had exceeded the limitations of God’s instruments of chastisement. They had wished to destroy Israel altogether or to oppress them beyond measure (cf. Isa 47:6). It was not the exile itself that moved Yahweh to compassion for his people, for they deserved that punishment. Rather his compassion was stirred by the inhumane treatment the Judeans had received at the hands of the Babylonians.

3. Zechariah was to proclaim divine plans for Jerusalem (1:16):
   a. Holy presence restored (1:16a): Therefore, thus says Yahweh: I have returned to Jerusalem with compassions. Therefore signals a connection with what precedes. In view of Yahweh’s intense jealousy for Israel and his displeasure with their oppressors Yahweh spoke a word of encouragement to his people. I have returned might be taken as a prophetic perfect indicating a commitment to be fulfilled in the future. More likely, however, is the view that Yahweh’s return to Jerusalem already has been indicated by the return of the exiles of Judah and the commencement of Temple reconstruction. Compassions is the plural of abundance. This line makes explicit what was symbolically represented in the vision, viz., the standing of the angel/messenger of Yahweh in the midst of the myrtles.

   b. Holy house restored (1:16b): and my house shall be built in it. My house is the temple. It is mentioned before the verb for emphasis. The temple was already under construction. The project, though facing formidable obstacles, would be brought to completion.

   c. Holy city restored (1:16c): And a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts). The city itself as well as the temple would be rebuilt. The line is the measuring line essential in larger building projects. It symbolizes reconstruction efforts. Jerusalem underwent reconstruction and repopulation under the leadership of Nehemiah in 445 BC.

4. Zechariah was to proclaim Yahweh’s choice of Zion (1:17): Also proclaim further: Thus says Yahweh of Hosts... Proclaim or cry is the same verb used in v 14. It connotes energy and enthusiastic proclamation. For the fifth time in
this ch the messenger formula is used. Zechariah had an urgent and welcomed message from Yahweh to deliver to the Judeans. It involved three assurances.

a. **Zion's cities to experience prosperity (1:17a): Yet shall my cities overflow with prosperity.** Cities overflowing with prosperity (lit., good) is a promise grounded in Deuteronomy. Overflow (r. p.ts) is elsewhere used of the gushing forth of a fountain (Prov 5:16). It includes economic prosperity and more—thriving families and nation well-being (Dt 28:11; 30:9). The returnees were anything but prosperous. They were oppressed by the people of the land. They had experienced a period of devastating famine. Haggai explained their plight as due to failure to work on the temple. Even after the temple work resumed, however, the workers had not witnessed any dramatic change in their circumstances. The present message from Yahweh must have lifted their spirits and set their sights on a glorious future.

b. **Zion to experience comfort (1:17b): And Yahweh will yet comfort Zion.** Yet or “again” (‘od) recalls earlier unspecified occasions when Yahweh comforted his people. Zion here is God’s people collectively, or Jerusalem personified as a person. God's people would be comforted by the reconstruction of their temple, and the realization that they once again were playing an important role in God's program.

c. **Zion to be the object of God's choice (1:17c): And he will yet choose Jerusalem.** The implication is that for a period of time God had ceased to designate Jerusalem as his own. That was about to change. God promised yet (or again) to choose Jerusalem for his dwelling place. This is the first of three references in this book to Yahweh’s choice of Jerusalem (cf. 2:12; 3:2; cf. Isa 14:1). Choose is the language of election. The election of Israel remained unimpaired. The Judeans were destined to play an important role in God’s program of world redemption. In fact, salvation would come to the world through the Jews (Jn 4:22).

Some see a "prefillment" of these promises in the rebuilding of the temple, the restoration of Jerusalem by Nehemiah, and the prosperity under the Hasmonean princes of the intertestamental period. In the final analysis, these promises were fulfilled in the ministry of Christ. Jerusalem was chosen as spot from which gospel would go forth (Laetsch). Believers have come to the heavenly Jerusalem where God himself has chosen to dwell (Heb 12:22f).

**Vision Two:**

**Retribution for Nations**

Zechariah 1:18-21; H 2:1-3

**And I lifted up my eyes and I saw and behold...** These words signal the start of the second vision. On the significance of *behold* see on 1:8. Zechariah lifted up his

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32At this point the ch and v numbers differ in the Hebrew and English texts. Verse division probably goes back to ca. AD 200; but numbers were not assigned to the vv until medieval times. Ch divisions were not standardized in the Hebrew Bible until the early tenth century AD.
eyes either because the previous vision had produced drowsiness, he was meditating upon what he had seen, or perhaps because the heavens themselves functioned as a screen on which he saw his visions.

A. Imagery of this Vision (1:18b-20):

1. First phase of the vision (1:18b-19):
   a. He observed four horns (1:18b; H 2:1b): four horns! We are not told whether or not these horns were attached to some object, floating loose in the air, or thrusting about. Some think of the horns attached to an altar. The description of what the horns had done, however, suggests that they may have been attached to rampaging animals like bulls. Horns are symbolic of power. They are sometimes explained by the biblical writers as symbolizing the political powers of the world (cf. Dan 8:3; Rev 17:3-12).

      The horns were four in number. Four is the universal number, associated with what is world-wide in significance. Scripture speaks of the four corners of the earth or land (Isa 11:12; Ezek 7:2) and the four winds of heaven. The number hints that God’s people face enemies from all directions.

   b. He inquired about the four horns (1:19a; H 2:2a): I asked the angel who was speaking to me, What are these? As in 1:9 Zechariah addressed a question to the interpreting angel. This is the fourth mention of the interpreting angel in this ch.

   c. He learned the meaning of the horns (1:19b; H 2:2b): He answered me, These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. The angel does not mention in the interpretation the number four. This suggests that four is not to taken mathematically, but symbolically. Thus those who take the horns to represent the four great empires of Daniel (i.e., Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome) are probably reading too much into the vision. The horns represent the totality of enemy nations in every direction that have threatened or would threaten God’s people.

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33Moses compared the strength of the Joseph tribes to the horns of a wild ox (Dt 33:17). When a wild ox was captured his horns were cut off. So Yahweh will cut off all the horns of the wicked, and exalt the horns of the righteous (Ps 75:10; 92:10). Yahweh promises to give the Daughter of Zion horns of iron (Mic 4:13).

34In keeping with this are the several references to the four winds (Jer 49:36; Ezek 37:9; Dan 7:2; 8:8; 11:4; Zech 2:6).
The Piel form of scattered indicates unmerciful sifting. This is equivalent to going beyond Yahweh’s commission referenced in 1:15. 

Judah was the southern kingdom during the divided monarchy period over which the descendants of David ruled. The restoration community is probably viewed as new Judah. Israel may refer to the old northern kingdom (Cashdan); but more likely Israel is either a further definition of Judah (Watts) or an honorable name for the entire nation (Laetsch). The horns had even scattered the population of Jerusalem, the city of the Great King. The basic idea is that the crime of the horns had been against Yahweh's people, hence against Yahweh himself.

2. Second phase of the vision (1:20; H 2:3):
   a. He observed four craftsmen (1:20; H 2:3): Then Yahweh showed me four craftsmen. The vision is initiated by Yahweh, not the interpreting angel. Craftsmen (ch_r_îm) or workers are artisans that work with wood, stone, or metal. Again the number four is not to be taken mathematically. The point is that the craftsmen are equal to the horns in number. “For every enemy of God’s people God has provided a counteracting power adequate to destroy it” (Lange).
   b. He inquired about the craftsmen (1:21a; H 2:4a). I asked, What are these coming to do? This is the third question that Zechariah addressed to the interpreting angel. The question implies that the craftsmen were seen in motion as they entered into the scene.

B. Interpretation of the Vision (1:21b-e; H 2:4b-e):
   1. Terrible crushing of God's people (1:21b; H 2:4b): He answered, These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no man raised his head. The thought of v 19 is repeated, except that here the focus is on Judah with no mention of Israel and Jerusalem. The horns represent those, like the Babylonians and their allies, that had taken advantage of the weakness of Judah. The people of Judah were utterly crushed. No one could stand up to resist the horns.
   2. Terrible crushing of God's enemies (1:21c-e; H 2:4c-e):
      a. Craftsmen terrify the horns (1:21c; H 2:4c): but the craftsmen have come to frighten them. Frighten them (r. chrd) is Hiphil, meaning “to throw into panic, to drive away in terror” (cf. Judg 8:12; 2 Sam 17:2). Perhaps the craftsmen were carrying hammers with which they would shatter the horns.
         The craftsmen symbolize the human agencies employed by God to overthrow the powers hostile to God's people.
      b. Craftsmen throw down the horns (1:21d; H 2:4d): and throw down these horns of the nations. Throw down (r. ydh) is Piel, indicating the violence of the action. For the first time the text makes explicit what has been implied, viz., that the horns represent the nations or Gentiles. All opposition to God's people eventually will be overthrown.
      c. Craftsmen used to punish the enemies of God's people (1:21e; H 2:4d): who lift up a horn against the land of Judah to scatter it. Lift up is a
participle, implying on-going or imminent action. Gentile nations have in the past lifted up a horn against God’s people. That may happen again. Whenever a Gentile nation does threaten the land of Judah, however, God will use his agents to throw down that horn or power. Scatter (r. zrh) indicates the intention of the hostile nation. Deane suggests the figure of a bull catching his prey on horns, tossing them into the air, scattering them to the wind. A land is scattered when its population is dispersed. The temple builders could continue their work without fear of that work being disrupted by external intervention.

Vision Three: Jerusalem Protected
Zechariah 2:1-13; H 2:5-17

And I lifted up my eyes and behold… The introduction to the third vision is identical to that of the second in 1:18.

A. Presentation of the Vision (2:1b-5; H 2:5b-9):
1. He observed a surveyor (2:1b; H 2:5b): a man with a measuring line in his hand! This man may be another angel as in 1:8. There is also, however, the intriguing possibility that this “man” is the same “man” seen in the first vision riding upon a red horse, i.e., the angel of Yahweh, the second person of the godhead (1:8, 11). Again in 6:12 this figure is again called “the man.” There we will discover that he is the builder of the true temple of God. Here he appears as the architect and builder of that Jerusalem of the future (Heb 12:22).

The “man” has a building tool in his hand—a measuring line. Here the thought of 1:16 that a line shall be stretched over Jerusalem is further developed.35 Zechariah seems to be building on concepts set forth by Ezekiel who saw a man “whose appearance was like bronze” who was going forth

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35 In 1:16 the word line is q_vh, while here measuring line is chebhel midd_h; but doubtless the idea expressed in the first vision is further developed here.
“with a linen cord in his hand and a measuring rod” to measure the site of the Jerusalem that was to be (Ezek 40:3; ch 43). John the Revelator picks up on this symbolism and applies it to the Jerusalem which is above—the city whose maker and builder is God (Rev 11:1-2; 21:15-27).

With enemies destroyed or in check, God's people can grow and develop until the time of their final glory. Yahweh already has promised that a measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem (1:16). This vision picks up on that theme to further develop it. The measuring line is a symbol of the rebuilding process that is about to rebuild.

2. He inquired concerning the surveyor (2:2; H 2:6): I asked, Where are you going? He answered me, To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is. This is an interactive visionary experience. Zechariah could talk with those he saw in vision. The surveyor is measuring Jerusalem in preparation for the reconstruction of the city.

3. He overheard a commission (2:3-4a; H 2:7-8a):

   a. Interpreting angel departed (2:3a; H 2:7a): And behold the angel that spoke with me went forth. The interpreting angel left Zechariah. Neither his direction nor his purpose is stated. Behold indicates that Zechariah found his departure unexpected and perhaps shockingly disappointing.

   b. Another angel appeared (2:3b; H 2:7b): and another angel was going out to meet him. Just as the interpreting angel went forth (y_ts__) from the side of the prophet, so another angel was going forth (y_ts__) from the side of the surveyor. Apparently the two met somewhere between the surveyor and the prophet.

   c. Interpreting angel received a commission (2:4a; H 2:8a): and said to him, Run, tell that young man... It is not clear who gives this order and to whom. If the analysis of the preceding v is correct, then most likely the angel who went out from the side of the surveyor gives this order to the interpreting angel. The term young man (na‘ar) denotes a male from infancy (Ex 2:6) to the prime of life. It occasionally is used for a servant without reference to age. The term is inappropriate to use of angels who do not pass through stages of growth as do humans. Some regard the surveyor as the young man, but this only confuses the vision. The young man is probably Zechariah (Pusey; Keil; Deane).

4. He hears good news (2:4b-5; H 2:8b-9):

   a. Future Jerusalem will be vast (2:4b; H 2:8b): Jerusalem shall be inhabited as open regions by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. Open regions (p_r_z_th) is an area in which there is nothing to circumscribe the inhabitants—nothing to prevent them from spreading out in all directions (cf. Ezek 38:11; Esth 9:19). The cattle represent the possessions and wealth of the city. Jerusalem will be so extensive that walls shall no longer be able to contain its inhabitants. This prediction

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36So Deane and Laetsch. Cashdan, however, thinks the interpreting angel gave the order to the other angel.

37Others think: the young man is the man with the measuring line (Wright; Perowne; Cashdan). But what indication is there that the surveyor was making a mistake in attempting to define the limits of what would be unlimited? Others think the young man represents the average opinion of the day. He believes Jerusalem will be rebuilt, but his concept of the city of God is poured into too small a mold (Leupold).
builds upon several earlier depictions of the burgeoning population of the Jerusalem to come (e.g., Isa 49:19-20). Messianic Jerusalem will resemble a succession of “villages” on the open plains (Baron). The fulfillment is not to be found in physical Jerusalem (Wright) because the walls of physical Jerusalem were rebuilt under Nehemiah. The reference is not to some imagined millennial Jerusalem (Unger), but the messianic Jerusalem, the church of Christ (Heb 12:22).  

b. **Future Jerusalem will be secure (2:5a; H 2:9a): And as for me, I will be (oracle of Yahweh) a wall of fire around it...** Though inhabited as “villages” on an open plain with no visible fortifications Messianic Jerusalem will be protected (cf. Isa 26:1). The messianic kingdom (the church) does not need walls of stone, for God himself will be her wall, a fiery wall that consumes all who attack. He will be a perfect defense for all within messianic Zion, and lethal obstruction to all who would attack her. As for me conveys the emphasis on the first person pronoun in the Hebrew. In the short run Nehemiah will build walls to protect Jerusalem; in the age to come Yahweh will provide the protection by his very presence within Jerusalem.

c. **Future Jerusalem will be glorious (2:5b; H 2:9b): and glory I will be in its midst.** Yahweh will be Zion’s protection from without; but he will also be her glory from within (cf. Isa 60:19; Rev 21:23). Christ is present in his church. God's providential care for the church reflects his glory. 2 Thess 1 speaks of Christ returning to be glorified in his saints.

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**B. Amplification of the Vision (2:6-13; H 2:10-17):**

1. **Word of exhortation (2:6-7; H 2:10-11):** In this oracle Yahweh cites four reasons why the captives in Babylon should flee as soon as possible.

   a. **Initial exhortation (2:6a; H 2:10a): Ho! ho! Flee from the land of the north (oracle of Yahweh).** Ho! Ho! is an onomatopoeic interjection employed to arrest attention. Flee (r. nûs) does not always connote fleeing from oppression or danger. There is no hint in the text that those addressed were in any immediate danger.

      The Land of the north is the region of Assyria and Babylon. Geographically, Assyria and Babylonia were northeast of Palestine. This region is called the land of the north because the normal invasion route against Palestine was from the north. The land of the north was no longer a threat to the people of God as it had been in the days of Jeremiah. Therefore, Zechariah is probably not thinking of Babylon geographically, but symbolically. The land of the north, source of oppression and grief to the OT people of God, symbolizes the world. God is calling for people to leave the world and come to messianic Zion. People flee from Babylon spiritually and psychologically (cf. Isa 48:20; 52:11; Jer 51:6, 45).

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38 Renewed national welfare and prosperity are prophetic ways of depicting the glorious messianic age. See Isa 54:1; Jer 31:27; Ezek 36:10-11; 37-38; Hos 1:10-11.

39 Rendered Come, come (NIV); Ho there (NASB); Up, up (NRSV); Away, away (NIP)).

40 See use of nûs in Dt 34:7; 2 Kgs 9:3; Song 2:17; Isa 35:10.
The oracular formula is used twice in this one v. On the significance of this formula, see on 1:3.

b. Basis of appeal (2:6b; H 2:10b): *For as the four winds of the heavens I have spread you abroad (oracle of Yahweh).* For (*kî*) introduces the reason people are urged to flee from the land of the north. *As the four winds* denotes the four points of the compass. *Spread abroad* (r. prs) in the Piel almost always means “to spread out,” with Ps 68:14 (“scatter”) being the only exception. Thus the line points to broad geographical expansion. This is a further development of the Zion-without-walls motif of v 4.⁴¹

c. Follow-up exhortation (2:7; H 2:11): *Ho, O Zion, escape you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.* As in the previous v, *ho* indicates an urgent appeal. *Zion* in this v refers to God’s people who are dispersed throughout the world. *Escape* (r. mlt) is Niphal fem. imperative. Babylon is no place for Zion to dwell. *Daughter of Babylon* personifies the population of Babylon. In this context *daughter of Babylon* is probably equivalent to the *land of the north* in the previous v.

Babylon recently had been involved in two successive rebellions against the Persians—one in 522 and the other in 521 BC. Darius and one of his generals had dealt harshly with the residents. Perhaps the hardships during these wars form the background of what Zechariah is urging. A more devastating assault was administered by Xerxes in 482 BC when he punished a third rebellion by Babylon. Zechariah recognized that people who live in physical or metaphorical Babylon get caught up in the turmoil that surrounds that place.

After 586 BC Babylon stood for all lands of the exile and was not confined to the geographical area known as "Babylon" (Baldwin). Zechariah’s audience probably understood him to be issuing a call to Jews living in the far corners of the Persian Empire to return to Jerusalem. The appeal of this unit, however, is even broader. Babylon is the world that opposes Zion. God is always calling his people out of the world. Cf. Rev 18:4-8.

2. Word of explanation (2:8-9; H 2:12-13):

a. Solemn utterance (2:8a; H 2:12a): *For thus says Yahweh of Hosts...* For (*kî*) introduces the reason for the summons to escape Babylon. Yahweh, commander of all armies in heaven and on earth, has issued a proclamation that necessitates a hasty departure from Babylon.

b. Visitation of God’s enemies (2:8a; H 2:12a): *After glory he has sent me unto the nations that spoil you.* The speaker appears to be the angel or messenger of Yahweh who elsewhere is identified as Yahweh himself. *After glory* means “in pursuit of glory.” *Glory* means to vindicate and to display the glory of God both in destroying the enemies of his people and in delivering his people from their oppression. *He has sent me* refers to the mystery of mysteries—how Yahweh the Father dispatched Yahweh the Son on his mission into this world. In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus read

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⁴¹Promises of territorial expansion also appear in Mic 7:11; Isa 54:2. They are built on the original promise to Abraham in Gn 22:17.
Isa 61:1-2a—“Yahweh has anointed me to preach good news…he has sent me.”

Apparently the angel of Yahweh is sent to get glory or honor over the heathen by taking conquering them. This v anticipates the NT revelation of the Father sending the Son to glorify him (Jn 17:4). The verb spoil or plunder (NASB) is a participle, indicating the continual plundering of God’s people by the nations. The nations that were the most implacable foes of God’s people must confront the angel of Yahweh.

c. Vindication of God’s people (2:8c; H 2:12c): because the one who touches you touches the pupil of his [God’s] eye. Because (kî) introduces the reason for God’s intervention in the human scene. Touches (r. n genital) has a hostile connotation in this context. Pupil is lit., gate. The gate of the eye could be the pupil; or it could refer to the opening of the eyelids, which the ancients may have viewed as the entrance to the eye. With bold anthropomorphism the text refers to his, i.e., God’s eye. The point is that God is extremely sensitive to any harm done to his people. It was Moses who first used this eye metaphor to express God’s tender compassion for his people (Dt 32:10). David applied this same figure to himself (Ps 17:8).

d. Vanquishing of hostile nations (2:9; H 2:13):
   aa. Dramatic gesture (2:9a; H 2:13a): For behold I am about to wave my hand against them… On behold, see on 1:8. The angel of Yahweh has only to wave his hand in a threatening gesture and his enemies shrink with fear. Wave my hand is similar to modern shake my fist. This v is a further development of the protection of Zion motif symbolized by the wall of fire in 2:5 (H 2:9). The verb (r. n p'p) is repeated from Isa 11:15 and 19:16 where similar prophecies of deliverance and intimidation of enemies are found.
   bb. Shocking reversal (2:9b; H 2:13b): and they shall be a spoil for those that served them. Zechariah builds on a prediction found in Isa 14:1-2. The hostile nations will be a spoil or plunder to former servants. The statement could be taken in a general sense, i.e., powerful nations will be overturned and thereafter plundered by former subject peoples. Those in Zechariah’s day had witnessed the subjugation of Babylon, the former mistress of the world. Those that served them, however, probably refers to God’s people. This prediction came true only in a spiritual sense when nations were converted to the true faith in the NT age (Deane). The theme that Israel’s dominion expands over Gentile nations in the messianic age is a major theme in OT prophecy. Such passages are applied to conversion by NT teachers (cf. Acts 15:15-18 citing Amos 9:11-12).

42Baldwin (TOTC, 109) renders achar k bhod with heaviness i.e., with a burdensome message for the nations (cf. Ecc 12:2; Ps 73:24).
43Similar to the common Hebrew expression the little man of the eye (Dt 32:10; Ps 17:8), or daughter of the eye (Ps 17:8; Lam 2:18).
44According to Jewish tradition the original reading was the pupil of MY eye.
cc. Certain conclusion (2:9c; H 2:13c): and you shall know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me. This has been called the recognition formula. Know refers to experimental knowledge. The mission of the angel of Yahweh in the invisible realm will be as evident as fallen trees are evidence of the invisible wind. When once hostile Gentile nations become servants of Zion then God’s people will understand the angel of Yahweh has been at work. This angel or messenger is the representative of Yahweh of Hosts. On the divine title, see on 1:3.

3. Second word of exhortation (2:10-12; H 2:14-16):

a. Call for joy (2:10a; H2:14a): Shout and be glad, O daughter of Zion. Anticipating the announcement of Yahweh’s coming, God’s people are told to rejoice. Daughter of Zion is the population of Zion personified. Since physical Jerusalem was uninhabited at this time, the reference must be to Zion as a name for God’s people collective. So God’s people are designated as a beloved daughter. Four reasons are given for the call for joy.

b. Promise of Yahweh's coming (2:10b; H 2:14b): For, behold, I am about to come and I will dwell in the midst of you (oracle of Yahweh). The speaker is still the angel/messenger of Yahweh, i.e., the second person of the godhead, who is the perfect manifestation of God’s name (Ex 23:21). Zechariah repeats the declaration of Messiah in Ps 40:7 (cf. Heb 10:7). For (kî) introduces the reason for the joy. On the meaning of behold, see on 1:8. The first person pronouns now refer to Yahweh, as indicated by the oracular formula. Since, however, Yahweh and the angel/messenger of Yahweh are one no change in speaker has occurred.

Yahweh will dwell (r. _kn) in the midst of his people. God is the designated subject of this verb 43x in OT, 4x in this book. God dwells on Mount Zion (Ps 74:2) and among his people (Ex 25:8). On several occasions some symbolic representation of the divine presence is said to do the dwelling: the glory (Ex 24:16; Ps 85:9); the cloud (Nm 9:17, 18, 22; 10:12). The word used here connotes the idea of nearness and closeness. God once dwelled in the tabernacle (Ex 25:8); then in the temple (1 Kgs 6:13). Ezekiel foresaw his return to the temple (Ezek 43:2, 4). But this v does not directly connect Yahweh’s dwelling with the temple currently being built. The fulfillment of this promise was in the incarnation—when God came in the person of his Son to dwell in the midst of his people. On oracle of Yahweh, see on 1:3.

c. Promise of the conversion of the nations (2:11a; H 2:15a): Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day and will become my people. Many nations probably refers to and explains the nations mentioned in v 8 which become plunder in v 9. Joined themselves (r. lwh in Niph.) could also be translated as a passive as in NIV. In either case a mass conversion of Gentiles is indicated. This term is used to describe a military alliance (Ps 83:3), a conjugal joining of husband to wife (Gn 29:34), and the

45 Others think Zechariah is the speaker in the recognition formula. He tyes his call and commission to the fulfillment of his prophecies.
joining of Levites with Aaron for tabernacle service (Nm 18:2-4). The idea of Gentiles being joined with Jews in a glorious future kingdom echoes a promise that first appeared in Isa 14:1. Such converts are assured that they will not be separated from God's covenant (Isa 56:3-6). The same verb is used of Jews who will join themselves to Yahweh in an everlasting (new) covenant (Jer 50:5). So in each case the r. lwh points to a voluntary, solemn and permanent commitment. Become my people indicates that converted Gentiles become part of the Israel of God. Clearly then the plundering of the nations in v 9 is spiritual and not the result of military conquest. This is further amplification of the promise of v 4 that Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of people.

Those who first heard these words may have understood Zechariah to say that there would be a massive influx of Gentiles into the postexilic community. The text, however, does not require such an interpretation. Furthermore, history does not indicate that any such influx took place. In the church, however, there is the merging of Jew and Gentile just as is envisioned here (Eph 2:11-16). The existence of the church confirms the angel's words.

d. Promise of a special relationship (2:11b; H 2:15b): And I shall dwell in the midst of you. The promise of v 10b is repeated for emphasis as well as assurance. The speaker is clearly Yahweh.

e. Promise of verification (2:11c; H 2:15c): and you shall know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me. The recognition formula is repeated from 2:9b where the conquest of hostile nations validates the message and mission of the angel of Yahweh. Here it is the coming of Yahweh in the person of Messiah that validates the message and mission of the angel of Yahweh. The interchange of pronouns referring to the angel of Yahweh and Yahweh anticipates the relationship between the Father and the Son. One might argue that the angel of Yahweh is the second person of the godhead.

f. Promise of divine election (2:12; H 2:16):

aa. Judah (2:12a): Yahweh will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land... Inherit (r. nch1) often denotes possession by right of succession. This is the only place in the OT where Yahweh is said to inherit Judah. Portion (cheleq) denotes a share of something, i.e., ownership. God will take possession of the true Judah, the church, as his heritage (Laetsch).

This is the only place where the term holy land is used in Scripture. The OT land or kingdom of Israel had been defiled and polluted. Messiah’s land or kingdom will be holy, for only those who have been set apart by the cleansing of the gospel can dwell in his land. The phrase holy land, then, is not restricted to physical Palestine. Cf. the expressions holy hill (Ps 2:6; 15:1) or holy mountain (Ps 48:2; 99:9). The r. holy (qd_) denotes separation from the common and profane. Wherever God reveals himself, there is the holy land.
bb. Jerusalem (2:12b): and will again choose Jerusalem. There is a rich tradition in OT that God chose Jerusalem as his special place of habitation. Eventually Jerusalem was rejected and handed over to the Babylonians. The city will again be chosen. All the decisive religious events of the future would take place in physical Jerusalem. This passage, however, envisions a greater Jerusalem—one that cannot be enclosed with walls. Physical Jerusalem is but a shadow of that heavenly Jerusalem portrayed by the apostle (Heb 12:22).

4. Third exhortation (2:13; H 2:17): Be silent, all flesh, before Yahweh for he is aroused out of his holy habitation. Be silent (has) is essentially equivalent to the English “hush,” or “keep your mouth shut.” In the light of the promises made in the first three visions complaints about injustice and God’s inactivity should cease. All flesh must include both Judeans and Gentiles. The phrase also underscores the weakness and impotence of man in the presence of the Almighty. Yahweh is aroused (r. ’_r in Niphal). This powerful anthropomorphic expression means that Yahweh is about to become actively engaged in the affairs of mankind (cf. Ps 44:23). The arrogance and abuse of his people by the Gentiles has moved him to respond.

His holy habitation must be heaven, since the earthly temple had not yet been rebuilt. The expression was introduced by Moses (Dt 26:15). It was used in Ps 68:6 and Jer 25:30. These words would be an encouragement for the people of God to be patient and to wait in awe for the great day (Laetsch). At the same time they are a warning to the nations that God was coming to execute judgment upon them. Yahweh was getting ready to fulfill all his promises and threats.

TEMPLE VISIONS
Zechariah 3:1-4:14

Visions 1-3 have their setting in a valley outside Jerusalem; visions 4-5, in the temple. These two visions focus on the two leaders of the nation: Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor.

Vision Four:
Encouragement to the Priest
Zechariah 3:1-10

Unlike visions 1-3, vision 4 has nothing mysterious to arouse the attention of the prophet. There is no explanation from an interpreting angel. The vision is explained as it unfolds. The setting of the vision is probably the Jerusalem temple. The vision depicts a scene of legal controversy.

A. Condition of Joshua (3:1-3):

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46E.g., 1 Kgs 11:32, 36; 14:21; 2 Kgs 21:7; 23:27; Ps 132:13; etc.
47Others locate the heavenly temple? or city gate where trials were conducted.
1. Accusation against Joshua (3:1):
   a. Joshua's appearance (3:1a): Then he showed me Joshua the high priest... The subject of the verb showed is not indicated. It could be Yahweh, or the interpreting angel. On the other hand, the verb could be taken impersonally and rendered as a passive, I was shown. Joshua or Jeshua was the current high priest, having served in that office for the past sixteen years (Ezra 3:2). The use of the official title the high priest suggests that Joshua represents not only the priesthood, but the entire nation (Laetsch; Unger; Leupold). His condition is Israel's condition; his acquittal is Israel's acquittal. Words addressed to him are also addressed to the people.

   b. Joshua's position (3:1b): standing before the angel of Yahweh... Apparently Zechariah saw Joshua rendering priestly service in the Temple (Unger; Laetsch). This view is supported (1) by the use of the verb stand which often points to ministerial service (Dt 10:8; Ezek 44:15); and (2) the mention of his garments, which implies that he was engaged in official duties at some consecrated spot. The scene may have taken place before the altar (Deane). While the temple was only under construction, pious Judeans could imagine what the full restoration of that facility would entail. On the identification of the angel of Yahweh, see on 1:11.

   c. Joshua's adversary (3:1c):
      aa. His identity (3:1c): And Satan... Some take sátān as a common noun meaning the accuser and not as a proper name. They propose that the reference is to a member of the heavenly court who was acting as prosecuting angel (Cashdan). The noun has the article. Sometimes in Hebrew proper names are formed by attaching a definite article to a common noun. It is probably best to take the reference to be to Satan (Unger; Laetsch). How and why Satan was permitted by God to appear before him is one of the mysteries that Scripture does not resolve for us.

      bb. His position (3:1d): standing at his right hand... Satan stands at Joshua’s right hand which may have been the usual position of an accuser (cf. Ps 109:6).

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48Cashdan, Perowne and Baldwin think Joshua was standing in a judicial sense as a defendant (cf. Nm 27:2; 1 Kgs 3:16; Nm 35:12). It is not stated, however, that Yahweh was sitting upon a throne of judgment.

49On the doctrine of Satan in the OT see Appendix B in Perowne's commentary on Zechariah.
cc. His purpose (3:1e): to accuse him. The verb accuse comes from the same root as the name Satan, which creates a neat paronomasia or play on words. So, lit., Satan stood there to satanize Joshua, i.e., to do what Satan was best at doing, viz., accusing God’s people (Rev 12:10). In this scene Satan is not a judicial accuser; he is an enemy who is resisting Joshua’s efforts to intercede for his people. Satan objects before the angel of Yahweh that Joshua was not qualified to offer up intercession both because of his own personal sin (symbolized by the filthy garments) and because of the transgressions of the people whose burden he bore.

2. Accuser reprimanded (3:2):
   a. Finality of the reprimand (3:2a): In response to the accusations against Joshua (and by implication, Israel) a double rebuke is administered to Satan.
      aa. Initial rebuke (3:2a): And Yahweh said unto Satan, Yahweh rebuke you, O Satan! The text does not reveal the actual accusation of Satan. Perhaps this rebuke is administered even before he spoke. According to the Syriac version, it is the angel of Yahweh who is speaking. It is not uncommon for Scripture to interchange Yahweh and the angel of Yahweh. As the text stands, however, Yahweh utters the rebuke, and administers it in his own name. Baldwin has this cogent comment: "When the Lord rebukes there is no gainsaying His word." The power of the rebuke is enhanced in that it was spoken directly to Satan. He is addressed by name.
      bb. Repeated rebuke (3:2b): Yea, Yahweh rebuke you... Repetition underscores the seriousness of the rebuke. The Judge himself pleads the cause of his people.
         The verb rebuke (r. g’r) means to reprove; but when applied to God this verb includes the idea of the power to suppress. When Jesus rebuked the demonic spirit he departed out of his victim.
   b. Basis of this reprimand (3:2c, d):
      aa. Yahweh’s immutable choice (3:2c): the Chooser of Jerusalem! In the repetition of the reprimand of Satan Yahweh began to set forth the reason for it, viz., God’s choice of Jerusalem. This first basis of reprimand looks forward to what God had in store for Jerusalem. To criticize the chosen is to impugn the wisdom and foresight of the Chooser.
         Chooser of Jerusalem is a participle + the article, i.e., the chooser of Jerusalem, the one who chooses or has chosen Jerusalem. This confirms the conclusion in reached in v 1 that the vision has something to do with the remnant as a whole, not just Joshua personally. Twice earlier Zechariah had declared that Yahweh would yet choose Jerusalem (1:17; 2:12). As both a physical city and as a designation of God’s people Jerusalem would yet play a significant role in the plan of

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50Ps 9:5; 18:15; 80:16; 106:9; 119:21; Isa 17:13; Nah 1:4; Mal 2:3.
God. Therefore, neither Satan nor any of his earthly agents should regard the present pathetic condition of the City of the Great King as indicating that the Judeans were still under God’s wrath. What God has chosen let not Satan or man regard lightly. Humble circumstances are no barrier to future glory.

bb. Israel’s marvelous salvation (3:2d): Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? To that reason for reprimand a second reason is now added, one based on what God already had done for his people. A brand (piece of charred wood) plucked out of the fire is a metaphor for deliverance from total destruction. This is a mas. sing. demonstrative pronoun. It could refer to Joshua personally, or to the people of Judah as in this people.\(^{51}\)

Proof that Joshua and the people he represents stand in God's favor is seen in the fact that they had been delivered from the fire of exile where they might well have been destroyed (cf. Amos 4:11). Therefore, neither Joshua nor the people he represented should be the victim of malicious slander. The principle is that those who have been saved by God from judgment are not subject to condemnation by anyone (cf. Rom 8:1, 33, 34).

3. Accused stands silently guilty (3:3): Now as for Joshua, he was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. Although Satan’s verbal accusation against Joshua is not recorded in this vision, this v supplies a clue as to the kind of vitriol which it must have contained. Satan might well have been arguing for the complete repudiation of Israel as the priestly nation. Filthy (tsô’îm) points to excrement-soiled garments that were offensively smelly as well as dirty. The garments are symbolic of sins of the entire nation (cf. Isa 64:6). Dressed is a participle, indicating that the moral and spiritual filthiness was a continuing problem. The angel is the angel of Yahweh as in 3:1. On the significance of the participle standing, see on 3:1. This v adds to the picture painted in v 1. It gives the reason Satan was accusing Joshua (and his people) of being unqualified to enter into the presence of the holy God.

B. Pardon Joshua (3:4-7):

1. Cleansing of the priesthood (3:4-5):

a. Order given (3:4a): And he answered and spoke to those who were standing before him, Take off his filthy clothes. Joshua was unable to answer. He was aware of his unworthiness. Only God can remove our sin and guilt. The speaker in this v is angel of Yahweh. He addresses the attendant angels who wait upon him. These attendant angels are mentioned for the first time. On the filthy clothes, see on the previous v.

b. Declaration issued (3:4b): And unto him he said: Behold I cause your iniquity to pass from you... The removal of the garments is symbolic of the remission of sins or cleansing. Iniquity is the whole sinful disposition which leads to distress and guilt. Removal of the filthy garments silenced

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\(^{51}\)The phrase this people appears 78 times in OT, three times in this book, twice in Haggai.
the accuser. The most holy Judge had done the unthinkable. By an act of his sovereign grace he had removed the guilt of his people.

c. Promise made (3:4c): and I will clothe you with festal garments. Clothe is Hiph. inf. absolute, indicating the continuation of the action of the previous finite verb. Festal garments are lit. garments that are put off or taken off before going to work; hence, a precious, costly, beautiful garment. Undoubtedly the holy garments of the high priest (Ex 28) are intended. These garments are symbolic of righteousness and glory (cf. Isa 61:10). The Aaronic priesthood has been reinstated in anticipation of the completion of the temple and the resumption of temple services. This promise illustrates the principle of Rom 8:30, “those whom he justified he also glorified” (cf. 2 Cor 3:18).

d. Request of the prophet (3:5a): Then I said: Let them place a clean miter upon his head. Zechariah is so excited by what he sees that he gives vent to his feelings. The miter or turban was the headgear of the high priest. The golden plate on the front of that miter was called the holy crown (Ex 29:6; Lv 8:9).

e. Festive garments are put on (3:5b): So they set a clean miter upon his head and clothed him with garments. They no doubt refers to the servant angels who stood before the angel of Yahweh (v 4). These angels are part of the trappings of the vision, not part of its symbolism. The request of the prophet is immediately carried out apparently even before the other garments were completely in place. This action signifies complete reinstatement of Joshua in the high priestly function. The miter (ts_nip) was the headdress of princely persons and kings. It declared the priest to be Holy to Yahweh, i.e., qualified to intercede for the people. The garments with which Joshua was clothed are those special garments referenced in the preceding v.

By way of application, one thinks of the crown of glory that completes the Christian’s process of glorification (1 Pet 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8).

f. Approval of the whole transaction (3:5c): while the angel of Yahweh stood by. He was watching the transaction, sanctioning and directing what was being done. On the identification of the angel of Yahweh, see on 1:11.

2. Covenant with the priesthood (3:6-7):

a. Transition (3:6-7a): And the angel of Yahweh solemnly testified unto Joshua, saying, Thus says Yahweh of Hosts says: The verb (r. ‘ūd) is rendered gave this charge (NIV) or charged (NJPS); admonished (NASB); assured (NRSV). The term is intended to express the solemnity and importance of the charge about to be made. This v marks the transition

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52On this function of the infinitive absolute in later Hebrew, see GK §113 z. There is no need to follow the lead of LXX which suggests the reading and they clothed him or let them clothe him.

53The priest’s headdress is called mitsnepet, while here the word is ts_nip, a word elsewhere associated with fine apparel. Clearly the high priestly turban is intended. Perhaps the implication is that even greater glory will be added to the reinstated priesthood.

54McComiskey (MPEEC, 1074) thinks these figures represent the agencies by which God expunges guilt, viz., the Levitical sacrifices and rituals.

55Cf. 1 Kgs 2:42 where the term is used of Solomon’s warning to Shimei.
from the symbolic vision to the practical application to Joshua. The solemn testimony to Joshua is introduced with the messenger formula. On the angel of Yahweh, see on 1:11. On the title Yahweh of Hosts, see on 1:3. This is the seventh use of the messenger formula in this book.

b. Two conditions (3:7b-c): Re-instatement of the priesthood and nation symbolized by the change of garments is conditioned on obedience—personal and national.

aa. Personal requirement (3:7b): If in my ways you walk, i.e., observe my commandments governing your life. Word order emphasizes in my ways. The high priest was expected to model the holiness that he represented by his garb and by the rituals he performed.

bb. Ministerial requirement (3:7c): And if my charge you keep. Word order places emphasis on my charge (mi_meret). To keep the charge is an idiom used at least 27x of an office or function, especially that of a priest or Levite. The word connotes certain responsibilities to be performed, certain rules to be kept, certain traditions to maintain.

c. Three-fold blessing (3:7c): If Joshua meets the twofold requirement put forth in v 7 he will be granted a threefold blessing.

aa. Superintendence (3:7c): then you will judge my house... Judge (r. ādān) is used in the sense of rule or govern. My house may be used metaphorically of God’s people (cf. Nm 12:7). If this be the sense, then Joshua will function as the supreme judge in all matters of controversy among the people (Dt 17:8-10). Probably, however, my house refers to the physical temple. Joshua would rule and order divine worship in the temple, i.e., govern the ministers of the sanctuary. Formerly kings had assumed a large measure of authority over worship. Now the rights of the high priest would be indisputable. This promise assumes the successful completion of the building project currently underway.

bb. Authority (3:7d): and will also keep my courts. This line confirms the interpretation given to my house in the previous line. Joshua will have the authority to guard the Temple courts from being desecrated by ungodliness and frivolity, idolatry or anything that defiled (2 Chr 23:19).

c. Access (3:7e): and I will give you free access among these who stand by. Free access is lit., walking places. These who stand by must be a reference to the serving angels mentioned in vv 4-5. So the essence of this promise is that someday Joshua would have direct communication with God, like the angels. The glory of the future priesthood will exceed that of previous generations of priests who only had access to the Most Holy Place once a year. Thus Joshua will have access through intercessory prayer to the very throne of God himself. The ultimate fulfillment of this promise may have been in Christ, Joshua's ministerial successor; and the right of the Christian priesthood of the future Joshua/Jesus to enter boldly before the throne of grace (Heb 4:14-16).
C. Coming of the Messianic Priest (3:8-10).

1. Call for attention (3:8a): Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your fellows that sit before you... Yahweh himself is speaker. The summons to hear kindles expectation of further information about the significance of the vision just described. Once again Joshua is addressed as the high priest to remind the reader that it is in his official capacity that Joshua is addressed. Joshua is addressed along with your fellows or friends (NASB) or colleagues (NJPS), i.e., associate priests (cf. NIV). It is not clear whether sit before you may indicate that the associate priests were merely spectators in the vision just described. On the other hand, sit before is used of pupils sitting before a teacher (1 Kgs 4:38; Ezek 33:31; cf. 1 Sam 19:20). Perhaps Joshua was conducting training sessions for the priests in anticipation of the restoration of temple ministries.

2. Sign of Messiah’s coming (3:8b): for they\textsuperscript{56} are men that are a marvelous sign. In v 3 Joshua individually was declared to be a sign standing for the nation that God had snatched like a brand from the fire. Now Joshua’s colleagues are said to be men that are a marvelous sign.\textsuperscript{57} Here the term refers to men who arouse the attention of the people to a coming event. Cf. Isa 8:18. The OT priests were types prefiguring the NT high priesthood and royal priesthood.\textsuperscript{58} The restored priesthood is a sign of the advent of the Messiah. The purified priesthood is typical of greater purification to come.

3. Messiah as Servant (3:8c): for behold I am about to bring my servant... For introduces the reason Joshua and his fellows are such types. They foreshadow the eternal priest who will by his vicarious suffering obtain full forgiveness for mankind. Behold is an attention getting device that conveys excitement (cf.1:8). This is the only use of the word servant (’ebhêd) in this book. The phrase my servant is used in conjunction with ten named individuals.\textsuperscript{59} Without a proper name attached, the phrase is used 4x in Isaiah to refer to a coming Servant par excellence who would die for the sins of mankind (42:1; 49:3, 6; 52:13). The NT understands this Servant to be Christ (Mt 12:18; Acts 8:32-35). He is called my servant because of his willing, patient, perfect obedience to his Father (Laetsch).

4. Messiah as Shoot (3:8d): the Shoot. The term tsemach is translated Branch in the standard English versions. The term refers to a small shoot poking its head up from the soil, not a large branch of a tree. The term was used messianically by Isaiah (4:2) and Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15) of a royal Davidic figure.\textsuperscript{60} Ancient interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, agree in explaining the Shoot as the

\textsuperscript{56} In the Hebrew the pronoun appears at the end of the clause, probably for emphasis: they, too, are men of a sign.

\textsuperscript{57} A marvelous sign (môph ˘) is rendered symbolic of things to come (NIV); a symbol (NASB); an omen of things to come (NRSV); a sign (NJPS).

\textsuperscript{58} They are men who foreshadow some future events, whose persons, office, duties, typify and look forward to good things to come\textsuperscript{6} (Deane).

\textsuperscript{59} Abraham (Gn 26:24); Moses (Nm 12:7 + 5); Caleb (Nm 14:24); David (2 Sam 3:18 + 17); Job (Job 1:8 + 3); Isaiah (Isa 20:3); Eliakim (1 Sam 22:20); Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9 + 2); Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23); and Jacob = the nation Israel (Isa 41:8-9 +10).

\textsuperscript{60} Isa 11:1 uses the word netser for the Messiah, which appears to be synonymous with tsemech used here.
Messiah. In this passage the term tsemach does not have the article. It appears to be a proper name. 61 Shoot points to the miraculous origin of Messiah and to the mystery of his person. He was one implanted by God in the world.

5. Messiah as Stone (3:9):

a. Announcement of the stone (3:9a): For behold, the stone which I have set before Joshua. For introduces further explanation of the Shoot-Servant of the previous v. On the meaning of behold see on 1:8. Joshua is told to focus his attention on a stone that presumably was placed before Joshua at some point in the vision. This action indicates that the stone (h ’ebhen) was a rather large object, not a small gem stone as imagined by some commentators.

That the stone is another symbol for the coming Messiah seems clear enough. 62 By Zechariah’s day stone would have been quite familiar as a messianic title (Isa 28:16; Ps 118:22; cf. Mt 21:42; Eph 2:20).

b. Characteristics of the Stone (3:9b):

aa. Unique Stone (3:9b): upon one stone. There was but one stone before Joshua. It was marked in a most unusual way. This suggests that the coming Messiah was to be absolutely unique.

bb. Omniscent Stone (3:9c): There are seven eyes on that one stone... Cf. Rev 5:6. Eyes is the traditional and likely rendering of (‘ên_yim). 63 The eyes were engraved on the Living Stone, they were not looking at the stone. 64 Seven eyes are symbols of perfect intelligence or omniscience. The number seven recalls Messiah’s sevenfold anointing by the Holy Spirit foreseen by Isaiah (11:2). John the Revelator seems to build on these passages when he depicts the Lamb which had been slain having seven horns (omnipotence) and seven eyes (omniscience) which are the seven spirits of God (Rev 5:6).

cc. Engraved Stone (3:9c): Behold, I will engrave the engraving of it. Prophetic excitement escalates with the use of another behold (see on 1:8). The pronoun I refers to God. The text does not indicate the nature of the engraving on the stone. The engraving is something God does to the Stone, or at least permits to be done. The reference is not to the polishing and inscribing of some literal stone to go into the temple.

The purpose of engraving a stone is to make it all the more beautiful—the precious cornerstone of Isa 28:16. If the stone is Messiah, then the engraving must be what was cut into his sinless humanity. The scars in his body are what make him beautiful to the believer.

5. Results of Messiah’s Coming (3:9b-10):

61 "If this well-known prophetic epithet of the coming of the Messiah was not a proper name by the time of Zechariah, he makes it one” (Pusey).

62 Leupold lists nine interpretations of the stone. For example, it is the capstone of the temple (Cashdan), the spiritual temple or church (Leupold, Laetsch, Deane), a symbol of the current building project (McComiskey) or the Messiah himself (Unger, Wright, Pusey).

63 The term is rendered facets (NRSV; Cashdan) representing the beauty of the stone; but a stone with seven facets would be difficult to use either in the foundation or as a cap stone in the temple. Others render fountains (Baldwin), symbolizing cleansing; but ‘ayin never occurs elsewhere as a metaphor for cleaning.

64 Others think the eyes are God’s eyes which are directed toward the stone in watchful care.
a. Day of forgiveness (3:9d): And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In these words one finds the key to the entire vision (Baron). The result of the engraving or deep cutting into the Stone is the removal of iniquity. Remove \(^65\) recalls the removal of the filthy garments from Joshua earlier in the vision (v 4). That land refers to the messianic land of Promise, the kingdom of Christ. One day in which sin is removed has as its backdrop the Mosaic Day of Atonement. On that day sin was removed from the land (actually rolled forward until the next Day of Atonement). If the Stone is Messiah, and his engraving is his sacrificial death, then this single day of sin removal must be Calvary day—the once and for all time messianic Day of Atonement.\(^66\) Later Zechariah will have more to say about that special day (12:10; 13:1).

b. Day of peace (3:10): In that day, says Yahweh of hosts, you shall call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig-tree. The reference is not to the day when the temple was completed (Cashdan), but the glorious day ushered in by the coming of the Shoot, i.e., the NT era. The idiom of sitting under vine/fig-tree signifies security and prosperity. Cf. the description of the kingdom of Solomon in 1 Kgs 4:24-25. Micah used a similar language to describe the messianic age in Mic 4:4.

**Vision Five:**
Encouragement for the Prince
Zechariah 4:1-14

A. Preparation for the Vision (4:1-2a):

1. Angel returned (4:1a): Then the angel who talked with me returned. Perhaps the interpreting angel had departed for a time.\(^67\)

2. Prophet aroused (4:1b): and wakened me, as a man is wakened from his sleep. This sleep is probably actual sleep rather than spiritual lethargy or exhaustion. This v seems to indicate that these visions were not dreams.

3. A stimulating question (4:2a): He asked me, What do you see? A question like this from an angelic being helps a prophet to focus, to look for more than what meets the eye.

B. What the Prophet Saw (4:2b-3):

1. A lampstand (4:2b): And I said, I have seen, and behold a lampstand… Zechariah responded to the probing question of the angel. He acknowledged seeing what he perceives that the angel wishes for him to see. On the significance of behold, see on 1:8. The central feature of the vision was a lampstand (מֶֽׁנְרוֹת). The lampstands of this period came in various

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\(^65\) Remove comes from the r. מָעָה meaning to yield, give way; in the Hiphil, to cause to yield, or give way, hence, to remove.

\(^66\) Others think that with the completion of the Temple God will remove the people's sins.

\(^67\) Others think that returned (גִּבְהָה) here has an auxiliary function answering to “again” in 5:1 and 6:1. They would translate: roused me again. This understanding, however, encounters the problem that there is no prior rousing recorded in the book.
configurations and with varying numbers of oil lamps. Zechariah paints a word picture of what he saw by listing four major features of the lampstand.

a. Its value (4:2b): all of gold… Like the lampstand of the Tabernacle, this lampstand was all of gold. On at least two points, however, this visionary lampstand differed from the Mosaic lampstand. Nothing here indicates that this lampstand was made of pure gold (ט_חור) or that it was hammered out of one piece of metal (Ex 25:31). In any case, gold indicates that this lampstand was precious.

b. Its bowl (4:2c): with its bowl over the top of it. Nothing is said about a bowl upon or over the top of the Mosaic lampstand. The bowl (געל_ח) that Zechariah saw upon or over the top of the lampstand was the oil reservoir.

c. Its lamps (4:2d): and its seven lamps thereon… There were seven lamps (נ_רות) on the lampstand. The text does not make clear how many spouts or lips each lamp had. Excavated lamps suggest that each lamp in vision had seven outlets for wicks. Such a lampstand with forty-nine flames would have provided maximum illumination.

d. Its spouts (4:2e): there are seven even seven pipes to each of the lamps which are upon the top of it. Each of the seven lamps atop the lampstand had a number of pipes (מ_טצ_גוט) or “channels” (NIV). The exact number of pipes is in dispute. The Hebrew could be read (1) seven times seven (Leupold), (2) seven plus seven, or (3) seven even seven. The latter interpretation is probably correct. Seven is the number of perfection.

2. Two olive trees (4:3): Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left. Zechariah’s description of what he saw in the vision continues. The olive trees signal that the vision is not describing some piece of furniture for the soon-to-finished temple. This lampstand was outside the temple, i.e., in the world. Zechariah shortly will inquire as to the meaning of these two trees.

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68Surrounding nations employed multi-tiered and multi-legged lamps and lampstands. This description does not resemble the Tabernacle lampstand which had three branches extending from either side of the central tier (Ex 25:31-40). What type of lamps each branch contained is not made explicit in Exodus.

69Beyond this obvious symbolism, some have tried to be more specific about the lamps. E.g., Josephus thought that the seven lamps represented the seven planets including the sun (Ant. 3.6.7; 3.7.7; Wars 5.5, 5).

70Some think that מ_טצ_גוט refers to spouts or lips on each saucer-like lamp. Such seven-lipped lamps have been discovered in excavation. This reconstruction, however, provides no explanation of how the oil flowed from the bowl over the lampstand to the lamps.
B. What the Prophet Asked (4:4-5).

1. Prophet’s question (4:4): I asked the angel who was talking with me, What are these, my lord? Zechariah did not grasp the significance of what he had seen. He probably understood the meaning of the lampstand as a symbol for the people of God.71 The meaning of the two olives trees, however, eluded him. My lord in this case is a title of respect, not an indication of deity. A student who is eager to learn inquires about what he does not understand.

2. Angel’s response question (4:5): He answered, Do you not know what these are? The angel felt that the symbols were so clear that the prophet should have grasped them. The interpreting angel twice delays his reply (cf. v 13). The effect is to concentrate interest on the final v of the ch. This messenger from heaven is not the first teacher of heavenly things who had high expectations of his students. A good teacher forces students to become precise in their questions. He builds anticipation before answering. He tries to get his students to discover answers for themselves.

3. Zechariah’s response (4:5b): No, my lord, I replied. On his part young Zechariah was did not try to bluff. He frankly admitted that the scene had him baffled. A wise sage said: Ignorance is correctable; stupid is forever. Zechariah was ignorant, but not stupid.

C. Immediate Application of the Vision (4:6-10): Before explaining the details of the vision the angel gave to the prophet a global application of it. Viewing this oracle as an intrusion into the vision account, some modern versions have opted to rearrange the text.72 Such rearrangements of the text are both unnecessary and exceed the prerogatives of a translation.

1. General principle (4:6):
   a. Personalized address (4:6a): This is the word of Yahweh unto Zerubbabel. Joshua had been given a special word in the previous vision, hence the focus here on Zerubbabel. Something that Zechariah saw in this vision was designed to bring comfort to Zerubbabel. This is the first mention of Zerubbabel in this book.

   Zerubbabel was a prince from the house of David (1 Chr 3:17-19). He had been appointed by the Persians to lead the first contingent of Jews back from exile in Babylon in 538 BC (Ezra 2:2). As governor of the province Zerubbabel was currently leading out in the temple reconstruction effort (Hag 1:12). The lampstand vision was intended to show that Zerubbabel would accomplish his work through the grace of God alone.

   b. Negative keys to spiritual success (4:6b): Not by might, not by power. This is an unusual construction in the Hebrew. It lacks any verbal element that might drain strength from the powerful nouns. It looks like the angel intended these words to be like a slogan for the postexilic community.

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71 Cf. the figure of light in Isa 51:4; Mt 5:16f, Phil 2:15; Rev 1:12, 20.
72 E.g., NEB, JB, TEV. Similar textual rearrangements were proposed originally by Wellhausen, S.R. Driver, J.M.P. Smith, and H.G. Mitchell.
Though the immediate application is to the temple project, this slogan is applicable to the work of God in any age.

The slogan begins with a negative emphasis on the complete insufficiency of human strength and resources to accomplish any work of God. The repetition of the negative heightens the emphasis. The work of the Lord is not accomplished by means of armies of workers such as had enabled Solomon to build the first temple. Might (chayil) is a general word for human resources such as physical strength, ability, wealth, military power, force. Power (kach) is used in Nehemiah for the strength of the burden bearers (Neh 4:10). Again the word denotes human strength—physical, mental, material etc.\(^73\)

c. \textit{Positive key to spiritual success (4:6c): but by my Spirit, says Yahweh of Hosts.} The lampstand in Zechariah’s vision was fed with oil not by man's hand and without human effort. So the temple would be restored not by the strength of Zerubbabel’s hands but by the Spirit of God. Clearly the ceaseless supply of oil to the lampstand symbolizes the inexhaustible supply of God’s Spirit available to those engaged in God’s work. This assurance echoes the assertion of Zechariah’s contemporary (Hag 2:5; cf. Isa 59:21). This powerful assertion\(^74\) is signed, as it were, by Yahweh himself. It is a slogan born in heaven. For spiritual success no truer words were ever spoken.

2. \textit{Specific application (4:7-9):}

a. \textit{Obstacles removed (4:7a)}: \textit{Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel . . . a plain.} With God’s Spirit at work in the restoration community, nothing could stand in the way of the completion of the temple task. Any difficulty impeding the progress of Zerubbabel in the rebuilding of the temple will be removed. Again the Hebrew uses an emphatic construction. Mountain is a figure for the opposition that was stood in the way of completing the temple.\(^75\) These obstacles are personified and addressed as if they were a single person. Perhaps the governor’s chief problems came from human obstructionists.

b. \textit{Project completion (4:7b):}

aa. \textit{Assurance (4:7b): Then he will bring out the capstone...} The pronoun refers to Zerubbabel the governor. Capstone: is lit., the stone of the head. This was the richly ornamented stone that crowned the building. Thus the hands of the man who had laid the foundation would also

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\(^73\) Baron (VPZ, 137) distinguishes between might and power, taking the former to refer to the strength of many, the latter to the strength of one person. The two terms together signify human strength of every description.

\(^74\) The powerful expression in the Hebrew is enhanced by (1) the unusual Hebrew construction in which both subject and predicate are omitted—an abbreviated sentence containing only the adverbial modifier of the predicate. So stated it is ideal as a slogan—the expression of a truth applicable to all the work of God; (2) the negative emphasis on the complete insufficiency of human strength and resources; (3) the repetition of the negative \textit{not} \((l’\text{‘})\) heightens the emphasis; (4) the emphatic positive statement follows the emphatic negative and is introduced by \textit{ki} ‘im, the strongest possible adversative; (5) the impact of the words themselves; (6) the addition of the formula says Yahweh of Hosts.

\(^75\) Some interpreters take the mountain as a symbol for the Gentile world power which is the major obstacle to the restoration of the theocratic kingdom. The idea of moving mountains of opposition to the kingdom of God is prominent in the NT (Mt 17:20; 21:21-22; Mk 11:22-23; Lk 17:6; 1 Cor 13:2).
complete the task. Zerubbabel will lead the festive celebration that accompanied the positioning of that final stone.

bb. Acclaim (4:7c): amid shoutings, Grace, grace to it! The people will cheer when the job is done. Grace here indicates loveliness or elegance. Syntactically grace refers to the top stone, but by extension to that which the top stone adorned.

3. More specific application (4:8-10):
   a. Inspired word of God (4:8): Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying... This formula has been used 3x before. Twice Zechariah referred to himself by name (1:1, 7), once the word came to Zerubbabel (4:6). Now for the first time Zechariah uses the formula in the first person. Four additional times the prophet will make this same claim. Zechariah exhausts the vocabulary of inspiration to bolster his claim to be a spokesman of Yahweh.
   b. Zerubbabel rewarded (4:9a): The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. What is implied in v 7 is now made explicit. This word of Yahweh stresses the certainty and immediacy of the completion of the temple. The Hebrew emphasizes that Zerubbabel's own hands and no one else would finish the work. It is rare in the work of the Lord that the person who starts a project is permitted also to finish that project, especially a project that was as important, controversial and complex as was the rebuilding of the temple. Documentation of the fulfillment of this prediction about four years later is recorded in Ezra 6:14-15.
   c. God's word vindicated (4:9b): Then shall you know that Yahweh of Hosts has sent me. This is the third use of the recognition formula in the book. For the meaning of this formula, see on 2:9. The completion of the temple by Zerubbabel will vindicate the message and mission of the angel of Yahweh (Unger; Laetsch).
   d. Critics silenced (4:10):
      aa. Initial mockery (4:10a): Who despises the day of small things? The beginning of the work of temple reconstruction had been mocked by some. Perhaps this explains the mountain of opposition referenced in v 7. Anyone who has engaged in establishing a new work for the Lord knows the sting of mocking words from those who should be applauding the efforts.
      bb. Encouraging observation (4:10b): they will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel, viz. these seven. This strange sentence delays the identification of the subject of the verb rejoice. Initially one might think that they refers to the despisers referenced in the first line of the v. The subject of the verb, however, is these seven. While there are some that look down on Zerubbabel’s efforts, there are some who rejoice over the progress.

The plumb line (lit., the stone, the lead) was simply a stone on a cord that helped builders to get perfect right angles for construction. Useless we are to understand this v as a figurative description of the
foremost temple builder, we must conclude that Zerubbabel was not just a cheerleader in this effort. He was a hands-on leader. His princely birth and governor’s office did not deter him from getting his hands dirty.76

The celebration of the glorious completion of the building was noted in the previous word from Yahweh (v 7). Success puts to shame all those who despised meager beginnings. This v, however, is intended to give encouragement during the difficult days of the construction effort.

cc. Surprising explanation (4:10c): (these seven are the eyes of Yahweh which run to and fro through the whole earth). Even more encouraging to Zerubbabel than the supportive enthusiasm of his fellow citizens, the governor can be assured that Yahweh himself was rejoicing over the progress in the temple project. The continuing rebuilding effort was carried out under divine auspices. The eyes of Yahweh, symbols of his knowledge, are said to be seven, i.e., he has perfect knowledge. Yahweh is omniscient. God beholds the progressing temple work with joy and gladness. How can the doubters continue their campaign of ridicule?

The eyes of Yahweh are mentioned 21x in OT. They are associated with evaluation whether bad (e.g., 1 Kgs 16:25) or good (e.g., Gn 6:8), with judgment (Amos 9:8), and with blessing (Dt 11:12; Ps 34:16; Isa 49:5). This is the only passage in which Yahweh is said to have seven eyes. The messianic Stone in Zech 3:9 is said to have seven eyes on it, perhaps indicating deity.

C. Messianic Application (4:11-14):

1. Request for additional details (4:11-13):
   a. General question (4:11): Then I asked the angel, What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand? Zechariah’s question is a bit more specific than the one he asked in v 4. He seems to have understood the lampstand as a symbol of God’s people. He was still perplexed, however, by the olive trees positioned on either side of the lampstand.
   b. More precise question (4:12): And a second time I said to him, What are these two olive branches which by means of the two spouts empty from over them the gold. Zechariah’s third question to the angel makes clear three aspects of the vision that have not previously been mentioned. First, two branches from the olive trees apparently hung over the lampstand. Second, coming out of those two branches were two spouts that connected the fruitful olive boughs to the bowl over the lampstand. Third, flowing through those spouts was the gold, i.e., oil that was so clear that it looked like gold. The finest olive oil might resemble liquid gold, especially as seen flowing along the golden pipes. The verb empty suggests that the oil

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76Another possibility is that Zerubbabel was holding the plumbline ceremonially for the laborers as they set the final stone in place, squaring it with the adjacent stones (McComiskey).
was flowing in profusion, not simply dripping from the spouts. The olives were automatically processed into oil. The oil flowed through the golden spouts, and then into the bowl. From the bowl the oil was distributed to the lamps on the lampstand.

c. A confession of ignorance (4:13): He replied, Do you not know what these are? No, my lord, I said. The angel again administers a mild rebuke to Zechariah as he did also in v 5. God expects us to understand his revelation.

2. Explanation (4:14): So he said, These are the two sons of oil who stand alongside the Lord of all the earth… Oil (yitsh_r) is not the word (_emen) for the oil used in ritual ordination of priests and kings. It is the word for oil as a staple and a symbol of abundance. The two sons of oil must be Joshua and Zerubbabel. They were the channels through which the divine empowerment will flow to the postexilic community. The text avoids naming individuals so as not to limit the application of this vision to specific personalities. It is doubtful that Zerubbabel ever underwent the ceremony of anointing. Still he was a Davidic prince by ancestral right. The two olive trees then represent the regal and priestly powers. These two offices foreshadow the Messiah who was to be both king and priest.

Stand alongside points to the fact that kings normally sat, servants stood. The civil and priestly representatives were at hand to obey the behest of the King. This is similar to 3:1 where Joshua was depicted standing before the angel of Yahweh. Lord is "dôn, i.e., Sovereign, Ruler. The title Lord of all the earth is used 6x in the OT.

Christians are also both kings and priests. God uses them as his channels through which the oil of the Holy Spirit is conveyed to mankind through the preaching of the gospel (Laetsch). Rev 11:4 is a reference to this passage.

To summarize: the emphasis in this vision is upon the automatic and spontaneous supply of oil for lighting without human agency. The lampstand undoubtedly signifies the people of God. Consider: its value (gold); its design (to give light); its vitality (endless supply of oil). The oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit or grace of God. The seven spouts accentuate the increased supply of oil to make possible an abundance of light.

Vision Six:
Jerusalem Purified
Zechariah 5:1-11

A. What the Prophet Saw (5:1-2):

1. Introductory formula (5:1a): And I returned and I lifted up my eyes and looked and behold… I returned is equivalent to English again, and is so rendered by most versions. Zechariah uses the same introductory formula as in second and third visions (cf. 1:18; 2:1). On the meaning of behold, see on 1:8.

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77 So McComiskey, citing Dt 7:13; 14:23; Neh 5:11.
78 Josh 3:11, 13; Ps 97:5; Mic 4:13; Zech 4:14; 6:5.
2. Observation (5:1b): a flying roll. The scroll (m'gill_h) was not rolled up in a case, but flying like a banner for all to read. The participle indicates continuous action, i.e., the scroll was hovering. The flying scroll suggests not only its speed but its source. The scroll was in the air, suggesting that it was from God. A scroll is the symbol of a message or pronouncement of solemn import from God to man (cf. Ezek 2:9-10).

3. Interrogation (5:2a): He asked me, What do you see? The angel used the same question to introduce the fifth vision (4:2). His purpose is to alert Zechariah to a new vision and help him focus on what he sees. As the prophet answers the angel’s question he reveals the vision to his readers.

4. Response (5:2b): I answered, I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. The scroll was overwhelming and fearful. It was the size of the holy place of the tabernacle (Ex 26:15-25) and porch of the temple (1 Kgs 6:3); but no significance is given to that fact. The main point is that the scroll was large enough to be seen; none could plead ignorance.

B. Contents of the Scroll (5:3-4): The scroll symbolizes the curse (i.e., the punishment) against those who violate God's word. Previous visions had promised divine intervention; but here moral conditions had to be met.

1. God’s curse (5:3a): And he said to me, This is the curse which is about to go out over the face of the whole land. This is the curse (h_l_h) indicates what was written on the scroll. This might refer specifically to the awful catalog of curses which Moses predicted would fall upon Israel because of disobedience (Dt 28:15-68). This catalog is called simply the curse in Dt 30:1. The curse is about to go out, i.e., be set into motion by Yahweh of Hosts.

People in the ancient world were afraid of curses. The curse is the punishment or judgment that falls upon those who violate God’s word (the scroll). The term is used several times in conjunction with covenant (Gn 24:41; 26:28; Dt 29:12; Ezek 16:59 etc.). The Law taught that those who kept
it would prosper; those who broke it would meet with disaster. The scroll
represented the Law with its specific curses on law-breakers within the
covenant family.

Land (‘erets) could be translated earth; but in view of the teaching of this
book concerning national cleansing the former translation is probably correct
(cf. ch 13). God’s word of judgment has a cleansing effect.

2. Subjects of the curse (5:3b-c): The scroll was inscribed on both sides. One
side stipulated punishment against thieves, the other against blasphemers.

a. Thieves (5:3b): for every thief shall be cleansed out (as) from this (side
of the scroll) according to it. The thief represents all engaged in the act
of stealing. Such people will be cleansed out (r. nqh in Niphal) or banished
(NIV), i.e., they would no longer be part of the covenant people, hence cut
off (KJV) from covenant benefits. Violation of the eighth commandment
represents all sins against man. From this (mizzeh) refers to one side of the
scroll.80 Apparently the scroll was written on both sides.

b. Blasphemers (5:3c): and every one who swears (as) from that side
according to it shall be cleansed out. Violation of the third commandment
is representative of all sins against God. The reference is to swearing
falsely, for using Yahweh’s name in oaths was a commendable practice in
the OT. Swearing falsely blasphemed the name of God, for it called on the
Holy One of Israel to sanction a lie. Only those who have been cleansed
from sin can avoid being cleansed out by God’s judgment.

3. Severity of the curse (5:4):

a. Curse dispatched (5:4a): I will cause it to go forth (oracle of Yahweh of
Hosts). This v sets forth the certainty with which God’s judgments shall
finally overtake the wicked. There is no escape. God’s words are often
personified and said to go forth on his errands (Ps 147:15; Isa 55:11). This
is the fourteenth use of the oracle formula in this book. See on 1:3.

b. Curse penetrating (5:4b): and it will come into the house of the thief and
the house of the one who swears to a lie by my name. The transgressor
may think that he is safe within his house. Bolted doors, strong walls, and
locked windows cannot keep out the avenging justice of God. These words
were no doubt an encouragement to those who tried to administer justice
in the postexilic community. Yahweh’s law-curse would consume all that
belonged to these lawbreakers. Swears to a lie recalls the language of Lv
19:12.

c. Curse abiding (5:4c): And it shall abide in the midst of his house… The
curse will not pay sinners a passing visit. It will abide (r. l̄n) or lodge or
spend the night in his house. Yahweh’s curse will completely destroy the
house of the evil doers. The point is that God's word found its way where
the judicial machinery could not go, viz., the privacy of the home.

d. Curse demolishing (5:4d): and shall consume it with the timber thereof
and the stones thereof. This is the climax of the calamities that God’s

80mizzeh has been taken by others to mean from this time (RSV), i.e. henceforth; from this place, the church of
God (Laetsch). The double use of mizzeh in v 3 recalls Ex 32:15 where the same construction is used to
indicate that the two tables of the Ten Commandments were written front and back.
judicial curse will bring upon the house of the wicked. How terrible is the punishment that sin brings down upon itself. The word of God will utterly consume sinners. The language here is virtually identical to that used of the leprous house in Lv 14:45 which also had to be destroyed.

This vision of the flying scroll was meant to be encouragement to the temple builders. The entire nation would not be held accountable for the sins of some or many citizens. God’s promise to make them a kingdom of priests would not be frustrated by the waywardness of the few.

Vision Seven:
Sinners Meet Retribution
Zechariah 5:5-11

A. First Phase (5:5-6):
1. Command (5:5): Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, Lift up now your eyes, and see what this is going out. The interpreting angel came forward, i.e., he drew near to Zechariah. His purpose may have been to underscore the importance of what follows, or to point out more clearly what was emerging on the visionary scene. Lift up now your eyes suggests that the night of visions was exhausting the prophet.
2. Question (5:6a): I asked, What is it? Zechariah probably wanted to know what the vision meant.
3. Identification (5:6b): And he said, This is the ephah that goes forth. The ephah was the largest of the dry measures used in ancient Israel. It was about two-thirds the size of a bushel. A literal ephah could not contain a woman. This ephah may have been enlarged as was the scroll in the preceding vision (Baldwin). Goes forth (participle) may indicate either that the ephah was flying (like the preceding scroll) or about to fly. The participle anticipates the use of the ephah to remove something, as it turns out, wickedness. As in 3:1-5 and 5:1-4 the sin that was hindering the people from accomplishing worthy goals will be removed. Some see regard the ephah as a symbol of godless commercialism; but the ephah may simply be a container used to depict the removal of sin.
4. **Explanation (5:6c):** And he said, This is their eye in all the land. And he said suggests that what follows advances the thought beyond the ephah that was identified in the previous saying. This (zʾt) could refer to the ephah again; but zʾt usually points forward in discourse. It probably refers to what is about to be revealed within the ephah, viz., a woman. Their eye refers to the way they looked, their appearance.\(^{81}\) The reference is to the covenant-breakers of vv 4-5, whom the crouching figure in the ephah represents.

### B. Second Phase (5:7-8):

1. Zechariah observed a lid lifted (5:7a): And behold a lid of lead was lifted up. The lid (lit., “a circle”) of the ephah was raised so that the prophet could see its contents. Here the term refers to a disc or circular plate which formed the cover of the round shaped ephah (Unger). Who or what lifted up the lid is not indicated; its rise is completely mysterious.

2. Zechariah observed a woman in the ephah (5:7b): and this (is) a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. All sin is united and concentrated in this woman. She may represent specifically the lawbreakers of vv 3-4.\(^{82}\) The fact that she was confined in the ephah beneath a heavy lid suggests that God already had taken care of the sin problem of his people.

3. Zechariah hears an explanation of the woman (5:8a): He said, This is Wickedness. Wickedness in Hebrew is a feminine noun, hence it symbolized by a woman. Cf. Rev 17-18 Babylon has both religious and commercial dimensions.

4. Zechariah observed the confinement of the woman (5:8b): and he cast her into the midst of the ephah and pushed the lead cover down over its mouth. Evidently the woman tried to arise from her ephah basket; but is flung back down by the angel. She knows her doom is at hand. The verbs indicate a struggle. Thus wickedness is confined within the ephah.

### C. Third Phase (5:9):

1. Two women appear (5:9a): Then I looked up, and behold there came forth two women and the wind was in their wings, and they had wings like the wings of a stork. Perhaps the sound of beating wings that caused the prophet to look up to the air above the ephah. Behold introduces the unexpected. These two women represent angelic agents of God. Usually in Scripture angels are represented as men. Perhaps here they are depicted as women to balance the representation of wickedness as a woman. The wind could also be translated Spirit. If so, the vision would emphasize that the removal of wickedness was God’s doing (Baldwin). Storks were common in Palestine. They had strong wings. The word for stork also literally means “faithful one.” This may give added significance to this feature.

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\(^{81}\) *This is the iniquity of the people is based (NIV) is based on a slight emendation of the text. This reading is probably not correct because then the woman is twice identified as a personification of evil.*

\(^{82}\) *Unger probably goes too far in suggesting that the woman represents ecclesiastical sin contentedly sitting in the ephah, thus at home in her secular surroundings.*
2. *Ephah is raised (5:9b): and they lifted up the ephah between heaven and earth.* With stork-like wings the two women soared heaven-ward. Obviously they were about to transport the ephah somewhere.

D. **Final Explanation (5:10-11):**

1. **Question of the prophet (5:10):** *And I said unto the angel that was speaking with me, Where are these bearing the ephah?* Zechariah inquires about the final destination of the ephah since it was obviously about to be taken some place.

2. **Explanation of the angel (5:11):**

   a. *Destination (5:11a): And he said unto me, To build for her a house in the land of Shinar...* The angel answers the prophet’s question. The two winged women will build a house for wickedness personified. The house may be a temple (Pusey; Baldwin). Shinar (Babylonia NIV) is the ideal land of unholiness where the world power first reared itself against God. Cf. Gn 10:10 Nimrod's empire; Gn 11:1-9 tower of Babel. The basic thought is that wickedness is removed from Zion. Cf. Ps 103:11-12. Wickedness belongs in a place where idolatry, oppression and cruelty already abide.

   b. *Establishment (5:11b): and it shall be established and they shall set it there upon its base.* Established is Hophal perf. 3ms. The reference is to the house that is built for wickedness personified. *They shall set it* involves a slight but necessary alteration in the vowel points in order to make sense of the v. *Its base* may refer to a pedestal for an idol. The two winged women are the subject of this verb. Wickedness becomes a virtual idol to be worshipped in the land of Shinar, symbol of the lost world (Baldwin). The language has a note of finality. Wickedness is removed permanently.

   In postexilic Judaism the ideal of this prophecy was never realized, as the later invectives of Zechariah and Malachi indicate. The ephah vision anticipated the new covenant where sin is removed from messianic Israel. God can absolutely remove sin because his law is written upon the hearts of all his people (Jer 31:31-34).

**Vision Eight:**

**Action of the Heavenly Patrol**

Zechariah 6:1-8

The eighth and final vision is similar in some respects to the first vision of the series. Colorful horses appear in both, howbeit not of identical colors. The setting of vision one—a valley full of myrtles—is similar to the locale of vision eight—between two mountains. In both cases the horses patrol the earth (1:10; 6:7). The phrase *walking through the earth* appears twice in the first vision, three times in the last vision (1:10-11; 6:6-7).

Vision eight is distinct from the first vision is these respects: The horses in vision one are mounted; those in vision eight are attached to war chariots. The
horses in vision one are standing still; those in eight are in motion. The horses in vision one seem to have been involved in surveillance; those in vision eight execute judgment. The horses in vision one appear to have gone about their business as a group; those in vision eight go in various directions. If vision one emphasizes Yahweh’s awareness of the earthly situation, vision eight underscores his action on the stage of human history.

A. What the Prophet Saw (6:1-3):

1. Transition formula (6:1a): And I returned and I lifted up my eyes and behold… The language introducing the fifth vision is repeated (cf. 5:1).
2. He saw chariots (6:1b):
   a. Their number (6:1b): and there before me were four chariots… Four is the number of universality. Chariots (mark_bhôt) are almost always war chariots. Chariots were the storm troops in ancient warfare. They sometimes symbolize the vast might of Yahweh (Hab 3:8; Isa 66:15). Here they represent God's intervention in international affairs, especially judgment. These four chariots are representative of thousands of chariots that carry out the will of God (Ps 68:17).
   b. Their point of origin (6:1c): going forth from between the two mountains… Going forth (r. yts’) is the first of seven uses of this verb in this vision. The verb frequently has the connotation of going out to confront an adversary, especially in a military sense. Thus Yahweh is not an impotent observer; he is active in pursuing justice on the international scene. The definite article may point to two well known mountains, perhaps Mount Zion and Mount Olivet (Keil; Pusey; Wright). It is better, however, in the light of the following statement about the mountains to view these as symbolic mountains guarding the approaches to the heavenly throne room. The imagery may be taken from the situation of earthly Jerusalem in respect to the above named mountains.
   c. Their heavenly origin (6:1d): mountains of bronze! The mountains that (symbolically) guard the approaches to God’s heavenly throne are imposing and impregnable. The suggestion has been made that the two

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83 Based on their analysis of 1 Kgs 10:29 where the value of a chariot is four times that of a horse, the rabbis concluded that a chariot had a team of four horses.
huge bronze pillars, which stood at the front of Solomon’s temple (1 Kgs 7:13-22), were symbolic representations of these two bronze mountains.

3. He saw horses attached to the chariots (6:2-3): The horses were of various colors as in vision one. It is not clear whether these colors have special significance, or are simply used to designate the various groups of God’s agents.

a. First chariot (6:2a): Hitched to the first chariot were red horses... The preposition beth on the word chariot indicates accompaniment, i.e., the red horses were hitched to the chariot. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the chariots are in immediate readiness to execute the judgment. Some of the horses in vision one were also red (‘ed_m). Red horses are perhaps symbolic of war and bloodshed. Cf. Rev 6:4.

b. Second chariot (6:2b): hitched to the second were black [horses]... Black (sh_ch_r) may be symbolic of famine and death. Cf. Rev 6:5-6.

c. Third chariot (6:3a): hitched to the third were white [horses]... White (l_bh_n) is symbolic of victory and triumph. Rev 6:2.

d. Fourth chariot (6:3b): and hitched to the fourth were spotted [horses. The horses were] strong. These horses perhaps are symbolic of plagues. Rev 6:8. The word strong dangles at the end of the clause. Its exact significance in relation to spotted is unclear. Strong might accentuate the spottedness of the horses, or be descriptive of their physical strength. If the latter, it is not clear why the strength of these particular horses is mentioned. In the light of the use of the same term in v 7, NIV is probably correct to take the adjective strong as descriptive of all the horses in the vision not just those hitched to the fourth chariot.

B. Vision Explained (6:4-5):

1. Zechariah’s request (6:4): I answered and said to the angel who was speaking to me, What are these, my lord? Zechariah requests an explanation. In visions 1, 2 and 5 Zechariah asked this same question (1:9, 19; 4:4). Five times Zechariah addressed the interpreting angel with respect as my lord.

2. General explanation (6:5):

a. Identification (6:5a): The angel answered me, These are the four winds of heaven... The angel used a symbol to explain a symbol. Winds (ruch_t) are frequently used in OT as a symbol for divine activity. Winds could also be rendered spirits of heaven. So there is a marvelous ambiguity in the word. Are they literal winds? More likely they are angelic beings (Unger) who go forth with the swiftness of the winds in willing obedience to the Creator (Ps 103:20-21; 104:4).

b. Anticipation (6:5b): which are about to go forth... About to forth renders a participle that suggests imminent action. Initially Zechariah saw the

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84Mason, CNEB, 59; Baldwin, TOTC, 131. Others think that the two mountains represent Mt. Zion and the Mount of Olives. Thus God’s judgments on the world go forth from Jerusalem. In support of this view Baron observes that the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which lies between these two mountains, is also associated with God’s judgment on the nations.

angelic chariots before their mission. The prophet will speak in v 7 of the
eagerness of the horses to begin their mission.

c. **Location (6:5c): from standing before the Lord of all the earth.** This
phrase seems to confirm the interpretation of "angels." Servants always
stood in the presence of the king they served. On the Lord of all the earth,
see on 4:14.

C. **Vision is Amplified (6:6-8):**

1. **Initial chariot jurisdictions (6:6):**

a. **Black-horse chariot (6:6a): [As for] the one with the black horses [they]
were about to go forth to the land of the north...** The v begins with the
one (’ash_r), obviously referring to one of the chariots. The construction
is unusual, but not without precedent. With (lit. “on it”) is the preposition
beth + the 3fs suff. referring back to the word chariot in v 3. This
construction emphasizes the connection between each team of horses and
a chariot.

Again the participle indicates imminent action as in the previous v.
The participle is plural, referring to the horses. The pronoun for this
participle must be supplied. Throughout Israel’s history the north was
the ominous direction from which most of the conquering nations
attacked. The north probably should not be limited to Mesopotamia or
Persia (cf. Jer 46:10; 50:9). In Jeremiah the land of the north refers to the
lands of the exile (e.g., Jer 3:18) or the direction from which Israel’s
enemies attack (Jer 10:22).

b. **White-horse chariot (6:6b): and the white will certainly go forth after
them.** Will certainly go forth is perfect, which following a participle has a
future orientation and connotes the certainty of the departure. The chariots
do not actually depart until v 7. After them (lit., “to/at the rear of them”)
indicates both direction and sequence. Two chariots were dispatched to the
north to symbolize a double blow against the ancient enemies of Israel
(Babylon and Assyria?).

c. **Dappled-horse chariot (6:6c): and the spotted will certainly go forth unto
the land of the south.** The verb (r vets’) in the perfect is repeated from the
previous clause with similar connotation. Land of the south points in the
direction of Egypt, Israel’s traditional enemy. North and south are
highlighted in this vision because those were the two main concerns of the
postexilic community.

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86McComiskey points out several similar usages of the particle ’ash_r in Jeremiah (14:1; 46:1; 47:1; 49:34).
87There is no need to emend the text as in NRSV; NEB, JB.
88OT frequently uses a participle with an unexpressed pronoun when the pronoun’s referent is clearly
indicated by the context.
89The NIV follows a slight emendation of after them (’achh_r_hem) and reads toward the west (’achh_r_
hayy_m). This understanding involves the addition of one Hebrew consonant (cf. NEB, NRSV, NJB, TEV). Such
an emendation is totally unnecessary.
89After them could also simply indicate sequence, i.e., the white-horse chariot went out after the black-horse
chariot, but perhaps in a different direction.
What happened to the red-horse chariot mentioned in v 2? Perhaps the red horses were held in reserve until judgment had been executed on the land of the north and south.\(^{90}\)

Why are east and west omitted? Palestine is bordered on the west by sea and on the east on desert. Any judgment on the world would have to depart north-south.

2. Preparation for departure (6:7):
   a. Positioning (6:7a): and as for the strong ones, they came forward. Strong ones (h. \(^{91}\)mutsim) stands first in the clause to highlight a new development in the scene. The term seems to be a reference to all of the horses of whatever color.\(^{91}\) Came forth is again the r. yts’, but in this new clause the perfect has its regular connotation of completed action. In preparation for departure the horse-drawn chariots came forth from their previous position of standing before the Lord of all the earth (v 5).
   b. Eagerness (6:7b): And they sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth. They sought to go in NIV is “they were straining to go,” i.e., the horses pawed the ground and strained at their harnesses until the command was given. The reference is probably to all the horses (Unger) not just the strong horses. The agents of the Lord are anxious to carry out their ultimate mission, viz., the suppression of all enemies of God’s people. To walk to and fro through the earth is to patrol the earth with a view to suppressing all opposition to God’s program.
   c. Order (6:7c): and he said, Go! Go to and fro in the earth. The Lord of all the earth is the speaker. At the proper moment he unleashes his heavenly warriors to do battle with his enemies upon the earth. The basic lesson is that from first to last the affairs of nations are under God’s directions, not man’s.

3. Divine declaration (6:8): Then he cried out to me and said unto me, Look, those going toward the north have quieted my Spirit in the land of the north. Cried out may indicate that the interpreting angel shouts to the prophet so as to be heard over the roar of the thundering hoofs of the horses. On the other hand, the shouting may indicate the good news which he is about to announce. The angel is apparently speaking directly for the Lord of all the earth. Those going toward the north refers to the black and white horse chariots. My spirit refers to the angel of Yahweh; but he is closely related to Yahweh. Quieted my spirit is an idiom meaning, to cause God's anger to cease.\(^{92}\) Cf. Judg 8:3. "Victory is proclaimed in the turbulent north country, and if there, then by inference victory has been achieved over every foe" (Baldwin).

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\(^{90}\)Another possibility is that two different chariots go south just like two go north. Perhaps the strong horses are the red horses mentioned earlier. Leupold sees five chariots here. Baldwin unnecessarily adds a clause to account for the missing red horses: The red horses went towards the east country.

\(^{91}\)Some think this clause should be read as the concluding clause of v 6 which could then be read “even the strong ones went out.” This would mean that the strong and the spotted horses were the same.

\(^{92}\)The verb can also mean “to settle down on” (Ezek 5:13). The idea would then be that the spirit of Yahweh is present and active in the very center of world power.
SYMBOLIC CORONATION
Zechariah 6:9-15

A. Historical Event (6:9-11):

1. Divine directive (6:9): The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: On the meaning of this formula see on 4:8. The prophet uses this standard prophetic formula to indicate that the series of visions is now at an end.

2. Zechariah to receive an offering (6:10):
   a. Action prescribed (6:10a): Take (offerings) from (them of) the captivity... Babylonian Jews were accustomed to sending gifts to the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah was told to take these offerings because normally the offerings would be given to temple personnel. This is the first of two action parables performed by Zechariah during his ministry.
   b. Visitors named (6:10b): from Heldai, from Tobijah, and Yedaiah who have come from Babylon. These are the names of individuals who headed the delegation from Babylon. These three names express a relationship to Yahweh. Thus one would assume they were men of faith. This delegation probably arrived in Jerusalem on the very morning after the night of visions.
   c. Location indicated (6:10c): you go that day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. That day suggests the prophet was to go the same day, i.e., at once. There was urgency in this mission. Since Joshua the high priest was found in the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah it is possible that Josiah was a ranking priest who, along with Joshua, lived in the temple precincts. Josiah is called Hen (Gracious) in v 14.

2. Zechariah to fashion crowns (6:11a): And take silver and gold and make a crown. The offering of the visitors was in the form of gold and silver. Crown is lit., “crowns,” a reading confirmed by the Greek and Latin versions. The ancient Syriac version, however, has a singular. Unger unnecessarily insists on emending the Hebrew plural to the singular. More likely the plural indicates a composite crown. Eastern crowns were circlets which could be worn singly or fitted together to make a composite crown (Baldwin). Cf. Rev 19:12. So the plural crowns could be a plural of excellence; or even a Phoenician singular.93 This word for crown (םַחְתָּן) is the one used for a crown of royalty. What most probably is meant is a single crown consisting of a number of gold and silver twists or circlets woven together.

3. Zechariah to place the crown on Joshua (6:11b): and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak... Under OT laws Joshua could not wear a royal crown. Thus the act must be typical of priestly kingship (Heb 7:1-3; Ps 110:4). Liberals insist that originally a crown was placed on the head of the prince Zerubbabel. For this there is no support in the text. To have placed a crown on the head of Zerubbabel would have been misleading, pointing to the reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom. There was a rigid distinction between kingly and priestly offices in the OT, the one confined to

93So Baldwin calling attention to a comment by Kidner's on Prov 1:20; 9:1; 14:1. The plural מַחְתָּן is used in Job 31:36 for one crown.
the house of David, the other to the house of Aaron. Cf. Uzziah's attempted intrusion in 2 Chr 26:16-21.

The crowning of Joshua the high priest is richly symbolic. Joshua is to be regarded as a typical person (cf. 3:8). He, as a priest, could not have served as king. He was a type of Christ in whom the two dignities of priesthood and kingship were to be united.

B. Messianic Significance of the Event (6:12-13):

1. 

**Promise of Messiah (6:12a):** And say unto him, Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: Behold, a man! As Zechariah crowns Joshua he is to say these words to him. On Yahweh of Hosts see on 1:3. On the meaning of behold see on 1:8. The words explain the significance of the crowning. The action points to a man, not this particular man as would have been suggested had Zechariah spoken of the man. The one to whom God calls attention is the man par excellence—the ideal representative of the human race—the One who after wearing the crown of thorns is crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:9). This dramatic “behold” statement recalls three other such statements that introduce the same wonderful figure in other aspects of his character: “Behold my Servant” (Isa 42:1; 52:13; “Behold your King” (Zech 9:9), “Behold your God” (Isa 40:9).

2. 

**Name of Messiah (6:12b):** Shoot is his name and from his place he will shoot up. The man symbolized by the newly crowned Joshua is called Shoot (Branch in most English versions). Shoot (tsemach) was used in 3:8 for the Messiah. Zechariah builds on Jeremiah’s theology of the coming royal Davidic Shoot (Jer 23:5; 33:15; cf. Isa 11:1). The title Shoot denotes the lowly origins of this coming ruler.

The Shoot will shoot up. This indicates the obscurity of his origin. He will come where there is little promise of new life--like a root out of dry ground (Isa 53:2). From his place is lit., “from under him,” i.e., from his own root. As to race and nationality he will be of the seed of the Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David and of the line of Zerubbabel. Geographically, he shall spring forth in Immanuel’s land, out of Bethlehem Ephratha (Baron).

If Zerubbabel the Davidic descendant entertained any thought of being restored to the throne (there is no indication that he did) those hopes were crushed by this symbolic action. Zion’s future king will have priestly office as well as Davidic ancestry. During the intertestamental period the Hasmonean dynasty of priest-kings arose in Judea; but they were not of the Davidic line. Only Jesus of Nazareth fills out the requirements of the symbolism of this passage.

3. 

**Work of Messiah (6:12b-13a):** and he will build the temple of Yahweh. Yes, he himself shall build the temple of Yahweh. The reference is not to the temple which was then in process of construction. This prophetic temple is to be built by a future Davidic priest-king while the present temple was to be finished by Zerubbabel (4:9). The reference must be to a greater temple of the future, the spiritual temple of the new covenant age depicted in great symbolic detail by Ezekiel. That temple is a present reality (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5).
The repetition of the promise functions to underscore certainty. It is also a device to distinguish between he Joshua and he the Shoot, as well as between the contemporary temple and the one to come (Baldwin). The announcement of a coming ruler who would build God’s temple served as encouragement to the current temple builders Zerubbabel and Joshua in two ways. First, they were encouraged to know that the current somewhat humble temple effort was a type and pledge of the greater temple to come. Second, Zerubbabel and Joshua were honored to realized that in their respective offices they foreshadowed the greater Builder of the future.

4. **Glory of Messiah (6:13b): and he himself shall bear the glory.** The pronoun in Hebrew is again emphatic, i.e., he and no other. The word glory (h_d) is used 23x in OT. It is used almost most frequently divine splendor (12x) or splendor bestowed by God on persons or things. The term is used of the messianic king in Ps 45:4. Christ will bear the regal majesty as none other has borne it. His is the glory of the only begotten of the Father (Jn 1:14; Heb 2:9).

5. **Offices of Messiah (6:13c):**
   a. **Kingly office (6:13c): and he will sit and rule on his throne.** The Shoot will sit...on his throne. He possesses the dignity and honor of royalty for he is the rightful monarch. David prophesied that God “would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (Acts 2:30). The angel said concerning Mary’s child: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David” (Lk 1:32). Not only will he occupy the throne as rightful monarch, he will actually rule, i.e., he will exercise all royal power and authority. His rule is autocratic and absolute. His blessed rule will result in the most wonderful blessing for the righteous (Ps 72).

   b. **Priestly office (6:13d): and he will be a priest on his throne.** This significant sentence is only four words in the Hebrew, but they effectively summarize in large measure the messianic expectation that was gradually revealed through the former prophets. The Shoot will be a royal priest, the greater Melchizedek of Ps 110. This statement builds on Jer 33:15 where the term Shoot is used in a context where kingly and priestly functions merge. Christ exercises his high priestly office as the Advocate with the Father (Jn 2:1), the only Mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). It is this royal priest that has compassion upon the ignorant and erring (Heb 5:2).

   c. **Perfect harmony (6:13e): and peaceful counsel shall be between the two of them.** Peaceful counsel is counsel planning or procuring peace. Between the two of them is difficult. Some believe that the reference is to the concord existing between the offices of priest and king. Only when the two offices are united in one person can be total harmony between them. Cf. 1 Tim 6:15; Heb 8:1; Rev 19:16. A less popular view, but one with much to commend it, is that the peaceful counsel is between Messiah and Yahweh, i.e., between the Son and the Father. In favor of this second view

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94E.g., Moses and Joshua (Nm 27:20), kings like Solomon (1 Chr 29:25), olive trees (Hos 14:6), a battle horse (Job 39:20).
are the following considerations. First, the phraseology two of them points in the direction of persons, not things or abstract offices. Second, only two persons are mentioned in this v, viz., Yahweh and Yahweh’s Christ. Third, communication between Yahweh and his Christ is plainly referred to in Ps 110 where Messiah is also depicted as both king and priest. The will of the Father and the Son is one. Both have as their focus the salvation of the world resulting in peace through our redemption (Eph 2:14, 16, 17).

C. Memorial to the Event (6:14):
1. Persons honored (6:14a): The crown shall be for Helem, Tobijah, Jedahiah and Hen son of Zephaniah… The crown was not a gift to Joshua; it was merely a prop in a symbolic act. It was temple property which now would serve another function. Helem (strength) appears to be a new name bestowed on Heldai (mole). He may have preferred the more dignified name for official purposes; or his generosity is being rewarded by use of an elevated name. Hen (grace) is substituted for Josiah the gracious soul in whose house the symbolic act was conducted. He may also have provided lodging for the three who had returned from exile.
2. Place for the memorial (6:14b): a memorial in the temple of Yahweh. The crown in the temple served two purposes. First, it served as a memorial to the generosity and kindness of the three visitors from Babylon and the local resident who opened his home to them. A memorial (zikk rôn) is an object designed to recall an event. Second, the crown was a pledge of the coming of Messiah and the building of an even greater temple. According to Jewish tradition the crown was hung in the windows in the height of the temple.

D. Final Messianic Note (6:15).
1. Conversion of Gentiles (6:15a): And those afar shall come and build in the house of Yahweh. These words explain the significance of the three guests from distant Babylon in the symbolism of Joshua’s crowning. There is no reason to limit those afar to Jews remaining in the lands of exile. As early as Isaiah there was a strong current of prophetic thought that envisioned Gentiles coming to Zion. So here it is best to interpret those afar as Gentiles who will bring their gifts to the temple that Shoot will build (cf. 2:11). Both Peter and Paul speak about those from afar who became part of Messiah’s kingdom (Acts 2:39; Eph 2:13). The house of Yahweh is not the temple currently under construction, for it was well on its way to completion. This house (temple) of Yahweh is the kingdom over which the Shoot will rule (cf. Hag 2:6). The Gentiles will build in the temple, but the Lord will be the builder.
2. Vindication of God’s word (6:15b): And you shall know that Yahweh has sent me unto you. The recognition formula is used for the fourth and final time in the book (cf. 2:9, 11; 4:9). The fulfillment of the messianic predictions regarding the union of Jews and Gentiles in the messianic kingdom will confirm the role of the angel of Yahweh as representative of Yahweh.
3. Condition of experience (6:15c): and it shall come to pass if you diligently hearken to the voice of Yahweh your God. The thought is similar to Dt 38:1.
These words do not say that the coming of Messiah is conditional upon the obedience of the Judeans. The idea is that individuals will not be able to share in the glories of the messianic age unless they faithfully obey the commandments of the Lord. Unbelieving Jews will not be part of the glorious future temple-building effort with converted Gentiles. The Shoot will preside over a house, temple or kingdom of Jews and Gentiles truly converted and devoted to him.

PART TWO
MESSAGES AFTER TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION
Zechariah 7-14

According to Klein, the second diptych of the book begins here. This section consists of two “burdens” with a lengthy introduction prefixed. The gist of these chs is set forth concisely in 8:11, viz., Yahweh will no longer deal with his people as he had done in the past.

Introduction to Part Two
Zechariah 7-8

A concrete event triggered Zechariah’s most poetic and dramatic revelation concerning the distant future of God’s people. The similarities between this introductory section and the six vv that introduce the first diptych were pointed out in the discussion of the structure of Zechariah in the introduction. There are also a number of similarities between the previous episode (6:9-15) and the present section.95

A. Circumstances (7:1-14):

1. Date (7:1): In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month the month of Kislev. On the modern calendar the date of this episode is December 4, 518 BC. This is nearly two years after the night visions. The temple reconstruction effort is about at its mid point. Outside of Jerusalem some Jews had leisure to engage in religious disputation. Questions were being raised about how the community would be affected by the completion of the temple.

2. Question (7:2-3):
   a. Arrival of a delegation (7:2):

95R. Smith (WBC, 22). These similarities include: 1) a delegation coming to Jerusalem; 2) difficulties concerning the names of the visitors; 3) assurance that the temple will be rebuilt (6:12; 8:3, 9); 4) stress on obeying God’s voice (6:15c; 7:8-14; 8:16); 5) the vision of Gentiles coming to Zion to share in the blessing of the messianic age.
aa. Delegates (7:2a): Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with his men...96 The leaders of the Bethel community had selected certain men to convey their query to the national religious leaders in Jerusalem. The two leaders of the delegation are named.97 Sharezer is a Babylonian name meaning protect the king.98 Regem-Melech means friend of the king.99 The foreign names suggest that these two men may once have occupied positions of prominence in the courts of Assyria or Babylon. Perhaps like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego these two men also possessed proper Hebrew names (Dan 1:6).

bb. Purpose (7:2b): to entreat the face of Yahweh. The phrase lit., means “to stroke the face,” hence “to mollify, appease, entreat the favor.” It is used of entreating the favor of the rich with gifts (e.g., Job 11:19); but is used 12x of God. When used of God the phrase is anthropomorphic. One entreats the favor of Yahweh through gifts and offerings. The language hints that the inquirers anticipated a favorable response to their request to be relieved from annual fasts.

b. Authorities questioned (7:3a): by asking the priests that were at the house of Yahweh of Hosts and the prophets... The priests were the logical group to whom to address a question about ritual. Priests were experts in the Law of Moses (Dt 33:8-10; Mal 2:5-7). The prophets were those who might make known a revelation from heaven on points where the Law was not crystal clear. In the postexilic community the hostility that often characterized the relationship between priests and prophets disappeared. In particular the prophets Haggai and Zechariah may be intended, for they were the most influential prophets of this period.

c. Question posed (7:3b): Shall I weep in the fifth month being separated as I have done these—how many years? The town of Bethel is personified and speaks as a single person (Unger). Weep points to the ritual lamentation of a fast day. Fasts over national calamities were not God-ordained. There were periodic calls for national fasting, but these were not intended to be annual occurrences. The Day of Atonement was the only annual fast. Being separated (r. nzr in Niphal) or “separating myself” is the same root used of the Nazarite vow in which a person took a vow of abstinence from strong drink and other bodily indulgences.

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96 Other translations of the v: Bethel-Sharezer sent (Baldwin); Sharezer and Regem-melech sent to the house of God. Baldwin understands the delegation to have come from Babylon, not Bethel. Personal names with Bethel as a constituent appear in the Babylonian texts of this period. But v 5 seems to make the resolution of the question a matter of concern to Palestinian rather than Babylonian Jews.

97 So most English versions. McComiskey argues that the two individuals named are in apposition with Bethel, hence were senders, not sendees.

98 Sharezer was the name of one of the parricide sons of Sennacherib (Isa 37:38). The full name was Nergal-Sharezer, with Nergal being a Mesopotamian god. One of the princes of Babylon who desolated Jerusalem was named Nergal-Sharezer (Jer 39:3-13). It appears that the delegate from Bethel had dropped the name of the false god from his personal name.

99 Regem is found as a proper name in 1 Chr 2:47.
The fast of the fifth month commemorated the destruction of the temple (2 Kgs 25:8-9).\textsuperscript{100} Among the exiles in Babylon that day had become a day of fasting. Now, however, the temple was nearing completion. Was it necessary to continue to mark the day of the temple’s destruction after the place had been rebuilt? One might judge this question to be sincere were it not for the way the petitioners refer to the length of time they had observed the fast. The wording betrays weariness with the privations imposed by the fast.

B. First Response: A More Basic Issue (7:4-7):

1. Reception of divine revelation (7:4): \textit{Then the word of Yahweh of Hosts came to me}: Zechariah was led by the Holy Spirit to speak yet another word on behalf of Yahweh.

2. First rhetorical question (7:5):
   a. Those to whom the question is directed (7:4-5a): \textit{Say unto all the people of the land and the priests, saying ...} The question raised by the Bethelites had implications for the entire population—\textit{the people of the land}.\textsuperscript{101} Zechariah can authoritatively speak to the priests on the subject at hand because he received direct communication from Yahweh.

   b. Question itself (7:5b): \textit{When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months even these seventy years, did you at all fast unto me, even me?} Yahweh’s word came in the form of a counter question to the inquirers. The answer demolishes the mistaken notion that fasting in itself is a meritorious work. The prophet begins with an acknowledgment that the fasting by the remnant was real, that it was intense, and that it was a custom of long duration (seventy years). Not only had they abstained from food from sun up to sun set as was customary in fasts, they had \textit{mourned} (r. spd) during that day. This word is used for mourning over the dead or over great public calamities. The linkage between fasting and (ritual) weeping is frequent in OT.\textsuperscript{102}

   Not only did the remnant fast in the fifth month (see v 3), they observed a similar fast in the \textit{seventh month}. The fast of the seventh month commemorated the death of Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25:25), the governor for a few months after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. \textit{Even seventy years} indicates that the fasts began to be observed immediately after the fall of Jerusalem. They had been observed for almost seven decades.

\textsuperscript{100}This fast is commemorated by Jews to this day on the ninth day of Ab (July/August). Jewish legend suggests three other disasters that fell on the same day of the month; 1) the decree of Yahweh in the wilderness that his people would not be permitted to enter Canaan; 2) the destruction of the second temple by the Romans; 3) city of Bethlar fell to the Romans in the Bar Cochba revolt; 4) Bar Cochba himself, whom many thought to be Messiah, fell into the hands of the Romans; and 5) Turnus Rufus ploughed up the temple mount.

\textsuperscript{101}The phrase \textit{people of the land} is used over 60x in the OT with various meanings: 1) the indigenous people of a land (e.g., Gn 23:7); 2) the entire population of a country (Lv 20:1, 4); 3) property owners of Israel who were instrumental in the nation’s political life (e.g., 2 Kgs 11:18); 4) the peoples surrounding postexilic Judea (Ezra 4:4).

\textsuperscript{102}Judg 20:26; 1 Sam 1:7; 2 Sam 1:12; Ezra 10:1; Neh 1:4, etc.
In spite of the faithful observance of their fast days, the effort was totally in vain. Did you at all fast unto me, even me? indicates that the fasts were man-made. They were not being observed to please the Lord. Their fasts were man-centered, not God-centered. The fasts expressed sorrow for their national misfortunes, but not for the sin that brought on those misfortunes. The question probes the motives for their fasting.

3. Second rhetorical question (7:6): And when you eat, and when you drink do you not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? This question, like a surgeon’s scalpel, exposes a serious cancer in the attitude of the Bethel citizens. Even in their celebratory feasts these people gave no thought to God. They did not recognize him as the provider of their daily bread. These people were indifferent to God in all aspects of their lives.

4. Third rhetorical question (7:7): Are not these the things that Yahweh cried by the former prophets when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, and the Negev and the Shephelah were inhabited? Far more important than whether they continued with their man-made fasts was the issue of whether or not this people finally would listen to the word of God. The former prophets are those who preached prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. What God had to say to the pre-exilic generation still applied. The implication is that the Jews lost their prosperity and land by failing to listen to those prophets. The theme of the rejection of previous prophetic voices is a theme taken up from Jeremiah. Reference to the preaching of the former prophets is relevant in the present situation because those great preachers had practically nothing to say about fasting! Fasting was not the foremost concern of Yahweh (but cf. Isa 58:1-9).

The three geographical regions of ancient Judah are named in this v. The Negev is the southern region of Judah which extended as far as Beersheba (Josh 15:21). The Shephelah is the region of rolling hills on the western side of Judah. Jerusalem and the cities round about refer to the third geographical region of Judah, viz., the hill country.

C. Second Message: Focus on God’s Word (7:8-14):

1. Claim of divine revelation (7:8-9a): And the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah: Thus says Yahweh of Hosts, saying: The second message begins with a claim of divine revelation, but this time Zechariah speaks in the third person (cf. 7:4). The reception of the divine revelation was translated immediately into a message for the people. The messenger formula, last used in 3:7, is now used for the seventh time. See on 1:3.

2. Summary of the divine word (7:9b-10): For the biblical prophets social justice was a requirement, not as an end in itself, but as an expression of submission to the rule of Yahweh.
   a. Just judgments (7:9b): With true judgment, judge... Yahweh always had required fairness in the courts. Judgments were to be rendered without

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103 Other views: the eating and drinking in v 5 refers to regular meals; or perhaps the fasts mentioned in this ch were not total, i.e., some food and drink was permitted.
partiality or bias. These words echo Jer 5:28. This admonition is not aimed at the public in general, but at those in positions of authority who had the fate of the poor in their hands. True judgment refers to legal decisions that accord with facts, not twisted decisions rendered for illicit gain.

b. **Compassion (7:9c): With kindness and abundant mercy deal each man with his brother.** Their personal dealings with one another were to be marked by kindness. *Kindness* (chesed) is the only use of an important OT word in Zechariah. The term is about as close as the OT comes to the NT concept of *agape* love. Abundant mercy in the Hebrew is a single word in the plural of abundance. A *brother* is a fellow citizen.

c. **No oppression (7:10a): Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.** These are the four categories of disadvantaged people that appear often in the Law. The first three are regularly grouped in Dt. The *widow* (alm_n_i) has no husband (and probably no son) to take her part. The *fatherless* (y_t_m) has no parents to love and care for him. The *alien* (g_r) has no country to protect him. The rough economic times may have necessitated the listing of the *poor* (m_i) among the oppressed. These folks had no money to purchase life’s basic necessities. Furthermore, human law does not require merchants to dispense goods without compensation. God expected his people, however, to live by a higher standard of compassion.

d. **Guilelessness (7:10b): In your hearts do not think evil of each other.** Here Zechariah literally gets to the heart of the matter. Outward conduct reflects inner values. In this way social justice is a reflection of true piety. So the prophets admonished Israelites not to plot or devise evil. God’s Law forbids even a thought of revenge or injury against a brother. Cf. Jer 5:26; 6:13.

3. **Prior attitude toward God’s word (7:11-12a).**

a. **Deliberately rejected (7:11a): But they refused to pay attention.** Pay attention (r q_b Hiphil inf. const.) is the same verb used in 1:4 to describe how the previous generation had responded to the proclamation of the former prophets.

b. **Stubbornly resisted (7:11b): stubbornly they turned their backs...** like an ox that refuses to have the yoke put on its neck. Cf. Neh 9:29; Hos 4:16.

c. **Actively opposed (7:11c): and made their ears heavy.** Isaiah was told that his preaching would make the ears of the people heavy so they could not hear (Isa 6:10). The term *heavy* or hard (r kbd) is also used 6x of the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart (e.g., Ex 7:14).

d. **Hardened hearts (7:12a): Yea, they made their hearts as a diamond, lest they should hear the Law and the words which Yahweh of Hosts had sent by his Spirit by the former prophets.** Their heart was hard like a stone that could receive no cutting or engraving (sh_mîr). Probably the diamond is in view. Authoritatively on the same level as the Law of Moses

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105Dt 14:29; 16:11, 14; 24:19, 20-21, 26:12-13; 27:19.
106The term *sh_mîr* is used 3x in the OT, in each case in reference to the hardness of the hearts of the people of God (cf. Jer 17:1; Ezek 3:9).
were the prophets. The former prophets spoke words that were inspired by God’s Spirit. This is a clear statement of inspiration. Cf. Mic 3:8. Former prophets include both literary and non-literary prophets.

4. Result of disobeying God’s word (7:12b-14):
   a. They incurred the wrath of God (7:12b): **Therefore there came great wrath from Yahweh of Hosts.** Disobedience always stirs God's wrath (qetseph). The word literally means “outburst.” This is the third usage of the term in the book (cf. 1:2, 15).
   b. They experienced unanswered prayer (7:13): **And it came to pass that, as he cried, and they would not hear so they will cry, and I will not hear says Yahweh of Hosts.** The pre-exilic prophets cried out, but the Judeans did not listen. Some take the he to refer to Yahweh. During the period of the great wrath (v 12)—the seventy years—God did not answer prayer. This is one of the ways that Zechariah saw the wrath of God manifested. Verb tenses change in the middle of this v.\(^\text{107}\) Apparently Zechariah is referring to his own time. Fasting and temple-building will not gain access to the ear of God apart from daily obedience to his word. On Yahweh of Hosts, see on 1:3.
   c. They were scattered in foreign lands (7:14a): **that I might scatter them\(^\text{108}\) among all the nations that they did not know.** Exile is another way in which the wrath of God expresses itself. If this is future (as the standard text reads) then what happened in the past was a sign of what shall befall them in the future in punishment of similar obduracy (Deane). Scattered (r. s ‘r Piel impf 1cs + 3rd mp suff.) means to toss about (by whirlwind); BDB renders it “storm them away” (cf. NIV). Nations that they did not know are foreign nations whose gods and/or language were unknown to the Israelites.\(^\text{108}\)
   d. They caused their land to become desolate (7:14b): **And the land was made desolate after them from passing over and returning for they made the pleasant land a desolation.** This is the third, and perhaps worst, manifestation of the wrath of God. After the Judeans were carried away captive their land was made desolate. From passing over and returning indicates that the land was deprived of travelers. The text does not mean that no one could travel over the land, only that they had no desire to do so. By their stubborn disobedience to God’s word the guilty fathers were responsible for the desolation of the land of Canaan.

D. **Third Message: Potential for Blessing (8:1-17):** In ch 8 there is a Decalogue of promises each beginning with the words thus says Yahweh of Hosts. All ten promises made to Zion come from the Lord himself.

\(^\text{107}\)The tense change is not recognized in NASB or NIV.

\(^\text{108}\)A small adjustment of vowel pointing of the initial vav yields a more understandable and I scattered them.

\(^\text{108}\)The phrase is connected with foreign gods in the following passages: Dt 11:28; 13:2, 7, 13; 28:26; 32:17; Jer 16:13. It seems to be equivalent to “strange gods” (Ps 44:20; 81:9; Isa 43:12; Jer 5:19; Dan 11:39; Mal 2:4) and “strange tongue” (Ps 114:1; Ezek 3:5, 6).
1. Revelation claim (8:1-2a): And the word of Yahweh of Hosts came, saying, Thus says Yahweh of Hosts ... The introduction to the third message is identical to that of the second except that Zechariah is missing here. On Yahweh of Hosts, see on 1:3.

2. Promise #1: Yahweh's zeal for Jerusalem (8:2b-c):
   a. Initial declaration (8:2b): I am zealous for Zion with great zealousness. This strong affirmation echoes the assurances of the angel of Yahweh in 1:14-15. Apparently the postexilic community still doubted Yahweh's commitment to them as much as they did at the outset of Zechariah's ministry. Although the temple work was continuing apace, still the economic hard times continued. The discouragement of the Judeans continued. In Hebrew the same word (qin’ h) means zealous or jealous. The word suggests intolerance of all rivals. Yahweh is often represented as a jealous God in the OT.  
   b. Declaration reinforced (8:2c): Yea, with great fury I am zealous for her. Yahweh's zealous good will toward his people is so intense that it burns with fury against their enemies. One side of God's love for Zion is shown in the punishment of Zion's enemies.

3. Promise #2: Yahweh's Return to Zion (8:3):
   a. Declaration of Yahweh's return (8:3a): This is what the LORD says: I have returned unto Zion. This promise echoes the words of 1:16 and 2:10. Yahweh had deserted the city prior to the Babylonian conquest (Ezek 10:18; 11:23). But now the restoration of the exiles, the rebuilding of the temple, and the voice of prophecy showed that God had returned to Jerusalem. The theme of Yahweh’s return to Jerusalem is also developed in Ezekiel 43:1-5 and Hag 1:8.
   b. Declaration of Yahweh’s presence (8:3b): And will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. The line of thought parallels 2:9-10 where the enemies are plundered and God dwells in the midst of his people. Dwell (r shkn) means to “settle down, abide, remain.” This is the same word used of Yahweh’s abode among his people in the Wilderness Period (Ex 25:8; 29:45; etc.).
   c. Result of Yahweh's return (8:3c):
      aa. New name for Jerusalem (8:3d): Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth. On the significance of this name see Zeph 3:13. In OT times the temple in Jerusalem was the center for instruction by the priests about the Law of God. Most of the great prophets of God had walked the streets of this city announcing current revelations from God. In Zechariah’s day Jerusalem was still in ruins. This prophet, however, foresaw a day in which Jerusalem would again be the center

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110 He is called a jealous God at least 7x. Yahweh is said to have manifested jealous anger in a number of passages, e.g., Dt 29:20-28; Ezek 5:13; 16:38, 42; 23:25.
111 Unger points out the devices used in this passage to underscore Yahweh's undying love for Israel: (1) by divine revelation (v 1); (2) the repetition of the divine appellation Yahweh of Hosts; (3) by the extremely emphatic assertion I am jealous which is a present perfect. The word denotes arduous, zealous passion; (4) by the use of the cognate accusative with great jealousy; (5) by use of the adjective with the cognate accusative; (6) by the use of the uncognate accusative strengthened by the adjective great, i.e., "with great heat, i.e., anger, wrath; (7) by the repetition of the verb jealous; (8) by repetition of the object of the fierce love.
for disseminating the truth about the one true and living God and his expectations for man.\textsuperscript{112} Renaming a person or place in biblical times signaled a change of status.\textsuperscript{113} \textit{City of Truth} could also be rendered “Faithful City.” Whereas Jerusalem once had been unfaithful, now she would be faithful.

\textit{bb. New name for Zion (8:3e): The mountain of Yahweh of Hosts [shall be called] the holy mountain.} The mountain of Yahweh is Zion, one of the prominent hills of Jerusalem, and subsequently a name for the city itself and for the people of God. Zion had been considered God's holy mountain for centuries. Holy means separated from the common and profane. During the exilic period when the land was desolate Zion was not considered holy or special to God. But by virtue of Yahweh's habitation the place would again be called the holy mountain. The messianic Jerusalem will be the exclusive realm of Yahweh.

The promises in v 3 find complete fulfillment in the church of Christ which is the spiritual Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). This Jerusalem is the center for God’s truth about the Messiah, and the habitation of a holy people (1 Pet 2:9). God once again dwells in an earthly temple (2 Cor 6:16).

4. Promise #3: Jerusalem peaceful (8:4-5):

a. Peace depicted in terms of the very old (8:4): \textit{Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, yea each man with his staff in his hand by reason of days.}

At the time these words were spoken Jerusalem was still in ruins. Yet Yahweh reassures the Judeans that once again\textsuperscript{114} (cf. 2:4) the beloved capital will be repopulated. Zechariah paints a beautiful word picture of the safety and tranquility of the new Jerusalem of which the physical Jerusalem is a type. New Jerusalem will be a safe and tranquil city. Elderly people generally do not desire to be present in public places when there is danger to them.

b. Peace depicted in terms of the very young (8:5): \textit{And the streets of the city shall be filled with boys and girls playing [laughing] in her streets.}

Zechariah sketches a second picture of peace and tranquility. Little children would not be playing in the streets if there were danger from raging chariots, thugs or enemy soldiers.

The new Jerusalem will be a city much blessed, for long life and children were thought of in the OT as blessings from God (Prov 3:2; 9:10-11; Pss 127:3; 128:3-4. It is by the well-being of children and aged that Zechariah measures the greatness of the city, not by industry, professional sports, art and culture, etc. by which cities are usually measured today.

5. Promise #4: marvelous promises (8:6):

\textsuperscript{112} Another view is that City of Truth means that Jerusalem will once again enjoy conditions consistent with God’s promises in the past.

\textsuperscript{113} Other new names for messianic Jerusalem: Yahweh Shammah (“Yahweh is there”) in Ezek 48:35; Hephzibah (“my delight is in her”) and Beulah (“married”) in Isa 62:2-4.

\textsuperscript{114} Once again (\textit{\_d}) appears to be a special prophetic formula used to introduce salvation oracles (cf. Hag 1:6; Zech 1:17). Earlier uses: Isa 14:1; 49:20; 56:8; Jer 31:23; 32:15; 33:10, 12, 13.
a. *Future blessings may be marvelous in the eyes of men* (8:6a): **Thus says Yahweh of Hosts:** It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time... Marvelous points to something too difficult to do. The remnant are those Judeans that have returned to Palestine from the exile in Babylon, and the nucleus of true believers. This faithful ones would scarcely be able to comprehend how such miraculous things just promised in vv 3-5 could come to pass.

b. *Future blessing certainly are not marvelous in the eyes of Yahweh* (8:6b): **should it be also be marvelous in my eyes?** (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts). Scholars have classified this questions as “a disputation question”—a questions that raises a question about Yahweh’s power to deliver on his promises.\(^{115}\) Apparently the Judean remnant had doubts about earlier promises of peace and restoration for Jerusalem. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. The interrogative force is only indicated by the context.\(^{116}\) In the most solemn of utterances—an oracle from the lips of God himself—Zechariah wants the remnant to know that Yahweh has infinite power at his disposal. He can fulfill all his promises. So the fourth promise is a promise to fulfill all marvelous promises!

6. **Promise #5: gathering the dispersed (8:7-8):**

a. *Deliverance from bondage (8:7):* **Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: Behold, I am about to deliver my people from the land of the east and from the land of the west.** Though a few thousand brave souls had returned to the desolation in Judea, God had many more people throughout the world that one day would join with faithful Jews in the kingdom of God. East and west are symbols for the whole world (cf. Ps 50:1; 113:3; Mal 1:13 where the same idiom is used). The participle deliver denotes continuous performance of the act. The promise here echoes Isa 43:5-6.

   In the OT God refers to “my people” some 169x., 23x in conjunction with “Israel.” The theme is prominent in Jeremiah (42x). Even before the Exodus and the covenant at Sinai he referred to the descendants of Jacob as “my people.” Thus those who are designated “my people” may be those who are potentially God’s people. Even Gentiles in the messianic age will become “my people” (Isa 19:25). These considerations suggest that “my people in Zech 8:7 who are gathered from the land of the east and the land of the west may include Gentiles as well as descendants of Jacob.

b. *Restoration to Jerusalem (8:8a): And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.* The gathering of the remnant is a theme that appeared as early as the eighth century (e.g., Isa 11:11-12; Mic 2:12-13; 4:6-7). The promise relates to the physical Jerusalem as long as the OT was in effect. But the ultimate reference is to the spiritual Jerusalem, the church of God (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Mt 8:11). That this does not refer to

\(^{115}\) Similar questions are raised in Gn 18:13-14; Jer 32:17.

\(^{116}\) The interrogative hey is sometimes omitted when the context makes the interrogative force obvious or something more than a question is intended, as the expressing of strong feeling or something incredible to imagine. Here it is incredible that anything should be thought to be impossible for God. The less suitable alternative is to regard these words as irony: “If it seems like a marvel to you, it even seems like a marvel to me also.”
the return from Babylon entirely is indicated by two facts: first, the return from Babylon came from only one direction, usually designated north; second, the bulk of restoration from Babylon was past by the time of Zechariah. In v 3 God dwells in Jerusalem; here it is the people of God who dwell there. They are drawn as to a magnet to the place where their God has chosen to dwell.

Clearly here Jerusalem has become a symbol of something much larger than the physical city of Jerusalem, for by no means could all the redeemed throughout the earth and throughout the ages fit into the physical parameters of ancient Jerusalem. Those who discern the true depths of this promise understand that God is presently in the process of gathering his people through the gospel into the kingdom of Christ. This v recalls the summons in 2:6-7 for people to leave the nations and come to Zion.

c. Reconciliation to God (8:8b): and they shall be my people and I shall be their God in truth and in righteousness. Shall be my people implies that prior to the time of the gathering they were not God’s people—they were Lo-ammi (Hos 1:10). This language points to a new covenant relationship (cf. Jer 31:31). Those who become part of the new Jerusalem will enter into a new covenant with the Lord. In truth and righteousness refers both to the people and to God.\(^{117}\) The promises made to Jerusalem will be seen to be true. He will deal with them according to his nature. On their part, God’s people will have true allegiance to the Lord. Furthermore, they will reflect in their conduct the right relationship with him.

7. Promise #6: conditions reversed (8:9-13): The sixth and seventh sayings in the Decalogue of promises come within a sermon of sorts (vv 9-17). The sermon is similar in form to 7:4-14 (cf. 2 Chr 15:1-7). The first part of the sermon begins and ends with the exhortation to let your hands be strong.

a. Exhortation to steadfastness (8:9):

   aa. Addressees (8:9a): Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: Those of you who are hearing in these days these words from the mouth of the prophets which (were) in the day when the foundation of the house of Yahweh of Hosts was laid to the end that the temple might be built. Zechariah seems to turn from the Bethel representatives to the postexilic community as a whole. He addresses those who had been listening to the prophetic word since the resumption of the temple work. These words refer particularly to the words of promise which had just been uttered by Zechariah in the preceding verses, and by Haggai. The prophets are those that ministered to the community since the return from Babylon, including Haggai and Zechariah. The day when the foundation was laid refers to the day nearly two decades earlier when the returning exiles prepared to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:6; Hag 2:18). To the end that the temple might be built anticipates the completion of the project. The point is that the same prophets that...\(^{117}\)These same two words are used to describe the messianic Jerusalem in Isa 1:26, and the messianic Ruler (Isa 11:5; using a synonym for truth).
speak words of promise now are those who have encouraged you throughout the time when the temple was under construction.

bb. Exhortation (8:9b): *let your hands be strong* is an idiom meaning to “be of good courage.” This exhortation is derived from the contest of the holy war.\(^{118}\) The encouragement is based on the bright prospects outlined in vv 12-13. These words include the older generation which had seen the temple project proceed by fits and starts. It also includes those young adults who had been born in the past two decades.

b. Reminder of former conditions (8:10):
   
aa. Economy was disrupted (8:10a): *For before those days the wages of man did not exist nor the wages of the cattle.* Before those days looks back to the time before the reconstruction effort was renewed about two years previously. There was economic depression (cf. Hag 1:4-11). *Wages* probably refers to crop yield which was so small that men and even cattle found it difficult to subsist.\(^{119}\)

   bb. Land was insecure (8:10b): *and to the one who went out and came in there was not peace because of the adversary.* Going out and coming in is an idiom that can refer to military activity; but here the reference is to everyday activity (2 Kgs 19:27; Ps 121:8). They could not go about their usual occupations or move from place to place with safety on account of their enemies that compassed them about. *The adversary* might refer to those living around Judea who harassed the farmers and herders who went out to labor in the fields (cf. Ezra 4:4). The adversary might also be the regional Persian officials who threw up roadblocks to reconstruction work in Jerusalem (Ezra 4-6).

   cc. Community was embittered (8:10c): *and I set every man against his neighbor.* Pre-construction hard times led to internal dissension as well as outward opposition. *I set* reveals the prophetic viewpoint that everything that happens is either caused by direct action of Yahweh, or at least permitted by him.

b. Divine blessings (8:11-12):
   
aa. Yahweh’s disposition will change (8:11): *But now not as in former days will I be to the remnant of this people (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts).* Now (*att_h*) signals that Yahweh is ready to reverse the fortunes of the Judeans. *The remnant of this people* points to the limited population and resources of the restoration of community. Yahweh will not deal with his people as in former days. Yahweh of Hosts reminds the listeners of all the power and authority of their God.

   bb. Agricultural situation will change (8:12): *For the seed of peace, the vine, shall give its fruit and the land shall give its increase and the heavens shall give their dew and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things.* *For* (*ki*) is used for the second time in this discourse (cf. v 10) to introduce a more positive reason for

\(^{118}\) Cf. Judg 7:11; 1 Sam 23:15-17; Isa 35:3; Ezek 22:14.

\(^{119}\) Another view: the poverty was so bad that the hired man could not be paid and the beast could not be given its share of the grain.
optimism. *The seed of peace is the vine.*120 Viticulture is a product of peaceful conditions. The basic idea: the crops will be safe and secure. *Increase* points to abundant harvest. *Dew* represents moisture essential in summer to produce crops. *Inherit these things* refers to the land, abundant harvests, and security. Agricultural abundance symbolizes God’s provisions for his people.

d. Changed attitude (8:13a): *As you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will deliver you and you will become a blessing.* *Curse* indicates that the fate of God’s people had been used as a formula of imprecation among the heathen, e.g., May your fate be that of the Judeans. Both *Israel* and *Judah*—the entire nation—experienced exile; both were also represented in the return from Babylon; both are represented in the present kingdom. *Deliver you* refers to deliverance from their national calamity and national sin. *Blessing* indicates that observers would now begin to use God’s people as a formula of blessing. Thus God reverses the fortunes of his people and fulfills the blessing promise made to Abraham (Gn 12:2; cf. Isa19:24; Ezek 34:26).

e. Concluding exhortation (8:13b): *Do not be afraid.* This admonition seems to mark the end of the first part of the sermon. In essence these words repeat the opening admonition in v 9 to be courageous. They need not fear failure if they will put their hands to the task of completing the temple and rebuilding the city.

8. Promise #7: Good things to come (8:13c-17):

a. Introductory admonition (8:13c): *Let your hands be strong.* The injunction of v 9 is repeated. The second part of Zechariah’s encouraging sermon begins here. Knowledge of what God had done and would do for Israel should encourage them in their work.

b. God’s past purpose (8:14): *Thus says Yahweh of Hosts: Because I proposed to do evil to you when your ancestors provoked me to anger and I did not relent, says Yahweh of Hosts*… The opening admonition is followed by the messenger formula (see on 1:3). *Because* (kî) indicates the reason for the strengthening of the hands. It has to do with the purpose of Yahweh. Babylonian captivity was no accident. This *evil* was a result of deliberate, purposive divine planning. God carried out the dreaded decrees that he had given forth against the apostate nation. The word *provoked to anger* (*raqṣ* Hiph.) was used in 1:2 in connection with the fathers, i.e., the previous generation. Here he explains why that anger was appropriate. Yahweh did not *reloan* (*šēb ḫē*), i.e., he did not change his mind.

c. God’s present purpose (8:15a): *so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.* The thought here recalls Jer 32:42. *So again* (*kēn* ) introduces a change in God’s purpose, but a purpose nonetheless. From former days Zechariah turns to *these days*, i.e., the days in which he lived. God is true to his purpose. Previously he carried out his purpose to bring judgment on his people. Now God has

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120 Others think he refers to seed time marked by absence of war (Unger, Perowne, Deane).
reversed himself. He now purposes to do good. The good that Yahweh proposes to do for the Judeans was outlined in v 12. Those who lived in the outlying regions will be beneficiaries of these blessings as well as Jerusalem. The benefits that were immediate did not exhaust the full scope of these sweeping prophetic previews (Unger). The past chastisement which happened as it was threatened is a guarantee of the fulfillment of the promised blessings (Deane). The promise of blessing is assured because Yahweh has purposed it. God's purpose toward them has changed because they have sought him.

c. God's encouragement (8:15b): Do not be afraid. The admonition from v 13 is repeated. Primarily fear of failing in the rebuilding efforts is in view. Fear of failing leads to discouragement.

d. God's requirement (8:16-17): These are the things you shall do… The future blessing is assured; but the time and place of its fulfillment are conditioned by the people’s response (R. Smith). The prophet now lists some fundamental moral requirements that must be met if the Judeans are to experience the promised blessing. This sounds very much like the preaching of the previous prophets which Zechariah summarized in 7:9-10.

aa. Their words (8:16b): Speak truth every man with his neighbor, i.e., in all conversations and transactions with their neighbors. Truth is what is consistent with the facts as one knows them.

bb. Their judgment (8:16c): Judge truth and the judgment of peace in your gates points to perfect equity in judgments. Such decisions would secure peace and concord between the parties concerned. Local judges sat in the city gates (cf. Dt 16:18; 21:19; Amos 5:10).

cc. Their hearts (8:17a): And let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor = Cf. 7:10. Micah 2:1. The Mosaic Law forbade covetousness in the heart. Such covetousness evolves into concrete plans to defraud and deceive one’s neighbor.

dd. Their oaths (8:17b): And love no false oath. The prevalent sins of this period were not idolatry but cheating, lying, and injustice—vices perfected in Babylon, the land of commerce. A false oath is one that is not honored—a promise that went unfulfilled.

e. God's holy will (8:17c): For all these are things that I hate (oracle of Yahweh). The ultimate reason for avoiding the sins named in the previous vv is that they are contrary to the holy character of God. Yahweh hated what he observed taking place in the postexilic community. Because God hates these sins, we too must hate them.

F. Fourth Message: Glorious Future (8:18-23): The words And the word of Yahweh of Hosts came unto me, saying… (8:18) signal the beginning of a new message. The message, however, completes the decalogue of promises that commenced in the third message.

1. Promise #8: fasts become feasts (8:19): Thus says Yahweh of Hosts… These familiar words introduce the eighth promise that came in response to the
question about fasting. For the first time the message directly addresses the issue posed by the delegation from Bethel.

a. **Current fasts (8:19a-d):** Among the most pious Jews, the four fast days named in this verse are observed even to this day.

   aa. **The fast of the fourth month (8:19a):** This fast was mentioned in 7:5. On the Jewish calendar this is the 17th of Tammuz. It commemorated the day when a breach was made in the walls of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. See 2 Kgs 25:3; Jer 52:6, 7; 39:2.

   bb. **And the fast of the fifth month (8:19b):** This fast was mentioned in 7:3. On the Jewish calendar this is known as the 9th of Av. It commemorated the day the Jerusalem Temple was burned in 586 BC. See 2 Kgs 25:8-9; Jer 52:12.

   cc. **And the fast of the seventh month (8:19c):** On the third day of the seventh month the Jews commemorated the death of Gedaliah, although the Scriptures do not specify the day on which he was slain. See 2 Kgs 25:25; Jer 41:1, 2, 4, 5. It is possible, but not likely, that the fast of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement.

   dd. **And the fast of the tenth month (8:19d):** The 10th day of Tebeth was a fast commemorating the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem. See 2 Kgs 25:1; Ezek 24:1-2.

b. **Feasts of the future (8:19e): shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.** Former miseries will be forgotten in the presence of the blessings showered upon them by the Lord. The painful experiences commemorated by the fasts can even become occasions of celebration when the redeemed realize how these events propelled them into a more wonderful relationship with Yahweh.

c. **Conditions of this promise (8:19f): Therefore truth and peace love.** The word order highlights the objects of the verb love. In order to share in the blessing that will unfold for God’s people an individual Jew must certainly practice truth and peace (8:16); but he must also love these ideas as well. There must be an inward compulsion always to say and do the right thing, and to strive for a peaceful relationship with neighbors.

2. **Promise #9: Conversion of Gentiles (8:20-22): Thus says Yahweh of Hosts...**
The messenger formula introduces the ninth promise in the Decalogue of Promises.

a. **Gentiles will seek Yahweh in great numbers (8:20): [It shall yet come to pass] once again that there shall come peoples, and the inhabitants of many cities...** The glorious blessings bestowed on God's people will attract surrounding nations to join in the worship of Yahweh. On *once again* (*_d*) see on 8:4. *Peoples* is a collective and representative name for all peoples.

b. **Gentiles will seek Yahweh earnestly (8:21): And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to entreat the favor of Yahweh, and to seek Yahweh of hosts. I will go also.** The Hebrew syntax (imperf. + infin. abs.) implies, "Let us go on and on continually" (Pusey; Wright). On *entreat the favor of Yahweh*, see on 7:2. Not merely will the
Gentiles make pilgrimages to the great annual festival, they will desire to seek to know Yahweh and worship him acceptably. The scene is that same as that portrayed in the eighth century by Isaiah (2:2-4) and Micah (4:1-4). I will go also have been taken to be the words of (1) some straggler or doubter; (2) the city exhorted; (3) Zechariah himself; and (4) those who give the exhortation, i.e., they will encourage people by their example.

c. Gentiles will seek Yahweh in Messianic Jerusalem (8:22): Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek Yahweh of Hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh. This explains v 20 more fully. Strong nations are those numerically strong. As in 2:5-7 these Gentiles come to Jerusalem. A literal fulfillment is not to be looked for (Deane). It declares the future conversion of the Gentiles and their being made one with Israel in the church of Christ. One entreats God’s favor through prayers and godly living. See further on 7:2.

In prophetic literature there are two opposite pictures of the relation of the Gentiles to messianic Jerusalem. In one picture the Gentiles are gathered to Jerusalem for battle. Their intent is plunder. This picture is sketched most vividly in chs 12 and 14. In the other picture Gentiles come to Jerusalem for worship on a holy pilgrimage. Both traditions have deep roots in the prophetic tradition, the first in Joel 3:9-17, the latter in Isa 2:1-4 and Mic 4:1-5.121

3. Promise #10: prominence of Jews (8:23): Thus says Yahweh of Hosts… For the tenth time the messenger formula introduces a promise in this ch thereby completing the Decalogue of Promises. This v provides a concrete example of Gentiles desperately seeking the blessing of being associated with Jerusalem.

a. Zeal of Gentiles (8:23a): In those days ten men from the nations of every languages and nations shall take hold, shall take hold of the robe of a Jew… In those days refers to the time when Gentiles in great numbers turn to Yahweh, i.e., in the NT age. The number ten is symbolic of a large, indefinite number. Cf. Gn 31:7; Lv 26:26; 1 Sam 1:8. Diversity of language and ethnic background shall not hinder the unity in the faith. The v is an amplification of Isa 66:13. The spiritual magnetism of messianic Zion overcomes the confusion of tongues at the foot of the Tower of Babel (Gn 11). The verb take hold means to grasp, seize, grab. The verb indicates the zeal of those who will seek Yahweh. The verb is repeated for emphasis. The metaphor of the many taking hold of one appears also in Isa 4:1.

b. Declaration of Gentiles (8:23b): and say, We will go with you… The picture is one of a Jew coming from some far country to celebrate the festivals and a number of Gentiles clinging round him, asking permission to accompany him on his journey. Gentiles want to join faithful Jews in their devotions to the Lord. In Christ Gentiles declare their allegiance to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jew and Gentle march together in the great new covenant pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem.

121Other passages reflecting this tradition: Isa 45:14; 49:22-23; 60:1-3.
c. *Explanation of Gentiles* (8:23c): *because we have heard that God is with you.* Gentiles will observe how well favored the Jews are and conclude that God is with them.\(^{122}\) Salvation is of the Jews. The gospel began to be announced in Jerusalem, preached by Jewish apostles. The founder of Christianity was of the seed of David. But true Israelites are all true Christians (Rom 4:11; Gal 3:7, 29; 4:26). So the Gentiles have become convinced that they must join these faithful Jews if they are to experience the blessings of the gospel age.

**Preliminary Note to Chs 9-14**

Critics generally contend that Zechariah 9-14 were not written by the same hand that wrote chs 1-8. Some critics alleged that chs 9-14 are pre-exilic. Yet there are clear indications that these chs are postexilic. For example, governors are mentioned in chs 9-14); but there is no hint that there was any king in Judea. Judah and Israel had been in exile; some were still there (9:11, 12; 10:6-10). Judah and Ephraim together shall wage successful war against Javan, i.e., the Greeks (9:13). The pre-exilic jealousy between the two divisions of the chosen people has ended. There is one nation.

Whereas critics allege that chs 9-14 are by a different author (called Deutero-Zechariah) a strong case can be made for the unity of the book. First, similar expressions, some rather rare, are found in both sections of the book. Second, similar concepts are developed in both sections. Third, there is a predilection for the number four throughout the book. Fourth, the negative critics themselves cannot decide between a pre-exilic and post-exilic origin of chs 9-14. Fifth, in both sections there is liberal use of the earlier prophets.

The following dissimilarities to chs 1-8 have been noted by Chambers. First, chs 9-14 came at a later time in the ministry of Zechariah. Second, no dates are present in the last six chs. Third, the first eight chs communicated the revelations that bore immediately upon the interests of people living in the sixth century; the last six chs took a wider range, focusing on the kingdom of Messiah. These final chs are intended for all people of all times. Fourth, in the Book of Isaiah there is a precedent for a book with an initial section focused on issues in the days of the prophet, and a concluding section focusing on the more distant future.

A few other points about chs 9-14 should be emphasized. First, these chs are extremely difficult—the hardest in the OT (Clarke, *Concise Bible Commentary*). Second, as to style, some of the grandest and most powerful passages in Zechariah are found in chs 9-11. These are as fine as any in Hebrew poetry (Deane). Third, the influence of these final six chs is substantial (Baldwin). Chs 9-14 are the most quoted section of the prophets in the passion narratives of the Gospels. Furthermore, next to Ezekiel, Zechariah has influenced the author of Revelation more than any other OT writer.

\(^{122}\)The Philistine Abimelech was the prototype of the Gentiles who recognize that God is with the descendants of Abraham in a special way (Gn 26:28).
The King is Coming
Zechariah 9:1-17

In the first “burden” Zechariah juxtaposes the images of donkey and horse to describe the salvation and transformation God’s people will experience in the future.123

A. Coming World Conqueror (9:1-8): Zechariah describes a divine judgment that sweeps southward through the regions of Syria, Tyre, and Philistia. Although Israel seldom occupied these territories, they territories fell within the ideal borders of Israel.124

   a. Introductory formula (9:1a): A burden. Burden (mass_’) refers to something uplifted, hence a burden (Ex 23:5) or an utterance; an oracle. Cf. 12:1; Mal 1:1. A burden is an authoritative divine utterance which contains a pronouncement of judgment. The term is often used in the OT in a technical sense to introduce an oracle of a prophet. 125 The word connotes the idea that the prophet feels an obligation to deliver his message to others.
   b. Initial object of God’s judgment (9:1b): The word of Yahweh is in the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place. Hadrach is mentioned only here in OT, but it does appear in Assyrian inscriptions.126 The place was situated between Hamath and Riblah. The idea is that God's word of judgment will fall upon this area of Syria.

   The oracle is describing a judgment that is moving from north to south. The word of Yahweh’s judgment next rests upon Damascus. This was a major trade center in Syria during the Persian period. The details of this prediction are adequately fulfilled by Alexander the Great whose armies march south from Asia Minor through Syria and on eventually to Egypt.127
   c. Reason for divine judgment (9:1c): for Yahweh’s eye128 is on mankind and all the tribes of Israel. For (kî) introduces the reason for the divine judgment on land of Hadrach and Damascus. Yahweh’s eye is lit., “to Yahweh is an eye.” The thought is parallel to Jer 32:19. The first vision (1:7-17) proclaimed Yahweh’s knowledge of world events and his loyalty to his people. This v makes the same claim. Mankind (’_d_m) is the world

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124Nm 13:21-24; 34:1-12; Dt 1:7; Josh 1:3-4; 1 Kgs 4:21, 24; 2 Kgs 14:25, 28.
125Isa 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; Ezek 12:10; Nah 1:1; Hab 1:1.
126Among the fanciful interpretations of Hadrach are these: 1) a name for Messiah; 2) symbolic of the Persian Empire; 3) an Aramean king; 4) an Assyrian fire-god; 5) a scribal error for Hauran, a district south of Damascus. It is now generally accepted that there was a city named Hadrach in greater Syria.
127Chisholm, IMP, 260. Cf. Hanson (DA, 316-19) who divorces these vv from any historical battles. He thinks Zechariah was using stock prophet formulae and locations to represent stereotypical Yahweh’s redemptive actions for his people. R. Smith (WBC, 252) concurs with Hanson.
128So NIV note. But NASB has “for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the LORD.” The line would then point to the consternation into which men would be thrown at the approach of the conqueror who is Yahweh’s agent of judgment.
of the Gentiles.\textsuperscript{129} God sees their evil doing and oppression of Israel. Therefore judgment falls upon them. Cf. Jer 32:19 (Deane). All the tribes of Israel speaks of the theocracy in its ideal form represented in Zechariah’s day by Judea.\textsuperscript{130} Yahweh sees the condition of his people and intervenes in history on their behalf.

d. Subsequent object of the judgment (9:2a): and Hamath also shall border on it. Hamath was both the name of an important Syrian city and a province of the Persian Empire. This v suggests that the province of Hamath bordered on that of Damascus. Apparently this city/territory will share in the judgment on Hadrach and Damascus. Hamath survives today under the name Hama with 50,000 population.


a. Reason for the judgment (9:2b): Tyre along with Sidon for she is very wise. The judgment continues to move southward from Syria to the two most important cities of Phoenicia. Sidon is mentioned parenthetically. She is very wise refers to Tyre, a city noted for wisdom (Ezek 27:8; 28:3, 4).

b. Inevitability of the judgment (9:3):

aa. Fortifications will not avert judgment (9:3a): Though Tyre build a tower. Any doubt that vv 1-2 are describing a military judgment are removed by this v. Description of the judgment on Tyre almost certainly was influenced by Amos 1:10.

Zechariah employs paronomasia. Tyre (ts\textsubscript{r}) will build a tower or fortress (m\_ts\textsubscript{ô}r), an obvious word play on ts\_r. This may be an allusion to the island fortifications of Tyre located about seven hundred off the mainland. Isaiah 23:4 referred to it as “the fortress of the sea.” It is said that this island fortress had a wall 150 feet tall. The city had been besieged by the Assyrians for five years and by the Babylonians for thirteen years without success. Nonetheless, Tyre’s mighty fortress will not stand up to Yahweh’s judgment. Alexander the Great was able to construct a mole out to the island in a matter of weeks.

bb. Wealth will not avert judgment (9:3b): though she heap up silver like dust and fine gold like the mire of the streets. Through her commercial enterprises Tyre amassed wealth as easily as one would sweep dust from a house and gather dirt from the street. Her vast wealth, however, will not enable her to bribe enemies.

c. Result of the judgment (9:4): Behold Yahweh will dispossess her, and smite her wealth into the sea, and she shall be consumed with fire. On the meaning of behold, see on 1:8. Yahweh will dispossess implies conquest at the hands of her enemies. Cf. Josh 8:7; 17:12. On the smiting of Tyre into the sea, see Ezek 26:4. All of Tyre’s wealth is buried in a watery grave. On the burning of fortress Tyre, see Amos 1:10. The

\textsuperscript{129}The slightest of emendations yields “Aram” (\_r\_m) for mankind (\_d\_m). But MT makes sense as it stands.

\textsuperscript{130}Other views: (1) All peoples as well as the tribes of Israel will recognize God in the future. Cf. 8:22 (Cashdan); (2) the eyes of mankind and Israel are upon the agent of Yahweh, viz., Alexander the Great.
passage is probably predicting the fall of Tyre to Alexander after of siege of seven months.

3. Judgment on Philistia (9:5-6a):
   a. Fear of the Philistine cities (9:5a): *And Ashkelon shall see and fear, and Gaza shall be exceedingly mournful along with Ekron, for her trust shall be ashamed.* Four of the famous Philistine Pentapoli are mentioned in this v in the same order that appears in Jer 25:20. Ashkelon fears the same fate as Tyre. Gaza is in anguish over the impending confrontation with Alexander. Tyre was Ekron's hope or trust. Perhaps there was mutual defense pact between the two cities. When Tyre fell, Ekron knew there was no hope. Cf. Zeph 2:6-7.
   b. Fate of the Philistine cities (9:5b-6a):
      aa. Gaza (9:5b): *And the king shall perish from Gaza.* Gaza will cease to be independent. This statement is important in setting the stage for a contrast with the coming of a future great king for God’s people in vv 9-11. No special mention is made of Ashkelon, Ekron or Ashdod in the records of Alexander’s march south from Tyre. The fate of Gaza, however, is fully recorded. The city fell to Alexander after a siege of five months. Ten thousand of its inhabitants were slain and the rest were sold into slavery. Batis, the king, was bound to a chariot with thongs thrust through the soles of his feet. He was then dragged through the city.
      bb. Ashkelon (9:5c): *and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited,* i.e., the city will gradually fade from the scene. During the Greek period, Ashkelon became a Hellenistic center of culture. The city did not apparently have hostilities with the Maccabean rulers in Jerusalem (1 Macc 10:36; 11:60). In fact, many Jews lived there. In 104 BC Rome granted to Ashkelon the status "free allied city." Herod the Great built some beautiful buildings, including a palace. He left the city to his sister, Salome, at his death. The city was attacked by the Jews in the first Roman Revolt (AD 66) but survived and was faithful to Rome. It later became a Christian city. The Moslems conquered Ashkelon in the seventh century. It was taken by the Crusaders, then retaken by Saladin in 1187. The city was systematically destroyed by the Mamelukes in 1270.
   cc. Ashdod (9:6a): *and a mongrel race shall dwell in Ashdod.* Mongrel race (mamz’ r) is used in Dt 23:2 where the word is often interpreted to mean one born of incest or adultery. Here the thought is that Ashdod shall be overrun by people not native to the area. In the Greek period Ashdod was known as Azotus. It was a flourishing city until being captured by Judas Maccabaeus. He destroyed altars and images in Ashdod (1 Macc 5:68). Judas’ brother Jonathan later burned the temple of Dagon, those who took refuge

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131 This is the case also in Amos 1:6-8 and Zeph 2:4. Gath is missing from the list because it had been destroyed in the days of King Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6). Here it is Gaza that will lose its king vs. Askelon in Amos; here Askelon will be without inhabitants, not Ashdod as in Amos.

132 Targum and LXX take the word to mean stranger or foreigner. Therefore here the threat is that a bastard race or aliens would inherit Ashdod.
there, and ultimately the city itself (1 Macc 10:84-87). In 63 BC the Romans separated Ashdod from Judea. Gabinius rebuilt the city, and it was joined to the province of Syria. The Emperor Augustus granted it to Herod the Great. Ashdod’s greatness as a city ended with the Roman destruction of AD 67, although it was occupied at least through the sixth century.

4. Conversion of the Philistines (9:7): The switch from third person to first person in the remaining vv of this oracle signals a change in tone from judgment to hope.

a. Humbling (9:6b): and the pride of the Philistines I shall cut off. The humbling of Philistine pride is the first of a series of actions taken by Yahweh to incorporate Gentiles into the family of God. The four great cities of the coastal plain were the pride of the Philistines.\(^\text{133}\) When prophets speak of the pride of a nation, they refer to the magnificence of that nation—its history, wealth, territory, unique culture. All of this Yahweh will cut off, i.e., destroy. That, however, is not bad. The humbling of Philistine pride paves the way for conversion.

b. Cleansing (9:7a): And I will remove his blood from his mouth and his abominations from between his teeth. The Philistines are depicted as a single individual perhaps signaling that the focus is no longer upon political Philistia but on individual Philistines. The text does not require that this conversion comes as a direct result of Alexander’s conquests, only that these conquests are the prelude to transformation on the part of some Gentiles.

The blood (lit., “bloods”) probably refers to the drinking of sacrificial blood as an act of worship or eating of victims used in sacrifice with the blood. Cf. Ezek 33:25; Lv 3:17; 7:26; 17:10, 12. The abominations are animals forbidden by Mosaic Law (Dt 14:3ff.) or sacrifices offered to idols and afterward eaten. The prophet paints the disgusting picture of pieces of the abominable meat still lodged between the teeth of this pagan Philistine.

Yahweh announces his intention to remove (Hiph. r. swr) this abomination from the mouth of the Philistine. He does not say when or how this will happen, except that one may conclude from the sequence of the prophecy that it occurs after Alexander’s conquests. The verb is generally used of a gracious response of Yahweh to a petition or obedient response on the part of people. Divine removal is generally not associated with force. So one can probably postulate here Philistine petition or repentance to which Yahweh responds by removing the taint of idolatry.

c. Recognition (9:7b): Also he also shall be a remnant to our God... This statement builds on the teaching of Zech 2:11 and 8:23. At some point he, i.e., the corrected Philistines, will no longer be considered aliens. They as much as penitent Jews will be considered a remnant to our God, i.e., a

\(^{133}\)The fifth city of the Pentapolis—Gath—is not mentioned since it never fully recovered from the destruction in the days of Uzziah (2 Chr 26:6).
people belonging to God. *He also* expresses the prophet’s personal shock about what he is announcing.

d. *Exaltation* (9:7c): *and he shall become as a governor in Judah...* Their worldly pride humbled, the Philistines are ready for honor within the family of God (cf. Jam 4:10). *Governor* is lit., “a chief.”¹³⁴ *Judah* here has spiritual rather than political connotations. It refers to the church. Cleansed of past abominations and counted among God’s people former Philistines (Gentiles) rise to positions of leadership within the redeemed community. The prototype of Philistines rising to leadership among God’s people was Ittai the Gittite (2 Sam 18:2).

e. *Integration* (9:7d): *and Ekron shall become like the Jebusite.* *Ekron,* one of the Philistine pentapolis, represents the entire people, and perhaps all Gentiles. The *Jebusites* were the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem. They were conquered by David and incorporated into the nation of Israel. Cf. 2 Sam 5:6; 24:22; 1 Chr 21:23. The basic idea is that Gentiles will be completely integrated with Jews so as to become indistinguishable.

Perhaps using this passage as justification, some people of Philistine extract were forced to circumcise and convert to Judaism during the intertestamental period (1 Macc 5:68; 10:84; 13:47, 48). Forced conversion, however, is far removed from the spirit of this passage. Only in Christ do former Gentiles and former Jews sit down to share a common meal around the Lord’s Table.


a. *Divine protection* (9:8a): *And I will encamp about my house...* *Encamp* (r. *chnh*) is a word that often has military connotations. The idea is similar to Isa 31:4 where Yahweh of Hosts comes down to fight for *Mount Zion,* *and for the hill thereof.* My house could be the temple; but more likely this is a figurative description of the remnant or Judah mentioned in the previous v. The point is that while the heathen world suffers judgment, God protects his own people. This promise is illustrated by the hosts of angels encamped on hills around Dothan, protecting Elisha (2 Kgs 6:17).

b. *Necessary protection* (9:8b): *because of an army, because of the one passing through and the one returning.* The word translated *because of an army* (*mitss bh h*) probably is the preposition *min* + an odd spelling of the word for *army* (*ts bh h*).¹³⁵ *The one passing through and returning* seems to describe someone who passes through a land en route to another destination.¹³⁶ The picture is of an army marching back and forth. It is tempting to see in this v a reference to Alexander the Great who by-passed Jerusalem en route to Egypt. He later returned through Palestine without doing harm to the holy city. See Josephus *Ant.* 10.1.8. Probably, however, the text refers more generally to the fact that Yahweh protects his people in all ages (cf. 2 Thess 3:3; 1 Pet 1:5).

¹³⁴LXX has *head over a thousand.*
¹³⁵Some take the word to mean “as a guardian” (referring to Yahweh) deriving the word from the r. *nts* “to take one’s stand” BD); NIV opts to render all of v 8b as “against marauding forces.”
¹³⁶The phrase, however, elsewhere merely indicates the overrunning of a land by an invading army. See Ezek 35:7.
c. **Promise of future peace (9:8c): and an oppressor shall not again pass over them.** This line is very difficult to interpret. Oppressor (n_g_s) can refer to one who drives men or beasts, i.e., a taskmaster; an arbitrary ruler; foreign oppressor; tyrant; exactor of tribute (Ex 3:7; 5:6-10). The term here further describes the army that passes through and returns. Pass over them depicts the steamroller effect of the oppressor. He tramples God’s people in order to sweep on to further conquests.

Probably the meaning is that a day will come when there will be no more oppressors with their armies to harass the people of God. Historically a foretaste of that day came when Alexander the Great bypassed Jerusalem on his way to and from Egypt.\(^{137}\) Palestine, however, remained under the oppressor’s heel for centuries following Alexander. Only the appearance of the great king in the following v ushered in an age when the ultimate oppressor (Satan) has been defeated.

d. **Reason for God’s promises (9:8d): for now I have seen with my eyes.** The opening v of this unit set forth the proposition that Yahweh eyes are upon the nations as well as Israel. The previous six vv illustrate his awareness of what would transpire among the Gentile nations. This v demonstrates that his eyes are also on Israel. During Israel’s past calamities God had not looked upon them; but now he will notice the plight of his people and will intervene on their behalf.

**B. Coming Prince of Peace (9:9-11):** At the time these words were uttered the Judeans had no king. The people were ruled by Persian-appointed governors and high priests. Judea was only a tiny sub-province within the Persian Empire. There was little prospect that they would ever have even a vassal king, not to mention an independent ruler.

1. **Promise of his coming (9:9a):** In contrast to the surrounding nations (cf. v 5), God’s people would find deliverance through a native-born king.\(^{138}\) No one denies that this v is messianic. The Gospel writers apply it to Jesus (Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15).

   a. **Double call for joy (9:9a): Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!** The exhortation to rejoice/shout grows out of the previous thought that Yahweh’s eyes are upon his people. The daughter of a place is the population of that place personified as a youthful female. Zion and Jerusalem are parallel.

   b. **Cause for joy (9:9b): Behold your king shall come to you.** Behold introduces the unexpected. Your king is a king of your own race. This king will fulfill the promise of the end of oppression which was set forth in the

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\(^{137}\) Other views: (1) partly fulfilled, partly yet to be fulfilled (Unger): Yahweh protects his people in the days of Alexander, and at some future time there will be no more oppressors to bother the land; (2) presently being fulfilled: The entire v has nothing to do with Alexander, but rather looks forward to the protection God’s people in the future (3) partly fulfilled, partly being fulfilled. The Alexander episode only partially fulfilled the prophecy. It continues to be fulfilled until finally no more oppressors shall bother the people of God again (Keil).

\(^{138}\) Chisholm, *IMP*, 266.
previous v.\textsuperscript{139} The reference is to the Coming One who had been foretold by prophets. This passage may be rooted in the account of David’s return to Jerusalem following the crushing of the Absalom rebellion (2 Sam 15-19). To you (fem. sing.) refers to Zion. The expression does not indicate a mere geographical approach; the phrase indicates “for you good.” He comes as a Deliverer. He is Zion’s king, yet he shall come to Zion. This may point to his deity. He was of Zion, yet not of Zion; he was human, yet divine.

2. Description of the coming ruler (9:9b): Zechariah intends for his readers to see the messianic king as the exact opposite of the great military conquerors of antiquity

a. His character (9:9c): [He is] righteous, i.e., just, impartial in judgment. He exemplifies the right relationship with both God and man. By implication, he is the ideal king. All of his decisions and actions are motivated by what is right. Such action on the part of the king will result in rain (fertility) and peace (Ps 72:1-7).

b. His work (9:9d): and showing himself a savior… The verb (nô‘ı̂ ) is a Niphal which can be rendered as reflexive. The term could also be rendered as a passive: endowed with salvation (Keil; Deane).\textsuperscript{140}

c. His demeanor (9:9e): gentle or lowly. The term also means afflicted, a translation that might be justified on the basis of what is reported about him in chs 11-13 and in Isa 53. The following clause, however, tilts the scale in favor of gentle or lowly. The LXX render “meek.”

d. His transport (9:9e): and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. From the time of Solomon, the donkey was a lowly animal.\textsuperscript{141} It was also a symbol of peace (Deane). Colt (‘ayîr) denotes a young male donkey (Gn 49:11; Job 11:12) that bore burdens (Isa 30:6) and labored in fields (Isa 30:14). Yet the mount is also a foal of a donkey, lit., “the son of she-donkeys,” i.e., young animal still running behind the she-donkeys. This phrase is added to show that whereas the mount was an ordinary beast of burden (= humility), it was still an appropriate mount for a king in two ways. First, it was purebred.\textsuperscript{142} Second, it was so youthful that it had never before been ridden or used in ordinary work. The donkey imagery linked the coming king to hopes for Davidic monarchy (Gn 49:11). At the same time it dashed expectations of military deliverance.\textsuperscript{143}

The exact fulfillment of this prophecy was arranged by Jesus (Mt 21:1-7) as he made a public claim of messiahship. The prophecy would have been truly fulfilled, however, had Jesus never made those arrangements. The prophet’s portrayal most likely referred to the entire range of events connected with Messiah’s first coming.

3. Nature of his kingdom (9:10):

\textsuperscript{139}Isaiah also foretold the end of oppression under the reign of the messianic king (Isa 9:4).
\textsuperscript{140}The LXX wrongly rendered the term s z n, “saving” or “savior.”
\textsuperscript{141}Pre-Solomon the donkey had been a royal mount (Judg 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam 16:1-2). David apparently had a mule for his royal mount (1 Kgs 1:33).
\textsuperscript{142}Baldwin, TOTC, 166; Meyers & Myers, AB, Zechariah 9-14, 131.
\textsuperscript{143}Meyers & Myers, AB, Zechariah 9-14, 129-30.
a. Peace within the nation (9:10 a-c):

aa. War chariot (9:10a): And I shall cut off chariots from Ephraim…

The verb cut off (r. krt) when used metaphorically means to eliminate, remove, excommunicate or destroy by violent means if necessary. Chariotry (rekebh) is a collective noun used in reference to horse-drawn vehicles used for warfare and royal travel. War chariots were used in Mesopotamia before 3000 BC. During the Conquest and Settlement periods Israelite infantry went up against powerful chariot forces on numerous occasions (e.g., Josh 11:4; Judg 4:3). David seems to have introduced chariot forces in Israel (2 Sam 8:4; 1 Chr 18:14). Assyrian records indicate that King Ahab (of Ephraim) was able to furnish two thousand chariots at the battle of Qarqar (853 BC).

Since Messiah’s kingdom is one of peace, a chariot force would not be needed. The success of God’s kingdom does not depend on instruments of war (cf. Mic 5:10-15; Zech 4:6). Through the coming messianic king Yahweh will launch a war on war. Ephraim (northern tribes), formerly declared to be Gentiles by Yahweh (Hos 1:9), is part of the messianic kingdom.144

bb. Horse (9:10b): horse from Jerusalem… The verb cut off governs this phrase. The battle horse mentioned without article or verb jumps out at the reader in this truncated sentence. Zechariah surely intended a contrast to the donkey upon which Jerusalem’s king entered triumphantly into the city: donkey, not horse. Humility surely is not pride is the mark of the coming kingdom. Zechariah here views Jerusalem as the capital of Messiah’s kingdom. As the ancient capital of Judah, Jerusalem also stands for the Jews. So Jews and Ephraimites (Gentiles) will be united in Messiah’s peaceful kingdom.

c. Battle bow (9:10c): the battle bow shall be cut off. The battle bow (qe et) is the third apparatus of war that will be cut off. The bow and arrow were effective arms from long-range (300-400 yards). This weapon was used widely by the nations of the Bible. Israel had expert archers in men from Benjamin (1 Chr 8:40; 2 Chr 17:17) and the eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh (1 Chr 5:18). Bows were constructed with single pieces of wood, or more effectively with glued layers of wood, horn, and sinew, and sometimes even with added bronze (2 Sam 22:35; Job 20:24). The size varied from approximately three to six feet in length.

Messiah’s kingdom was to be established without physical force. The words here reflect the longings of earlier prophets (Ps 72:7; Isa 2:4; 9:4-7; Mic 5:10-11).

b. Peace among the nations (9:10d): for he shall speak peace to the nations.

The messianic reign of peace is not to be confined to the Jews and to the physical land of Canaan. It will extend to the nations as well. This prophecy builds upon Isa 2:4 and Mic 4:3. Peace means “blessing,” “total

144 A major theme in prophetic literature is the healing of the rift between Israel and Judah. See Ezek 37:16-17; Jer 31:31; Isa 11:13. This theme will be further developed in ch 11. Cf. Jer 3:18; 23:6.
well-being.” The coming King will extend God’s blessing to the entire world. To speak peace means to announce peace and the removal of hostility (cf. Ps 85:8). The peace he announces is not just the absence of external hostility, but that deeper peace of the soul when men have assurance that all is well with their Creator. To announce peace implies that this Ruler has the authority and power to bring about this peace.

c. Peace under the coming ruler (9:10c): His rule shall be from sea to sea and from the River unto the ends of the earth. From sea to sea is an idiom meaning, from the sea to the end of the world where the sea begins again. The River is the Euphrates, the most remote eastern boundary of the Promised Land (Gn 15:18; Ex 23:31). The thought is that the Holy Land will extend from the furthest limits of the OT Promised Land to the ends of the earth. This is an OT way of referring to Messiah’s kingdom as world-wide (cf. Ps 72:8; Mic 7:11-12).

4. Redemption of the coming ruler (9:11):

a. Basis of coming redemption (9:11a): Also you in your covenant blood… Also you (fem. sing.) means “as regards you, O daughter of Zion.” Cf. v 9. In your covenant blood, i.e., “for the sake of.” The messianic context suggest that it is the blood of the eternal covenant (Heb 13:20) that is in view—the blood of the new covenant (Mt 26:28).145

b. Depiction of coming redemption (9:11b): I shall send forth your prisoners out of a pit in which there is no water. The verb send forth (r. _lk in Piel) is prophetic perfect indicating what God said was certain to happen. The pit is a symbol for subservience to hostile powers. The prisoners (lit., “bound ones”) are Zion’s citizens. The background of the figure is the experience of Joseph at the hands of his brothers (Gn 37:22). Cf. Jer 38:6. In such a pit the prisoners would inevitably perish if they were not drawn out. Since the context is messianic, the bondage spoken of must be spiritual rather than physical. The waterless pit, then, is figurative for the disgusting bondage of sin. In Isa 61:1 the Servant liberates prisoners (same word used here) from their prisons.

C. Coming Divine Warrior (9:12-17):

1. Summons to exiles (9:12):

a. Exhortation (9:12a): Turn to the fortress… The daughter of Zion will not automatically be liberated from the waterless pit. Turn points to repentance. The imperative is plural because it is addressed to individuals. The fortress is messianic Jerusalem in which believers are protected by the power of God through faith (1 Pet 1:5).146 Only those who choose to be part of messianic Jerusalem will enjoy the liberation just described.

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145 Others think the reference is to the covenant with Abraham (Gn 15:9-12, 17ff) which guaranteed the preservation of “Israel” and the eventual incorporation of Gentiles into that holy nation The Sinai covenant was also sealed with blood (Ex 24:5ff); but it was a covenant conditioned upon obedience.
146 Another view is that the fortress is God himself (Joel 3:1-6).
b. Address (9:12b): You prisoners of the hope. The reference is not the hope (hattiq_y_h) of deliverance from captivity; but the hope of Israel, viz., the messianic king and kingdom. See Acts 26:6-7; 28:20.

c. Incentive (9:12c): even today I declare: Double I will return to you. Even today suggests Yahweh’s immediate resolve to dispense blessing on the daughter of Zion. A double measure of blessing compensating for past suffering is offered as an incentive to get people to turn to the fortress (cf. Isa 40:2; 61:7).


a. Preparation for a holy war (9:13a): For I will tread Judah my bow, I will fill (it) with Ephraim. For (kî) introduces the explanation of how Yahweh will return double to Zion. God uses his people as his weapon. Judah and Ephraim constitute Zion. Some citizens of the northern tribes (Ephraim) joined the restoration community. In biblical prophecy, however, Ephraim was declared to be “not my people,” i.e., Gentiles. So prophecies envisioning the reunion of Judah and Ephraim point to the eventual union of Jews and Gentiles in one body.

As Zechariah develops the figure, Judah is the bow, Ephraim the arrow. Both together—a unified people—are essential to having a lethal weapon.147 Tread...my bow references the Hebrew custom of using the foot to string the bow. In 9:10 Yahweh cut off the battle bow from his people because they will not need physical weapons of war. The holy people will not use weapons for defense or advancement; but they will be a weapon in the hands of their God.

b. Adversaries in the holy war (9:13b): and stir up your sons O Zion, against your sons, O Greece. The Jews were protected from the rampaging army of Alexander, although he had every reason to punish Jerusalem for assisting Tyre during the siege (cf. v 8). Eventually, however, Zion will have a showdown with Greece. Is Zechariah referring to the Greek empires of antiquity? Or is he using Greece as earlier prophets used Assyria, Egypt, Edom, et al as symbols for all the enemies of God’s people? The prediction pertains initially to Maccabean victories over the Greek Seleucids during the intertestamental period. These victories, however, were typical of the Messiah's victories over his enemies.

3. Intervention of Yahweh (9:14-15):

a. Description of the Lord's coming (9:14): This v depicts the assistance that Yahweh gives his people in their struggles with hostile powers.

aa. Yahweh defends them from above (9:14a): And Yahweh shall appear over them and like lightning his arrow shall go out. In the time of battle against enemies Yahweh shall appear over his people. Lightning is Yahweh’s weapon. The figure is of a storm cloud hovering over the people. Yahweh uses a lightning bolt as a signal arrow to initiate the

147McComiskey (MPEEC, 1171) follows the Hebrew accents and renders: “For I will bend Judah for myself, as a bow, I will fill [the hand with] Ephraim.” This translation has the text speak of two bows.
people are spattered with blood. Divine assistance appears to have been present during the wars with the Greeks in the second century BC. That same assistance has also been present in every assault against the kingdom of ruled by the lowly king of v 9.

bb. Yahweh joins with them from below (9:14b): and the Lord Yahweh with the trumpet shall blow and he shall come with the whirlwinds of the south. Along with the signal arrow, the trumpet signals the approach of Yahweh and the start of battle; it also directs the movement of troops during the conflict. Yahweh is in charge. Perhaps in the poet’s imagination, thunder is being compared to a battle trumpet. The whirlwinds of the south, the most violent, may be viewed as the war chariot of Yahweh in which the mighty King leads his troops into battle. Cf. Isa 21:1. The south (lit. t_m_n) might be rendered as a proper name, referring to one of the major Edomite cities. If this is so, then Yahweh comes from Teman as in Hab 3:3.

b. Results of the Lord’s coming (9:15):

aa. God’s people protected (9:15a): And Yahweh of Hosts shall be a shield over them. The title Yahweh of Hosts has military connotations. It emphasizes the unlimited power God has to protect his people. A shield over them reflects the language of Isa 31:5 where Yahweh promises to protect Jerusalem.

bb. God’s people strengthened (9:15b): and they shall eat... Some think the picture is that of a lion devouring the prey (Cf. Nm 23:24). This, however, is probably reading too much into the verb. More likely those who were once prisoners in the waterless pit are now strengthened by the consumption of food.

cc. God’s people emboldened (9:15c): and they shall subdue sling stones. Strengthened by heavenly food, God’s people go boldly on the attack. They will subdue (r. kb_), lit., “tread down,” sling stones, probably a symbol for the enemy that is trodden under foot.

dd. God’s people victorious (9:15d): and they will drink and make a noise as through wine and will become full, like the sacrificial bowls, like the corners of the altars. The picture is that of a boisterous feast. God’s people will celebrate their redemption even while under attack by their enemies. Those who were released from the waterless pit will be refreshed. They will drink of the water of life that God himself provides. Refreshed by their drink, the redeemed of the Lord make a noise (r. hmm). This verb is used of the roar of waves (Jer 5:22) and the din created by multitudes or armies (Isa 17:12; Jer 6:23). As through wine suggests boisterous, uninhibited noise like that resulting from the consumption of intoxicating drink. Become full is

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148 Alternatively, lightning bolts going forth from the cloud are the arrows of God's judgment.
149 Alternatively, Yahweh is depicted as marching triumphantly in the midst of the roaring winds.
150 Others think the reference is to the messianic celebration banquet referenced in Isa 25:6.
151 Others (e.g., McComiskey) think the picture is that of a violent destruction of enemies in which God’s people are spattered with blood.
another reference to their eating. Those who once were emaciated and dying in the waterless pit are now depicted feasting until they want no more. The *sacrificial bowls* and *corners of the altars* are both used to underscore the degree of fullness.\(^{152}\)

There are numerous examples of God's special intervention on behalf of the Maccabees in the second century BC. See 1 Macc 3:16-24; 4:6-16; 7:40-50; 2 Macc 2:21-22; 3:24; 5:2-4; 11:8; 12:11, 15, 22, 28, 37 etc. These victories, however, were only the foretaste of the spiritual conquest of those who march under the banner of cross.

D. Coming Triumphant Savior (9:16-17):

1. **Reason for the promise (9:16):**

   a. Yahweh will act (9:16a): *And Yahweh their God will deliver them in that day.* Whenever his people come under attack God will be there for them. The down payment on this promise came during the war with the Greek kingdoms in the second century BC. The promise, however, embraces the rescue of his people in the messianic era when the lowly king of v 9 rules from sea to sea.

   b. Glory of God's people (9:16b, c):

      aa. Picture one (9:16b): *as a flock, his people.* The picture is of God the Good Shepherd who battles all beasts that attempt to molest the flock. The term *flock* is used 9x of God's people in this book.

      bb. Picture two (9:16c): *for (they are) stones of a crown displayed upon his land.* For *(ki)* introduces the reason Yahweh will deliver his people. While the enemies are sling stones trodden under foot, God's people are *stones of a crown,* i.e., jewels in a king's crown. They are *displayed*\(^{153}\) upon Yahweh’s land, elsewhere called Immanuel’s land (Isa 8:8). The land is the crown—symbol of Yahweh’s sovereignty—in which the precious stones, the redeemed people, are placed.\(^{154}\)

      This v has given reassurance to God’s people in every age. The enemy may enjoy temporary success. In the end, however, the divine Warrior-King will deliver his people from every foe. It is not the inherent worthiness of this people that triggers heavenly intervention. It is the fact that they are the symbols of Yahweh’s sovereign rule.

2. **Results of the promise (9:17):**

   a. Exclamation (9:17a): *For how great is its goodness and how great is its beauty.* For *(ki)* introduces the reason the land can be compared to a crown. The suffix *its* refers to the nearest masculine antecedent, *crown,* which is a metaphor for the land. A land is said to possess *goodness (tūbh)* when it produces abundantly, i.e., it is good to its inhabitants.\(^{155}\)

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\(^{152}\)Cf. NRSV “they will be filled like a (sacrificial) basin, (drenched) like the corners of the altar.”

\(^{153}\)English versions generally take mitnō̄ssōt (r. nss = displayed; prominent; raised) as a biform of mitnō̄̄tsstsōt (r. nsts = sparkle, glitter).

\(^{154}\)Others think the white sheep grazing under the brilliant oriental sun on a small field might be figuratively called *jewels.*

\(^{155}\)*Goodness* is sometimes a figure for spiritual blessing as well (Ps 65:4).
that possesses good~ess can also be said to possess beauty. Nothing was
more beautiful to the eyes of ancient man than lush vineyards and
undulating fields of grain. So Israel is a productive and appealing land. As
such it is an appropriate symbol for the NT land of promise (Heb 3, 5), the
kingdom of Christ.

b. Explanation (9:17b): Grain shall make the young men flourish and new
wine the virgins. The land abundantly produces grain and new wine, the
linchpins of ancient Israelite agriculture. Those who were once prisoners
in the waterless pit (v 11) now will flourish, i.e., they will find
nourishment and refreshment in the messianic land of promise. Grain
(d_g_n) is a general word for cereals. Common grains in the biblical world
included wheat (Gn 30:14), spelt or emmer (Ex 9:32), barley (Ex 9:31),
and millet (Ezek 4:9). New wine (tirô_) refers to the first pressings of the
grapes, not fermented wine. In Christ’s kingdom the grain and new wine
have their counterparts in the loaf and cup of communion, the fruit and
symbol of the abundant salvation that believers have in Christ. Young men
and virgins point to the vitality and abundant life of those who inhabit the
messianic land.

Interventions by Yahweh
10:1-12

A. Conditions Requiring Intervention (10:1-2): Zechariah returns from future
messianic salvation to the present evil age.

1. Implicit in exhortation (10:1):

a. Exhortation to pray (10:1a): Ask from Yahweh rain in the time of the
latter rain. Ask is a general command to the people (cf. Ezek 36:37).
Fertility depends upon rain; rain (m_t_r) depends upon God. Zechariah
may be suggesting that the prosperity predicted in 9:17 would only come
when the people began to beseech God for it. The early rain occurred at
the autumnal equinox; the latter rain (malqô_), at the vernal equinox. The
presence of this exhortation implies that the postexilic community was
drifting back into the same sins that marked previous generations. This
conclusion is confirmed by the follow v.

A prayer for rain is most appropriate in the midst of a drought. Haggai
(1:5-6, 10-11) mentions a drought, but it cannot be the one to which
Zechariah refers. That drought was connected with lack of temple
progress. This drought must be a much later occasion.

b. Exhortation reinforced with promise (10:1b): Yahweh who makes the
lightning; and showers of rain he will give to them, to everyone grass in
the field. These words serve as an encouragement to ask for rain in two
ways. First, Zechariah affirms that Yahweh is in the rain-making business.
Lightning (chazîzîm) is used elsewhere only in Job (28:26; 38:25). The
lightning here is not a weapon of God as in 9:14 but is an accompaniment
of the welcomed showers. In fact the term may refer to storm clouds rather
than lightning per se. Earlier prophets struggled mightily to make God’s people understand that the rains came from the Lord.\textsuperscript{136}

Second, Zechariah promises a positive response to a sincere request for rain. These words bring to mind the ask-and-receive promise of Jn 16:24. \textit{Showers of rain (t·mar ge_em)} is lit., “rain of plenty” or “pouring rain.” The phrase indicates the abundance of the response of Yahweh.

Third, Zechariah stresses that everyone will benefit from the rains that Yahweh will send. \textit{To everyone} (lit. “to a man”) suggests abundant provision for man and beast. \textit{Grass of the field (’esebh bass_deh)} in this context refers to edible vegetation.

2. \textit{Explicit in explanation (10:2a):} In pre-exilic Israel there was an on-going debate about who gives the rain, Yahweh or Baal. There is no mention now of Baal; but still there was a reluctance on the part of the community to rely completely on Yahweh for the annual rains.

a. \textit{Undependable guidance (10:2a, b):}

aa. \textit{From teraphim (10:2a):} \textit{For the teraphim have spoken vanity… For} (ki) introduces the explanation for the previous exhortation, viz., because diviners and false prophets cannot bring the rains or predict when they will fall. \textit{Teraphim} are mentioned 7x in OT. They were images, sometimes in human form and sometimes life size. They were kept at shrines, but were also found in private houses. Evidently they were among the instruments used by diviners to predict or influence the future (cf. 2 Kgs 23:24; Ezek 21:21). Those who spoke by making use of the teraphim have spoken \textit{vanity (’_ven)}, i.e., an empty, worthless message.

bb. \textit{From diviners (10:2b):} \textit{and the diviners have seen a lie and speak dreams of deceit; they comfort in vain.} Diviners (haqq_s-mim) are those who pretend to predict the future. What they see in various omens or dreams is a \textit{lie (’eger)}, i.e., untrue and therefore a deception (cf. 8:17).\textsuperscript{137} Their dreams were \textit{deceit (’v’)} both to themselves and to those with whom those dreams were shared. \textit{Comfort in vain} indicates that their promises of rain and prosperity, for example, were not fulfilled.

b \textit{Unrestrained sheep (10:2c): Therefore they have gone their way like sheep.} \textit{Therefore} introduces the consequences of following lying oracles and deceptive diviners. Without proper guidance from their leaders, the people \textit{have gone their way}, i.e., wandered aimlessly, like a flock of sheep.\textsuperscript{138} Zechariah is not looking back on the exile to Babylon; he alludes to the wandering away from God by the post-exilic community following the completion of the temple.

c. \textit{Unworthy leaders (10:2d): they are continually oppressed because there is no shepherd.} Continually oppressed is imperfect. It can refer to

\textsuperscript{136}Isa 30:22-23; Jer 5:24; 14:22; 51:15-19.
\textsuperscript{137}Other prophets as well accused these self-appointed prophets of lying: Jer 27:9-10; 29:8-9; Mic 3:7.
\textsuperscript{138}The \textit{like sheep} comparison is used 5x elsewhere: Ps 44:11; 49:14; 78:52; Isa 53:6; Jer 12:3.
continuous action in the past, or, as Keil proposes, the present tense implying that the oppression continued in Zechariah's day. No shepherd must mean there was no true or godly shepherd. The phrase again distances the setting of this periscope from the earlier chs of the book which were written in the days of godly Zerubbabel and Joshua. It appears that after the deaths of this godly duo the spiritual and civil leaders were no longer worthy to bear the title “shepherd.”

B. Provisions for Messianic Salvation (10:3-4):
1. Removal of tyrannical leaders (10:3a): Against the shepherds my wrath is kindled and upon the he-goats shall I visit (my wrath). The shepherds are the leaders of the Judeans in the period after the completion of the temple. It is possible that the term also includes the foreign rulers who dominated Israel during the postexilic period. My wrath is lit. “my nose,” the redness of which indicated the state of burning anger to the ancients. He-goats are a figure for leaders or chieftains. Cf. Isa 14:9; Ezek 34:17. The verb visit (r. pqd) has the connotation of turning the attention to someone or something. The focusing of God’s attention results in either judgment or blessing.

2. Empowerment of his people (10:3b):
   a. He visits his flock (10:3b): For Yahweh of Hosts shall visit his flock the house of Judah… For (ki) introduces the reason for the divine outburst in the first half of the v. The corrupt, incompetent and worthless shepherds of the first half of this v must be removed before Yahweh can bring forth to his flock the Good Shepherd of the following ch. The verb visit (r. pqd) is used for the second time in this v, this time in a positive sense. When Yahweh visits his flock he sees their misery and focuses on their needs. Flock is defined by house of Judah, all that survived of the Israel of the Exodus. Depicting God has the shepherd of his people is a common motif in biblical literature.159

   b. He transforms his flock (10:3c): and he shall make them as a majestic horse in the battle. In 9:10 the horse is removed from Jerusalem in the messianic age, for the kingdom of messiah will not advance by physical arms. Now the shepherdless sheep are transformed into a majestic warhorse on which God rides to battle against his foes. This is a figure that promises strength and courage to God's people (Dods). The figure also reminds them that Yahweh advances against the enemy only so far as they carry him. God does not accomplish his work on earth without the church but by means of it. The allusion may be to the Maccabean victories over the Syrian Greeks which were a preparation for the coming of Messiah.

3. God provides for messianic salvation by bringing forth from Judah a divine prince (10:4): Divine visitation of the flock results in the appearance of a great ruler. From him, referring to Judah, is used 4x in this v to emphasize that the great future ruler and his associates will come from the very same people

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159In the Psalms: 23:1; 74:1; 78:52; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7; 100:3. The theme of a ruler as a shepherd is common in the prophets: Isa 40:11; 44:28; Jer 6:3; 23:2-4; Ezek 34; 37:24.
that were used as Yahweh’s majestic horse in battle. The first three expressions are verbless, setting them apart from the fourth clause where a finite verb appears. By the time of Zechariah it was well established in messianic prophecy that Messiah would come from the family of David within the tribe of Judah.

a. Corner (10:4a): From him the Corner… The Corner (pinn_h) is used in Isa (19:13) and Ps 118:22 of present or future rulers. The Corner is the stone that is at the junction of two walls. It is probably the same as the Cornerstone in Isa 28:16. “Comparing a ruler to a cornerstone emphasized the stability and the adhesive power that a good ruler gives to his people.”

b. Nail (10:4b): from him the Nail… Nail (y_t_r) is used of (1) the stake that fastens the cord of a tent; (2) a nail used in building with timber; (3) a peg used for hanging arms and utensils on a wall. Thus, the Nail is one who holds or holds together the nation. This is another title for Messiah. The term suggests security and reliability in a leader. There is a possible allusion in this title to Isa 22:22-24 where Eliakim of the house of David was compared to “a nail in a sure place.”

c. Battle Bow (10:4c): from him the Battle Bow… Battle Bow (qe_et milch_m_h) is used only here in the OT, but it was a common royal designation in the Near East. This is a figure for the King as a warrior. In 9:10 the physical battle bow is removed from the messianic kingdom, for it will not be necessary. The humble king who comes in peace during his first coming, comes to aid his people against their adversaries as a mighty warrior.

d. All Ruler (10:4d): from him shall go out the All Ruler… The verb is imperfect, setting the temporal framework for the assertion as future with respect to Zechariah. The rendering All Ruler (kol nôg_s) is based on two observations of the context. First, the first three titles in this v seem to refer to a glorious individual ruler. Second, the previous titles are positive, at least in respect to God’s people. The usual understanding of kol nôg_s is that it refers to a number of officers, perhaps those who aid Messiah in administering his kingdom. The term ruler (nôg_s) is used in the OT for a taskmaster or exactor. If the word has this meaning here it would indicate that the people of God shall subjugate their enemies,

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160R. Smith, WBC, 264.
161Mason, CNEB, 100.
162Cf. NIP which takes the first three titles as collectives.
163The phrase is rendered “every ruler” (NIV; NASB); “every commander” (NRSV).
OPPRESS them and exact tribute from them. But the term apparently is used in a more general sense of “ruler” in Isa 3:12; 60:17.\(^{164}\)

e. **Unity of authority (10:4e): together.** The significance of the adverb *together* (*yachd_v*) is unclear.\(^{165}\) Perhaps it is best to regard the adverb as referring to all four elements in the v collectively, not as separate entities that come together. All these together come from Judah at the same time for they are all part of a messianic package. All of the qualities portrayed in the four preceding titles come together in Messiah.

C. **Salvation as Military Victory** (10:5-7): In these vv the change which will come over God’s people after Yahweh of Hosts, in the person of Messiah, visits his flock (cf. v 3).

1. **Description of the victory (10:5a-c):**
   a. **Victory over infantry (10:5a): And they shall be like mighty men trampling in the mire of the streets in the battle...** The scene shifts now from battle preparation to the thick of battle. The plural verb has as it antecedent the house of Judah in v 3. The *mighty men* are the citizen soldiers in the army of the Ruler who comes riding a donkey (9:9). These warriors are united; they are on the march. They are not deterred by any obstacle or opposing force. The gates of Hades will not prevail against the army of the King. Surely, however, in *the mire of the streets* means more than a depiction of the armies of God marching out to battle. *Mire* may be a figure of contempt for the adversary (cf. Mic 7:10); or the thought may be that they trample their enemies into the mire. The thought is similar to 9:15 where God’s people trample sling stones.
   b. **Victory because of God’s presence (10:5b): and they will fight because Yahweh is with them.** God’s people are successful in battle because Yahweh is fighting alongside his people. God’s people overcome enemies through the power God supplies (cf. 4:6). The appearance of the Corner, the Peg and the Battle Bow and the All Ruler (v 4) is Yahweh’s doing.
   c. **Victory over cavalry (10:5c): and the riders of horses shall be put to shame.** Israel’s force mainly was infantry; that of her enemies in Zechariah’s period was mostly cavalry. *Put to shame* (r. *bô_* in Hiphil) is often coupled with military defeat in the OT. The people of God will prevail over those better armed.

2. **Focus on Judah (10:6a): I will strengthen the house of Judah...** Again we are reminded of the mighty defender who hovers over his people (9:15). Again we see the principle that God fights with and through his people, not in their stead (cf. v 3).

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\(^{164}\) Unger thinks that what is meant here is that the *noges*—oppressors—will depart from Judah under the reign of the Messiah, i.e., there will be no more oppressor for the people of God. Cf. 9:8.

\(^{165}\) NIV emends the text to move *yachd_v* to the beginning of the next v. NASB translates *yachd_v* with *kol nog_s* = “every ruler together.”
3. **Focus on Ephraim (10:6b-7):** Judah already had returned from exile. But what was the future of Ephraim—those Israelites who were carried away into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BC? Zechariah now addresses that issue.

   a. **Salvation (10:6b):** and the house of Joseph I will save. The house of Joseph is the old northern kingdom. It is so called because Joseph was the father of the two leading tribes in the north, Ephraim and Manasseh. In biblical prophecy Ephraim or the house of Joseph is a symbol for those who are not God’s people (Hos 1:9), i.e., Gentiles. The theme of messianic salvation for Ephraim as well as Judah recalls 9:10, 13. Gentiles will experience deliverance or salvation, which is parallel to the strengthening of the house of Judah in the previous clause. This suggests that strengthening and salvation support and explain each other. Gentiles will join Jews in the conflict and share in the victory. The salvation is not merely deliverance, but positive salvation as in 9:16 (Keil).

   b. **Restoration (10:6c): and I will restore**\(^{166}\) **them**... Apparently the pronominal suffix refers to Ephraim since Ephraim is the subject immediately before and in the following v. Restore is the opposite of cast off in the following clause. Thus the restoration envisioned is one of spiritual position, not geographical possession. Those of ethnic Ephraim who desired to return to the homeland had done so already by the time these words were penned. So the promise here is of a restoration to divine favor. Not since Noah walked with God (Gn 6:9) had there been any spiritual relationship between Yahweh and someone outside the Abrahamic covenant family.

   c. **Reconciliation (10:6d):** because I will have compassion on them and they shall be as though I had not rejected them... Because (kî) introduces the reason or basis of Ephraim’s restoration to divine favor. The basis of messianic salvation is Yahweh’s compassion and mercy. When God cast off (r. znch) Ephraim he expelled them from the land, declared them not to be his people, cut them off from covenant promises, and declared that he was not their God (Hos 1:4-9). Ephraimites were scattered among the Gentiles. For all intents and purposes, they were Gentiles. The separation between God and Ephraim will end because God takes the initiative in bringing it to an end. As though I had not cast them off underscores the completeness of the restoration. Rejected (r. znch) means to spurn. It expresses God’s strong abhorrence of sin, and of those caught up in it.

   d. **Reformation (10:6e):** for I am Yahweh their God, and I will respond to them. For (kî) introduces an explanation of an explanation. There are two reasons given why God so completely restores Ephraim (= Gentiles) that their past repudiation and humiliation is completely forgotten. First, it is the very nature of God to become involved in redemption, salvation, deliverance and forgiveness. That is what the name Yahweh implies. Yahweh is in the forgiveness business. He does it better than anyone else.

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\(^{166}\)Some prefer to take the verbal form from the r. *y-* _h_, “to sit, dwell.” The context, however, weighs in favor of the r. _zh_ , “to return, restore.”
The essence of his nature is compassion, and compassion knows no finer demonstration than in forgiveness.

Second, Yahweh’s exercise of compassion is a response to Ephraim. The verb respond or answer (r. 'nh) has God as the subject 67x in the OT. In the majority of these occurrences, the divine response comes as a result of a person’s call or request. The present passage is one of only five where God answers without someone’s request; but in each of these cases the greater context suggests that petition had indeed been made prior to the response by the Lord. Furthermore, the suffix them suggests a response to a petition on the part of those that Yahweh promises to answer rather than Yahweh’s general response to the miserable condition of his people. So the clause suggests that God is reconciled to those who petition for reconciliation, i.e., those who repent and seek his mercy.

d. Transformation (10:7a): and Ephraim shall be like a mighty man... In v 5 the house of Judah was compared to mighty men (g-bh rîm). Here the singular of the same word is used (a collective in NIV) to portray converted Ephraim. The men of Ephraim shall prove themselves mighty heroes in the spiritual conflict of the messianic age.

e. Jubilation (10:7b): and their heart shall rejoice as through wine and their sons shall see and rejoice; their heart shall exult in Yahweh. Ephraim shall hasten to the battle like men refreshed and strengthened by wine. Reference to their sons suggests two things. First, the jubilation over the restoration of “Ephraim” may be a long time in the future from Zechariah’s day. Second, the jubilation of restored Ephraim is not a passing emotion. The children of restored “Ephraim” shall be led to a joyful relationship with Yahweh by observing the courageous actions of their fathers. This joy is generated by association with the humble king of 9:9 and the privilege of participation in his glorious kingdom.

D. Salvation as Gathering (10:8-12): These vv develop a different picture of the same events depicted in vv 3-7. Having spoken of “the house of Judah” and the ‘house of Joseph” separately, Zechariah now sets forth the purpose of God in regard to the unified nation.

1. Promise of the great gathering (10:8):
   a. Means of it (10:8a): And I will whistle for them and I shall gather them... The imagery of shepherd and sheep is suggested by the verb whistle or pipe (r. _rq). The subject of the verb is Yahweh. This same verb was used twice by Isaiah to describe God’s signal in calling together nations to accomplish his purposes (cf. Isa 5:26-27; 7:18-19). The whistle is parallel to gather (r. qbts). So the shepherd attracts his sheep by his distinctive whistle.

   b. Explanation of it (10:8b): because I have redeemed them... Because (kî) introduces the explanation for the whistling metaphor. Yahweh had

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167In Psalms God is the subject of ‘nh 31 of 33 uses.

168Isaiah depicted Yahweh whistling to summon the invaders of Judah. Cf. Isa 5:26; 7:18, 19.
redeemed (r. pdh) his people (cf. Isa 62:12; Jer 31:11). Those who are gathered are the redeemed. From what they are redeemed is not made explicit. Originally this verb had commercial connotation, referring to the payment of a sum for the transfer of ownership (e.g., Lv 19:20). It is frequently associated with the deliverance from Egypt. As time went on the term broadened until it came to be equivalent to “deliver” or “save.” In the Psalms a person might be redeemed from danger, the hand of human oppression, death, or sin (e.g., Ps 130:7-8). The messianic context of the present passage suggests that Yahweh delivers his people from sin and its consequences.

c. Result of it (10:8c): and they shall increase as they have increased. The gathering and redemption in this v most likely refer to the gathering of the people of God out of the world by the gospel. The result of this gathering is the multiplication of the holy nation in which all the redeemed are citizens (1 Pet 2:9). Just as the Israelites grew so much in Egypt (Ex 1:7, 12), so will NT Israel grow through the evangelistic proclamation of the gospel. The multiplication of the nation by the inclusion of those from distant lands is a prominent theme in this book (cf. 1:17; 2:6-11; 6:15; 8:7-8; 9:7).

2. Prelude to the great gathering (10:9): This v is the most difficult one in the ch due to the fact that an explicit subject is not stated for any of the four verbs.

a. Sowing (10:9a): And I will sow them among the peoples… Yahweh will sow his people—those who are gathered and redeemed in the preceding v—as one sows seed in expectation of a bountiful harvest, i.e., population growth. This is a theme introduced originally by Hosea. The entire Christian Age is characterized by this sowing. Among the peoples indicates the sphere of the sowing. The church has been gathered out of the world so as to be sent into the world to preach the gospel.

b. Remembering (10:9b): and in far distant places they shall remember me… Remember in the OT means more than merely recalling to mind. This verb has the sense of responding positively to God, even making mention of God (cf. Ezek 6:9). But who remembers Yahweh, those who are sown (the gathered/redeemed) or those among whom they are sown (the peoples)? Either interpretation is possible. The nearest antecedent is peoples. This suggests that the remembering of Yahweh is the response of the peoples to the sowing of the gathered/redeemed. Those outside the family of God begin to acknowledge him as their Creator and God as a result of the evangelistic witness of new covenant Israel.

c. Thriving (10:9c): and they shall live with their children… Live (r. chyh) connotes enjoying the blessings of God’s covenant. It is a word that describes the condition that follows repentance (Amos 5:4, 6). Gentile peoples come to fully enjoy the privileges of new covenant Israel. This is equivalent to the abundant life of which Jesus spoke—spiritual renewal—that results from the new birth. Mention of their children

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169 Cf. Hos 1:11; 2:23; Jer 31:27; Ezek. 36:9-10. It is unlikely that the r. zr’ here connotes scattering as in NIV. The verb is never used of scattering, or dispersing, in a bad sense (Baron).
indicates that the witness in distant places is on-going from one generation to the next.

d. **Returning** (10:9d): *and they shall return.* The *return* (r. ̀úbh) is not geographical (as in return from exile) but spiritual. The verb suggests a return to God with all that entails. This return is not a result of the new birth to life, but is concurrent with it. Gentile peoples will return to the God they abandoned early on in the history of mankind (Rom 1:19-21). Reconciliation and restoration to fellowship are involved.

3. **Picture of the gathering** (10:10-12):
   a. **Release from captivity** (10:10a): *And I will bring them from the land of Egypt and from Ashur will I gather them.* At the time Zechariah wrote the bondage in Egypt was a distant memory, and Assyria no longer existed. It is, then, highly unlikely that this v refers to the physical lands of Egypt and Assyria. Rather God's people are pictured being gathered out of the great historical lands of captivity (cf. 2:6). In this context these lands symbolize the bondage of sin. In the messianic no oppressor can separate God’s people from their spiritual inheritance. As in v 8, the words point to a general reassembling and reorganization of the people of God (Dods).
   b. **Bulging population** (10:10b, c):
      aa. **Location** (10:10b): *And unto the land of Gilead and Lebanon I will bring them...* Yahweh brings his people out of bondage (Egypt/Assyria) and into the Promised Land of salvation. *Gilead and Lebanon* are the antithesis of Egypt and Assyria. As such they represent for God’s people emancipation from Satan’s bondage whatever form that might take. Beyond that, Gilead/Lebanon symbolizes expansion, for neither was considered part of the Promised Land envisioned by Moses.170 Messiah’s kingdom includes both, and more. Gilead/Lebanon also symbolizes God’s provision in the messianic kingdom. Both regions were noted for their fertility. *Gilead,* noted for its lush pastures, symbolizes the Good Shepherd’s provision for his flock (cf. Jer 50:19-20; Mic 7:14). *Lebanon* is associated with restored Zion as a provider of resources (Isa 60:13; 35:2, 10).
      bb. **Multiplication** (10:10c): *and no (place) shall be found for them.* The promise of multiplication from v 8 is amplified. There will not be enough room in Gilead and Lebanon for the swelling numbers of converts (cf. Isa 49:20-21). The point is that the kingdom of God cannot be confined to Greater Palestine any longer. The Abrahamic promise of innumerable offspring finds ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom of Christ.
   c. **Supernatural assistance** (10:11):
      aa. **Intervention** (10:11a): *And he shall cross over the sea (which is) affliction...* The subject is Yahweh. A metaphorical sea of affliction momentarily separates him from his people. The reference is not to affliction in general but to the suffering of God’s people at the hands of oppressors. Yahweh crosses that sea to come to the aid of his

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170The northern border of the Promised Land stretched to Lebanon (Dt 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:4).
people—to join them in their suffering. The metaphor may have been suggested to the writer’s mind by the Red Sea incident in Exodus.

**bb. Confrontation (10:11b): and shall smite waves in the sea and all the depths of the river shall dry up… Smite waves** indicates that God would make a way through the sea of affliction for his people. The river is either the Euphrates (or Nile) which is a symbol of humiliation by the ruling power (Assyria or Egypt). The oppressive power can no longer hold them captive.  

**cc. Liberation (10:11b): and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down and the rod of Egypt shall be removed.** Pride of Assyria and rod of Egypt symbolize oppression. The oppressors of God’s people shall pass from the scene (cf. 9:8). It is the gentle king riding a donkey (9:9) that brings this deliverance from oppression. Messiah’s kingdom is spiritual; it cannot be taken captive. Its capital—heavenly Zion—can never be taken. Messiah smashes the power of sin, the greatest oppressor (Rom 6:9). Death is conquered (1 Cor 15:55). Inner peace that can never be shattered is ushered in (Jn 14:27). Zechariah’s hope as expressed here is a reflection of the same hope articulated by Isaiah over two centuries earlier (Isa 9:4, 6).

**d. Divine strength (10:12a): And I will make them strong in Yahweh…**  
The oracle formula at the end of the v indicates that the first person speaker is Yahweh. He speaks of himself in the third person so the redemptive implications of the name Yahweh will be underscored in the minds of the auditors. Those rescued from bondage will be a strong people, or to use the words of Paul, they will be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Eph 6:10). They will be ready to undertake mighty exploits in his name.

**e. Sanctified walk (10:12b): and in his name they shall walk (oracle of Yahweh).** Walk (r. hlk in Hithpael) means “to walk up and down” or “walk to and fro.” It is the same form used to describe the walk of Enoch and Noah (Gn 5:22; 6:9). The word suggests a way of life. Converts will live their lives by the principles and power symbolized by the name or attributes of God. Cf. Mic 4:5; Col 3:7.  

In Messiah the name of Yahweh was personified. He was the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15). This v further develops the theme of empowerment previously encountered in 4:6.

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**Rejected Shepherd**  
**Zechariah 11:1-17**

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171 The imagery of smiting the waves may have been inspired by the actions of Xerxes when his double bridge across the Hellespont was destroyed by a storm in 480 BC. Xerxes ordered that the Hellespont receive three hundred lashes in punishment for destroying his bridges (Herodotus, Persian Wars 7:35).

172 Another possibility is that the river is the Jordan, the allusion being to the crossing of the Jordan by Joshua. Thus God leads his people out of oppression aThend into the messianic Promised Land.

173 Another possibility is that walk about means that the converts go about as messengers and representative sharing the blessings of Messiah’s gospel (Baron).
Ch 11 brings the first burden to a climatic conclusion. The king who enters Jerusalem riding on a lowly donkey is now rejected. The ch has a peculiar structure which summarized looks like this: Result—Reason—Further Result.

A. Judgment on Judah’s Leaders (11:1-3): These vv form a bridge from ch 10 to 11:4-17. The term Lebanon has been picked up from 10:10, and the term shepherds prepares the reader for the rest of the ch.

1. Tree metaphor (11:1-2): Three strong and valuable types of trees (cedar, cypress, oak) are used to represent proud rulers. Some sort of judgment is sweeping southward through Lebanon, Bashan and the Jordan valley. The idea is similar to 9:1-6 where the invasion is of Hadrach, Tyre and Philistia. Zechariah is utilizing the language of Jer 25:34-38; Isa 10:34; and Ezek 27:5-6.
   a. Cedars of Lebanon (11:1): Open, O Lebanon, your doors that the fire may consume your cedars. The doors are the mountain passes which gave access to Palestine from the north. The cedars of northern Palestine probably represent the highest ranking members of society (cf. Ezek 17:3). The fire is symbolic of judgment. Thus a judgment sweeps into Palestine from the north.
   b. Fir trees (11:2a): Howl, O cypress trees, for the cedar has fallen. (Those) which are mighty ones have been spoiled. Fir trees grow south of Lebanon. They too should wail for they are about to suffer the same fate as the northern cedars. Since the cedars (the nobles) have fallen there is no hope for the cypress trees (common people). Mighty ones indicates that trees are being used metaphorically of the chiefs of Israel. Given the context and what unfolds in this ch, the invading army is likely that of the Romans who crushed Judea in war AD 66-70.
   c. Oaks of Bashan (11:2b): Howl, O oaks of Bashan, for the inaccessible forest has been brought down. If the inaccessible forest of Lebanon was not spared, much less shall Bashan escape. The destruction is now sweeping into the Jordan valley. Bashan was famous for it oak trees. These proud trees, like the cedars and firs of the preceding v, are metaphorical for leaders of the region. The Roman army is coming closer to Jerusalem.

2. Tree metaphor explained (11:3): The less common metaphor of the trees is explained by the more common metaphor of shepherds and lions.
   a. Howling shepherds (11:3a): The sound of the howling of the shepherds, for their glory is spoiled. The howling of the trees now becomes the howling of the shepherds, a frequent metaphor for national leaders. These are the same shepherds that were introduced in 10:2-3. The glory (’aderet) of shepherds is their pasture land, a metaphor for the land over which the shepherds rule. The verb spoiled (_udd_d_h) links the destruction of the trees in metaphor (v 2) to the destruction of the glory of the shepherds (rulers).

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b. Roaring lions (11:3b): The sound of the roaring of young lions for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Above the wailing of the shepherds, Zechariah now hears the roar of young lions. These lions, like the howling shepherds, symbolize national leaders. The lions roar because their habitat has been destroyed by the judgment fire. The pride of Jordan was the jungle\textsuperscript{175} that lined the River Jordan from north to south. It was a habitat for many wild animals including lions. Here the pride of Jordan symbolizes the land over which the young lions (rulers) have dominion. The third use of spoiled creates a verbal link between the ruination of the forests in v 1 and that of the pride of Jordan. Thus the fire of judgment (Roman army) has now reached the southern extremity of the land of Palestine.

In the opening three vv of this ch the physical destruction of Palestine has been in the forefront. The subtext of these vv is that a destructive judgment will fall upon the people of the land. This of necessity must be, because the desolation of the land involves the destruction of the peoples living in it.

B. Judgment on Judah’s Citizens (11:4-6): This prophecy is one of the most enigmatic in the OT. The prophet performs an action parable, but he does not explain it. The interpretations are almost as numerous as the commentaries on the passage. The passage appears to be an explanation of the causes and manner of the judgment that was sketched in broad outline in the first three vv.

1. Commission (11:4): Thus says Yahweh my God: Shepherd the flock of slaughter. Zechariah is directed to act the role of a shepherd (ruler) to national Israel. This is an action parable in which Zechariah plays the role of the Good Shepherd. Prophetic action parables always pertain to the future; so any idea that Zechariah is portraying some past event or present circumstance cannot be entertained. Zechariah acts as a representative of God. In carrying out this assignment Zechariah was emulating the methods of his illustrious predecessor Ezekiel.\textsuperscript{176}

A flock of slaughter is a flock destined for, exposed to destruction at the hands of their present shepherds. The reason for this commission becomes clear as the passage unfolds. The people of Israel will be treated unmercifully by their leaders or human shepherds. The slaughter flock represents the entire nation. Israel is prophetically viewed as given over to judgment for reasons that will be made clear as the ch unfolds.

Ch 11 amplifies ch 9 in which Messiah rides triumphantly into the city of Jerusalem. It sketches his labors and ministry in trying to seek and to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10:6).

2. Description (11:5): This v illustrates the truth of the designation flock of slaughter in the previous v. The ruthless ways of the leaders of Judah are described under three figures.

\textsuperscript{175}Because of hostilities between the countries of Jordan (east of the Jordan River) and Israel (west of the river) the tangled brush known as the pride of Jordan in biblical times has been defoliated in recent decades.

\textsuperscript{176}Ezekiel’s role playing is reported in Ezek 4:1-17; 5:1-4; 12:1-7.
3. Declaration (11:6):
   a. Withdrawal of divine mercy (11:6a): For I will no longer spare the inhabitants of the land (oracle of Yahweh). For (ki) introduces the explanation for the command to play the role of a shepherd in v 4. No longer spare (r. chml) indicates that God will no longer protect the flock from abuse. Inhabitants of the land is used in the Pentateuch and Historical Books to refer to the Canaanites; but in the prophetic books, beginning with Joel, the phrase is used at least 8x to refer to the current occupants of the land, viz., the Israelites. Here the phrase refers to the postexilic community that was now occupying the land promised to Abraham some fifteen hundred years earlier. God will permit this abuse of the flock for at least one generation of those who occupy the land. The abuse by the leaders is a manifestation of God's anger with His people—part of their punishment for some as yet unspecified act of unfaithfulness. On oracle of Yahweh, see on 1:3.

b. The language in this v is similar to that of Jer 50:6-7.

c. McComiskey (1191-92) thinks the buyers and sellers represent the wealthy and influential members of the community who mistreat the flock with the approval of the shepherds or leaders. Baron (384) identifies the buyers and sellers as Gentile power (i.e., Romans), while the shepherds are the native rulers.
b. Orchestrating divine judgment (11:6b, c): And behold, I will deliver men up… Behold serves to arrest attention and signal an unexpected turn of events. The verb delivering up (r. mts’ in Hiphil) is lit., “causing to be found” (cf. 2 Sam 3:8). Into the hand points to a struggle in which one party gains ascendance over another usually by physical means. As in 8:10 Zechariah identifies two factors leading to the ruin of the nation following the rejection of Messiah: strife within and assault without.

aa. Internal strife (11:6b): each man into the hand of his neighbor. Neighbor (r. ‘a), also meaning “friend, companion, associate”, appears 8x in Zechariah, 6x in the reciprocal phrase (‘î_r_’hû) used here (lit. “a man his neighbor”). The situation described in this v is similar to what transpired during the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (Jer 19:9). The first result of the withdrawal of divine pity is internal strife. The population living in the land when God withdraws his compassion will be rent by civil war. The confusion, strife, hatred and mutual destruction within the Jewish population following their rejection of their true Messiah is chronicled in all its ugly detail by Josephus.

bb. External oppression (11:6c): And into the hand of his king… The second source of ruin for those that rejected Messiah came from the foe without. Into the hand suggests military defeat. Zechariah knows of no future king except Messiah. This entire ch, however, is about the repudiation of Messiah, so king who inflicts military defeat on the Judeans here is certainly not Messiah. His king indicates that this passage looks to the distant future when a king acknowledged by God’s people will oppress and defeat them. This king is the one to whom the flock of God have given their allegiance, i.e., their chosen king. In this case, the Roman emperor is intended. One is reminded of the words of the Jewish leaders in Pilate’s judgment hall: “We have no king but Caesar” (Jn 19:15).

4. Prediction (11:6d): and they shall smite the land and I will not deliver from their hand. The subject of the verb smite (r. ktt in Piel) is his neighbor and his king. The verb has a range of meanings including “beat, crush by beating.” The Piel form is intensive, thus “beat or crush fine.” It is used here as a figure for devastating the land. Thus internal strife and external assault will crush the land where God’s flock resides. I will not deliver from their hand implies that the smiting of the land will be non-stoppable and therefore total. The Roman war against the Jews in AD 66-70 is in view. That war resulted in the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the dismantling of the Judean state.

C. Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:7-14).

1. Ministry of the Good Shepherd (11:7): Zechariah carried out his assignment to shepherd the flock as directed in v 4.

a. General compliance (11:7a): And I became the shepherd of the flock of slaughter, therefore the poor of the flock. Became the shepherd can also be translated “fed.” He “fed the flock” by his ministry of teaching and preaching. The flock is national Israel. The poor of the flock are the
remnant of true believers who were abused by the rest of the flock and the national leaders. By shepherd ing the flock in its entirety Zechariah (symbolizing the Good Shepherd) ministered to the poor of the flock as well. This phrase invariably refers to the godly within the nation that are persecuted and abused by the godless.\(^{179}\) Although rejected by the flock as a whole there would be within the nation a remnant of believers who loved and embraced Messiah (Jn 1:11).

b. Two staffs (11:7b): And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called one Favor and the other I called Bands and I proceeded to shepherd the flock. To make his role as a shepherd to the nation more authentic Zechariah acquired or fashioned two staffs. Shepherds often carried a rod and a staff (Ps 23:4)—a rod to ward off wild beasts; a crooked staff with which to guide the flock and rescue the straying. Zechariah gave names to the two staffs, perhaps carving the names into the wood.\(^ {180}\)

Favor (n_ ᵃ’m) can be translated “beauty” and “pleasantness”.\(^ {181}\) The staff called Favor symbolized the loving, gracious care of the Good Shepherd. The staff called Bands (ch_bhlim) or “Union” (NIV) symbolized the unifying mission of the Good Shepherd. Cf. Jn 10:16. I proceeded to shepherd the flock again indicates that Zechariah acted out the role of the Good Shepherd using the two staffs. Just exactly what he did is left to the imagination of the reader.

2. Rejection of the shepherds (11:8):

a. Cutting off (11:8a): And I cut off three shepherds in one month… The verb cut off (r. kchd in Hiphil) has the sense of cutting off or annihilating in seven passages (e.g., 2 Chr 32:21). In this context, however, the word may mean “removed” or “expelled.” Many different interpretations of the three shepherds have been offered.\(^ {182}\) Perhaps the easiest is to regard this as a reference back to the three classes of shepherds mentioned in v 5—buyers, sellers, shepherds.\(^ {183}\) It is as shepherds that they are cut off, i.e., they were so discredited that they could no long serve effectively as national leaders. One month symbolizes a short space of time. Cf. Hos 5:7.

The key question is how did Zechariah carry out the cutting off of the three shepherds? Did the prophet have enough political clout that he could “fire” three actual leaders? Is the cutting off of the shepherds part of a visionary experience? Did Zechariah verbally cut them off with threats and denunciations? In some unspecified manner Zechariah acted out the cutting off of the national leaders or at least some of the national leaders.

\(^{179}\)Ps 10:2-9; 14:6; 35:10; 37:14; 11:17; 70:5; 72:4; 86:1; 104:16-22; Isa 10:2; 14:32; 41:17.

\(^{180}\)The actions of Zechariah are similar to that of Ezekiel who took two sticks and wrote the names of Ephraim and Judah upon them. There is this difference: Ezekiel’s sticks speak of saving events, while Zechariah’s speak of judgment.

\(^{181}\)The LXX translate kallós—favor, grace, protective care or graciousness.

\(^{182}\)In 1912 Mitchell (ICC, ???) found at least forty conjectures about the identity of the three shepherds. (R. Smith (WBC, 270) suggests that “three shepherds” is like the “three transgressions” of the nations in Amos 1-2. Three is a complete number. So the text simply means that all the evil shepherds were removed.

\(^{183}\)Other views of the three shepherds: (1) kings, priests, prophets; (2) three nations which oppressed Israel; (3) the number three used indefinitely; (4) Moses, Aaron, Miriam (Talmud); (5) three actual leaders in Zechariah’s day.
The cutting off of the shepherds seems to point to the time predicted in vv 1-3 when trees, shepherds and lions—all symbols of national leaders—agonize over their fate and the fate. In terms of fulfillment, the cutting off of the shepherds seems to precede the foreign invasion depicted in the vv that follow.

b. Cutting short (11:8b): and my soul was cut short with them... Soul (nephe) describes humans as conscious beings; but numerous times the term refers to what one may call the heart, emotions or feelings. My soul was cut short (r. qtsr) with them is the testimony of the Good Shepherd regarding the national leadership. The verb lit. means “to be short”; it indicates that the Good Shepherd had reached the limits of his patience.

c. Response (11:8c): and also their soul abhorred me. Abhorred (r bchl) expresses intense disgust. The national leaders despised the Good Shepherd. Did Zechariah lose patience with the national leaders, and did they come to detest the prophet? Or does this symbolically represent the attitude of Jesus toward the national Jewish leaders, i.e., the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, and their attitudes toward him? Perhaps both questions can be answered in the affirmative. What happened to Zechariah the type would be repeated in the relationship between Jesus and the national leaders.

3. Rejection of the flock (11:9-11):

a. Good Shepherd announces his intentions (11:9): And I said, I will not be your shepherd. The one that dies, let it die. The one that is cut off, let it be cut off. And let the rest eat each one the flesh of another. Because the Good Shepherd has been rejected by the national leaders, he abandons the flock (national Israel) to its fate. The one that dies, probably refers to plague. Plague would kill many, and did during the Roman war of AD 66-70. The one that is cut off probably refers to those who died in violent conflict with the Romans. Eat ...the flesh of another points to cannibalism. Many died in famine during the siege of Jerusalem. Josephus documents that some turned to cannibalism to survive.

The passage anticipates an invasion of Palestine from which God will not deliver his people. In the years following Zechariah there were two major Gentile incursions into Palestine—that by Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC, and that by the Romans under Titus in the seventh decade of the first Christian century. God did intervene to bring deliverance to his people in the former ordeal, but not in the latter invasion. Thus the Roman invasion of Palestine that resulted in the destruction of the temple and the Jewish state must be in view.

b. Good Shepherd breaks his covenant with the nations (11:10-11a):

aa. Symbolic action (11:10): And I took my staff, Favor, and I cut it in two to break my covenant that I made with all the peoples... God symbolically withdraws his gracious protection of national Israel because the Good Shepherd was rejected by the flock. In the first person pronouns in v 10 the first two refer to the prophet, the second two refer to the Good Shepherd which he symbolizes in this action
parable. The explanation by the actor glides over into the declaration of the one being portrayed.

My covenant...with all the peoples refers to restrictions placed on Gentile nations to prevent them from afflicting postexilic Israel. These restrictions were now removed, opening up the land to invasion by enemy nations.

bb. Significance (11:11a): and it was broken in that day. In that day refers to the day that the national leaders showed contempt for the Good Shepherd, not to the day when Zechariah broke his staff. So an action performed by Zechariah in his day forecast an action by God over five hundred years in the future. It was broken is feminine, referring to the covenant, not to the staff which is masculine.

c. Good Shepherd's prediction is recognized as the word of God (11:11b): And the poor of the flock, those who watched me, knew that it was the word of God. The poor of the flock are the faithful remnant who received the Good Shepherd. This believing remnant is consisted of those who watched (r. _mr) me. The verb implies careful, perceptive observation. The believing remnant kept their eyes constantly fixed on the Good Shepherd, ready to act according to his directive. These faithful followers knew that it was the word of God, i.e., they knew that national Israel was doomed to attack by the nations (Gentiles). In AD 66-70 the Christians saw the abomination of desolation (Roman legions) approaching Jerusalem. They fled Jerusalem as Jesus had directed (Mt 24:15-22) and took refuge in the town of Pella beyond the Jordan.

4. Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:12-14):

a. Good Shepherd asks the flock to evaluate his services (11:12): And I said unto them: If it is good in your eyes give (me) my hire, and if not, desist. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. The Good Shepherd had the right to demand his wages; but he left it up to the flock to express appreciation in the way the deemed appropriate. His request for his “wages” after the first staff was broken was in reality a call for repentance. The wages that the Good Shepherd desired were repentance, faith, obedience (cf. Mt 21:34). Unlike the wicked shepherds, he puts no constraint on the flock. Here was the opportunity to show their gratitude for all God had done for them. Instead of wages, however, they offer the Good Shepherd an insult (Keil). Thirty pieces of silver was the value of a slave (Ex 21:32). Thus flock mocked the Good Shepherd. Their evaluation demonstrated their ingratitude.

b. Good Shepherd rejected the wages of the flock (11:13):

aa. Directive (11:13a): And Yahweh said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price with which I was evaluated by them. Cast it (r _lk Hiphil impv.) is the verb used for casting torn flesh to the dogs (Ex 22:31), of discarding a corpse left unburied (Isa 14:19), and of idols cast to the moles and bats (Isa 2:20). Thus as the silver was to be flung down with an air of disgust and revulsion.
Zechariah is told to cast the paltry silver pieces to the potter. Presumably perhaps the reason for this directive is that a potter was considered one of the lowliest professions. A potter’s labor was estimated as being of relatively little value. It could be that “cast to the potter” was a proverbial expression for contemptuous treatment.

Goodly price (’eder hay-q_r) is sarcastic meaning something like “magnificent sum” (lit., “the magnificence of the price”). Yahweh takes the treatment of the Good Shepherd as a personal insult. He contemptuously rejected the sum. Goodly price is obviously spoken sarcastically.

bb. Execution (11:13b): So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of Yahweh. The declaration of execution complies with the directive except now it becomes clear that the potter to whom Zechariah cast the coins was in the house of Yahweh. This phrase could simply indicate the venue for the entire symbolic drama. More likely, however, a potter was actually in the temple at the time Zechariah acted out this parable. The potter may have been a temple functionary who made vessels for use in the various rituals. In any case, the announcement of the repudiation of Israel was announced publicly in the very place where the covenant people assembled before Yahweh.

In the fulfillment of this prophetic drama the national leaders were willing to pay Judas thirty pieces of silver for information leading to the private arrest of Jesus. After the betrayal, Judas had a change of heart. The thirty pieces of silver by which Jesus was betrayed was first cast down in the temple by Judas, then was used to purchase a potter's field. Thus the blood money ultimately wound up in the pocket of a potter. It is no wonder that the Gospel writer cites vv 12-13 as a direct prophecy of what happened to Jesus on the night of his betrayal (Mt 27:9-10). \(^{184}\)

f. Breaking of the second staff (11:14): And I cut in two my second staff, Bands to break the brotherhood between Judah and [between] Israel. For some time after the breaking of the first staff the Shepherd retained his second staff. This may point to Shepherd’s reluctance to give up the flock which had been so dear to him. To the very end he waited to be gracious to them if they would but turn unto him. In the absence of any manifestation of repentance he not only had to give them over to Gentile enemies (first staff), but also to the terrible calamity of internal strife.

This ch has previously announced that the future of God’s people would be marked by internecine fighting (v 6) and even cannibalism (v 9).

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\(^{184}\) The passage from Zech 11 is cited as coming from Jeremiah. Matthew seems to be citing the passage by section of Scripture rather than by book. Jeremiah at one time stood at the head of the latter prophets, and for that reason the section may have been cited as “Jeremiah.” Another view: Matthew intent in using the name “Jeremiah” was to signal a connection between this passage in Zech 11 and prophecies concerning the Valley of Hinnom in Jer 18-19, the potter chaps. The Apostle saw a connection between the “field of blood” purchased with thirty pieces of silver and the prediction that the Valley of Hinnom would become the Valley of Slaughter.
The dramatic cutting of the second staff by the Good Shepherd (portrayed by Zechariah) indicates that the time had come for the implementation of this aspect of national judgment. The breaking of the second staff symbolized the dissolution of all bands that held the nation together, the civil and social disunion that paved the way for the victory of the Romans. Jews were dispersed throughout the world. The nation would be shattered into factions as happened after the death of Solomon.

Brotherhood (‘achav h) is used for the only time in the Hebrew Bible. At the time of the schism in 931 BC the Judeans were forbidden to go to war against their “brothers” the Israelites (1 Kgs 12:24). So the term here refers to the fraternal bond that blinds together people of common ancestry. Between (b _n) is regularly repeated in the Hebrew text to indicate the space separating two distinct objects. Here, however, the text emphasizes the brotherhood that previously existed between Judah and Israel. So it may be that in this case b _n has the meaning “among,” i.e., “among Judah and among Israel” (Baron). Judah and Israel is the traditional way designating the tribes descending from Jacob as a whole. In this case the unified nation refers to the people living in Palestine at the time of the rejection of the Good Shepherd.

On the fulfillment of the prediction portrayed in the breaking of the second staff, see on v 9.

D. Coming False Shepherd (11:15-17):
1. Second shepherd commission (11:15): And Yahweh said to me, Yet again take for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. Yet again (’_d) connects this action with the previous one. It implies that the prophet already had acted out the rejection of the Good Shepherd. It is not clear what the equipment of the foolish shepherd was, or how it may have differed from that of the Good Shepherd. Perhaps the text simply means that Zechariah was to again take up the garb, rod, staff, etc. of a shepherd. Foolish (’evil) occurs only here in the Hebrew Bible; but it is equivalent in meaning to a noun/adjective which is used 25x. A “fool” is always morally bad. He despises wisdom and discipline (Prov 1:7), mocks at guilt (Prov 14:9), is quarrelsome (Prov 20:3), licentious (Prov 7:22). It is folly and useless to attempt to instruct such a person (Prov 16:22). The word is frequently used as a synonym of ungodliness (e.g., Ps 14:1). So this time Zechariah was acting the role of one that is the direct opposite the Good Shepherd.

2. Coming of the false shepherd (11:16a): For behold I will raise up a shepherd over the land. For (ki) introduces the explanation of the commission of the previous v. Zechariah’s second shepherd drama, like the first, is prophetic. Behold demands attention and indicates something unexpected. The first person pronoun is emphatic. I will raise up is a Hiphil participle (r qûm). This is the only time in the OT where the first person declaration of raising up

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185"Judah and Israel” is used 11x in the OT. In addition the two with descriptors appear an additional 38x in the same v. Sometimes (e.g., Josh 11:21) the dyad is used geographically.
someone is used of a negative figure.\textsuperscript{186} God raises this shepherd up in the same sense that he raised up the adversaries of national Israel at various points in OT history. The reference is to the permissive will of God. Over the land refers to the land where the Good Shepherd was rejected.

This shepherd must represent some person or power subsequent to rejection of Christ and the Roman invasion of Palestine. This shepherd is not further identified. He is probably the same as his king in v 6. A possible candidate is Titus, commander of the Roman forces that destroyed the temple and ruthlessly mistreated Jerusalem’s survivors.\textsuperscript{187} The lesson is that if people will not follow good leaders they are doomed to suffer under bad ones.

3. \textit{Character of the false shepherd} (11:16b, c):
   a. \textit{What he will not do} (11:16b): The cut off one he will not visit the young he will not visit; the broken he will heal; the one who stands still he will not feed… The false shepherd will be totally unconcerned about the flock. He will not go after the cut off or straying sheep. He will show no particular concern about the young. The sheep that stand still are those too feeble to move. They get no food. This leader is ruthless and heartless.
   b. \textit{What he will do} (11:16b): but the flesh of the fat he will eat and their hoofs he will break. The false shepherd uses the flock for his own purposes. Hoofs he will break suggests that their hoofs will be torn by driving them mercilessly over rough places.\textsuperscript{188}

4. \textit{Condemnation of the false shepherd} (11:17):
   a. \textit{Warning} (11:17a): Woe to the worthless shepherd who forsakes the flock. This is the only woe (חָי) in the book. The word warns of judgment to come. Worthless (לְלִיל) is used 20x in OT. It is used to describe physicians (Job 13:4), utterances of false prophets (Jer 14:14), and in the plural of gods or idols (Lv 19:4). This is God’s estimate and description of the second shepherd. He is designated as worthless because he forsakes the flock, thus proving himself to be a false shepherd (Jn 10:12-13).
   b. \textit{Description} (11:17b): A sword shall be against his arm and against his right eye. The false shepherd falls under the judgment of God. Arm and right eye represent power and understanding. God will deprive him of the power and understanding that he has abused. Sword symbolizes judgment by any means. The sword is against the shepherd’s arm because he did not reach out to assist the needy sheep. The sword is against the right eye because this shepherd did not search out the lost.
   c. \textit{Result} (11:17c): His arm shall be completely dried up and his right eye shall be utterly dimmed. A withered arm and a blind eye will be the result

\textsuperscript{186}First person declarations using the verb raise up appear 8x, six of which refer to the messianic prophet (Dt 18:18), priest (1 Sam 2:35) and king (Jer 30:9). Once this phrase is used of Cyrus the deliverer (Isa 45:13).
\textsuperscript{187}Other proposals include the Romans in general, Antichrist, Herod, false christs, and false prophets.
\textsuperscript{188}Another interpretation: he will tear their hoofs in pieces in his attempts to consume every last morsel of meat or fat (Baron).
\textsuperscript{189}The right arm and right eye may also be linked with ability to defend his subjects. According to R. Smith (\textit{WBC}, 272) the arm of the leader represented strength for defense and the right eye was the one used to see over the shield in aiming his arrow. Under the foolish shepherd the people would be defenseless.
of the divine judgment against this shepherd. If the foolish shepherd is Titus and the emperors he represented, then history records the gradual withering of Roman might and blindness to the needs of the masses within the Roman Empire.

Second Burden
Zechariah 12-14

The second “burden” in Zechariah focuses on great attacks against the messianic Jerusalem from which the Jerusalem that is from above emerges as the center of a new creation.  

A. Introduction (12:1):
1. Subject: (12:1a): The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel (oracle of Yahweh). Literal Israel has been rejected; this is addressed to the messianic theocracy—the people of God in contradistinction to the world of nations that is estranged from God.
2. Speaker (12:1b, c, d): These words are probably taken from a hymn or doxology.  

A. Introduction (12:1):
1. Subject: (12:1a): The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel (oracle of Yahweh). Literal Israel has been rejected; this is addressed to the messianic theocracy—the people of God in contradistinction to the world of nations that is estranged from God.

B. Great Siege (12:2-9): Spiritual Jerusalem in this paragraph comes under intense attack. Even so Yahweh will in the end rescue his people.

1. Picture #1: cup of staggering (12:2):
   a. Jerusalem’s strength (12:2a): Behold, I am about to set Jerusalem a bowl of reeling... Behold (22x in Zechariah) serves to introduce statements that

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190Dumbrell, FOI, 198.
191The words of Zech 12:1b are similar to Isa 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13; Amos4:13.
are shocking, or at least unexpected. The first person pronoun is emphatic in the Hebrew. *About to set* renders a participle that indicates imminent action. Earthly Jerusalem has been crushed in the attack by the Romans at the end of ch 11; but Jerusalem lives on—the Jerusalem that is from above—the church of Christ.

*Bowl of reeling* develops a figure used several times in Scripture as a symbol of the judgment of God that makes its recipients as helpless as those impaired by intoxicants. Elsewhere it is a “cup” (*k_s*) from which men drink. Here, however, it is a *bowl* (*saph*) or basin. The term is used of the vessel used to collect the blood of the Passover lamb (Ex 12:22); it is used of certain temple vessels (Jer 52:19) as well as basins used in a domestic setting (2 Sam 17:28). The use of the word *bowl* may point to the larger dose of intoxicating judgment that Jerusalem’s enemies must consume. On the other hand, the bowl may indicate a vessel that is large enough for attackers to drink out of either together, or one after another in succession.

b. *Jerusalem’s attackers* (12:2b): *to all the peoples round about...* The peoples are hostile powers of the world. *Round about* suggests that the attackers in this first picture are those in closer proximity to Jerusalem. *Under siege* depicts the worldly enemies of heavenly Jerusalem coming against the city of God with murderous intent. Their attacks, however, only lead to confusion. The hostile forces that try to drink from the Jerusalem cup will reel about like drunken men. Thus they will be unable to take the city. Unlike the physical type, this Jerusalem will be impregnable.

c. *Jerusalem’s siege* (12:2c): *even (when) Judah shall be under siege (and) Jerusalem.* A literal rendering of the Hebrew is: “and also upon Judah shall be in the siege against Jerusalem.” Some take this to mean that Judah—at least initially—joins the Gentiles in the attack upon Jerusalem. In vv 5-6, however, Judah and Jerusalem are allies against the attackers. Some 31x in the OT Judah and Jerusalem are named together as comprising the southern kingdom. So the words “also upon Judah” most likely means that Judah experiences the same siege as Jerusalem. *Siege* implies a time of hardship for God’s people. For a time the attackers may have the upper hand. The point, however, is that God’s people collectively will survive the attacks of hostile forces.

2. *Picture #2: burdensome stone* (12:3): In several ways the second picture intensifies and amplifies the first.

a. *Jerusalem’s strength* (12:3a): *And it shall come to pass in that day that I will set Jerusalem as a stone of burden...* In that day, used 6x in this ch, is the day of the attack against spiritual Jerusalem. *A stone of burden* is burdensome stone, a weight too heavy to lift—a weight which wounds and injures those who attempt to carry it.

The origin of the burdensome stone image is disputed. According to some it is taken from construction operations. Another view is that the

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figure is derived from the efforts of the plowman to remove large stones from his field. The most ancient view is that of Jerome who claimed that large stones were used by young men as weights to be lifted in exercise.193

b. Jerusalem’s attackers (12:3b): to all the peoples... The description of the attackers does not have the restricting phrase round about attached as in picture #1. Zechariah considers the possibility that all the nations of the earth will converge to attack Jerusalem. These words point to a larger and potentially more devastating gathering of hostile forces. Is this the same attack envisioned in the previous v? Or is Zechariah anticipating the final all-out assault against NT Jerusalem? (Rev 16:14; Joel 3:9-12). Throughout history there have been from time to time concentrated attacks against Christian faith. All of these point forward to that final assault which the Bible depicts being in progress when the Lord returns.

c. Jerusalem’s deliverance (12:3c): All who burden themselves with her will surely be lacerated, even if all nations of the earth gather against her. In the previous picture the deliverance of Jerusalem was implied; now that deliverance is explicitly mentioned. The attackers reeled but were not injured in the previous picture; now those who attack spiritual Jerusalem will injure themselves. Previously Zechariah alluded to a siege against Jerusalem and Judah, i.e., prolonged operations. Burden themselves with her may be equivalent to siege; but here the enemy seems to be injured as they approach the city. Lacerated (r. srt) means “to incise, scratch.” Use of this term suggests that the stone is jagged as well as heavy. The size of the attacking force is of no consequence. The attackers will themselves be injured even if all the nations of the earth gather against her.194

3. Picture #3: place of befuddlement (12:4): In this v Zechariah uses three rhyming words (timm_h_n; shigg_‘_n; ‘ivv_r_n) to show how Yahweh totally befuddles those who attack his people.195 Seven features of this picture suggest an escalation of imagery: 1) the oracle formula; 2) the triple set of terms 3) the representation of the attackers as a cavalry unit; 4) specific mention of the affliction; 5) the more serious nature of the affliction; 6) the direct involvement of Yahweh; and 7) the expansion of the affliction to the attackers’ horses.

a. Horses (12:4a): In that day (oracle of Yahweh) I will smite every horse with confusion... As was the case with the second picture, the third is specifically set in that day, i.e., in the day of the attack against spiritual Jerusalem. The enemies of God’s people are depicted as a cavalry unit assaulting the city. Yahweh intervenes to smite every horse. This frequently used verb (r. nkh) is a strong one. It sometimes connotes hitting an object with one, non-fatal blow (e.g., Nm 22:23). It is sometimes used for a beating, i.e., multiple blows (e.g., Neh 13:25). Many times it means

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193Cited by Baron, VPZ, 428-29.
194The verb is a perfect + vav. McComiskey (1210) points to passages where this construction has a concessive force.
195The three rhyming words appear together in Dt 28:28 where they denote divine judgments to be sent upon unfaithful Israel. Petersen, OTL, ??? Curses once pronounced on Israel are now directed against Israel’s enemies. Barker, EBC, 7:681.
to slay (e.g., Ex 21:12). In other passages the verb indicates to attack and/or destroy (e.g., Amos 3:15). In many cases God is the subject of this verb. He smites people with blindness (2 Kgs 6:18), plagues (Dt 28:22), even death (2 Sam 6:7). Confusion (timm_ h_ n) is rendered panic (NRSV; NJPS; NIV) and bewilderment (NASB). The horses charge as ordered by their riders, only to shy away in terror. Cavalry thus become useless as a battle weapon.

b. Riders (12:4b): and its rider with madness… The riders of the horses will not be able to continue the attack on foot, for they will be smitten with madness (_igg_’ôn). This noun is used but 3x in OT. In Dt 28:28 it is used of a divine judgment on Israel. It is also used to describe the wild and erratic chariot driving of Jehu (2 Kgs 9:20). On foot the horsemen can do no better than their horses. Coordinated attack is impossible for the attackers go racing about in all directions.

c. Victims (12:4c): but upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes… House of Judah refers to those who are true descendants of Judah and Abraham, i.e., those who have put their faith in Christ. Since Judah and Jerusalem together describe the Kingdom of Judah in the type, there is no reason to think that in the antitype some subtle distinction is to be made between the two designations. Both refer to Messiah’s kingdom, the church of Christ. To open the eyes is a metaphor meaning to show favor towards. God will show his people favor in the terrifying scene.

d. Horses (12:4d): and every horse of the peoples I will smite with blindness. Zechariah returns to the horses, the major weapon of the enemy. The strong verb smite is repeated for emphasis. The confusion of the horses is now attributed to blindness (’ivy_rôn) which renders the horses ineffective as instruments of waging war.

The three pictures depict those who attack spiritual Jerusalem as reeling (implied), lacerated, and rendered incapable to pressing the attack. It is perhaps important that Zechariah does not see them at this point as slain.

4. Picture #4: Confidence under attack (12:5-6): In the midst of the furious assault on Jerusalem from without, within the city the scene is one of calmness and confidence.

a. Basis of confidence—faith in God (12:5): And the princes of Judah will say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Yahweh of Hosts their God. The princes of Judah are the leaders of God’s people. These princes are not outwardly boasting of their strength. They have quiet confidence. Say in their heart refers to a reasoned conclusion based on evidence and to gratitude for that conclusion. The leaders recognize that the inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength, not walls or gates, but the citizens of spiritual Jerusalem. In Yahweh of Hosts their God indicates their belief that God is on their side. The survival of spiritual Jerusalem will be a token of divine favor. There is no indication that the inhabitants of Jerusalem engage in the battle; only the leaders do that. So the strength the inhabitants give must be moral support and prayer support.
5. Picture #5: fire pan (12:6a, b):
   a. Empowered leaders (12:6a): In that day I will make the chiefs of Judah like a pan of fire in the wood and like a torch of fire in the sheaves... In that day is repeated from v 4. The phrase refers to the day when messianic Jerusalem comes under attack. The chiefs of Judah are the leaders of spiritual Jerusalem. In the day of attack they will contribute to the defense of Jerusalem. The leaders are compared to a pan of fire and a torch of fire exposed to combustible material (the enemy).
   b. Victorious leaders (12:6b): and they shall consume upon the right and left all the people round about... The metaphor underscores the ease with which the leaders, empowered by the Lord, will subdue all those who intend to do spiritual Jerusalem harm. Consume upon the right and left refers to the slaughter of those who are the enemies of God’s people. All the people round about refers to all those who attack spiritual Jerusalem.

6. Picture #6: Secure city (12:6c): but Jerusalem shall be inhabited yet in its (own) place (even) in Jerusalem. Jerusalem had not been repopulated in Zechariah’s day. But he envisioned a new Jerusalem. This spiritual city shall be inhabited no matter how fierce the assaults against her. Yet in its (own) place (even) in Jerusalem refers to the period after or during the siege of spiritual Jerusalem. Spiritual Zion will remain settled on her site unmoved by what ever hoards of hell come against her.

7. Picture #7: Yahweh’s intervention (12:7-9):
   a. Defense of the defenseless (12:7): This ch previously has stressed the equality of Judah and Jerusalem (vv 2, 5) in the messianic age. That point is now made even more forcefully. Earlier Zechariah depicted the messianic kingdom as a combination of Judah and Ephraim (9:13). Now he portrays that kingdom as consisting of Jerusalem plus Judah (cf. 2:12).
      aa. Priority in salvation (12:7a): Yahweh will save the tents of Judah first... The verb save is used in conjunction with Yahweh at least 48x in the OT. He is preeminently the God of salvation, and his people are known as the saved (Dt 33:29). From the time of the wilderness wandering tents was used as the traditional designation for Israelite dwellings. In OT times open towns and villages could offer no effectual resistance to an enemy. So the point is that Yahweh will intervene on behalf of the defenseless.

   Citizens who lived in the rural regions of Judah were the first to feel the effects of invasion; now they are portrayed as the first to experience Yahweh’s salvation. In the days of Messiah it will no longer be necessary for citizens living in the outlying areas around Jerusalem to take refuge behind the massive walls of the capital when the nation was faced with invasion.

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196 Tent (ḥēl) is used for the animal skin dwelling of nomadic people (e.g., Gn 4:20), shepherds (Jer 6:3), women (Gn 31:33), warriors (1 Sam 17:54), cattle (2 Chr 14:14). It is also used for a bridal tent (2 Sam 16:22). The term continued to be used for a habitation or home (e.g., 1 Kgs 8:66).
197 Cf. Isa 9:1-2 where the regions most subject to oppression and darkness are the first to see the messianic light.
The word *first* suggests priority. The defenseless land will be delivered sooner than the well-defended capital.

This line establishes the following points: 1) The salvation of which Zechariah is speaking is not physical in nature; it does not depend upon walls. In effect this verse says the same thing as 2:5 that Yahweh will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem. 2) The citizens of the messianic kingdom are those who enjoy Yahweh’s salvation. 3) There is no such thing as second class citizens in Messiah’s kingdom.

(bb. Glory in salvation (12:7b): *in order that the glory of the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem does not exalt itself over Judah*.) The glory of the house of David consists in the fact that it is the God-appointed royal line in Israel. The Davidic house survived the exile to Babylon and was prominent in the restoration community in the person of Zerubbabel. Since Messiah was to come from the Davidic line there was some reason to think that Yahweh’s priority concern would be the royal family. The glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem probably consisted in the fact that they considered themselves exalted above others because they lived in the city Yahweh had chosen as the seat of his earthly government.

Throughout the centuries the prophets of God predicted a restoration of the house of David. The one who rules the future kingdom is a son of David. Those who assist him in his rule are called the house of David. God will see to it that every citizen of Messiah’s kingdom will have divine protection. The point is that each part of the chosen nation will have its share in the glory of salvation. The ground at the foot of the cross is level. Christians are sinners saved by grace. There is no place for boasting, save in the cross of Christ.

(b. Defense through empowerment (12:8):)

(aa. Certainty of it (12:8a): *In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem*... *In that day* again refers to any time of attack on spiritual Jerusalem. As Yahweh will save the tents of Judah, so will he also defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The entirety of Messiah’s kingdom is protected from on high.

(bb. Description of it (12:8b): *and it shall come to pass the stumbler among them in that day (shall be) as David and the house of David (shall be) as God, like the Angel of Yahweh before them.* Zechariah now describes the strength God’s people will possess when Yahweh comes to their aid. The stumbler (*hanniksh_ši*) is the person so weak that he cannot even stand, much less fight in the battle. He represents the weakest among the citizens of Jerusalem. This person shall become a mighty war hero like David. The house of David, probably led by a prince or governor, shall be as God (*Elohim*), i.e., God in his might and majesty. These words suggest that the leaders of spiritual Jerusalem will be endowed with supernatural strength and discernment. *Like the Angel of Yahweh before them* indicates that the
leaders will lead God's people into battle like the Angel of Yahweh led the ancient armies of Israel.198

3. **Defense by destruction of enemies** (12:9): *And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations which come against Jerusalem.* The peoples of v 2 are now called nations or Gentiles. *I will seek* means “I purpose.” God's purpose is to destroy (r. shmd in Hiphil) the enemies of the church. This verb occurs 68x in OT in the Hiphil. Sometimes it has the meaning “to annihilate” (Josh 11:14). When used of a group, however, this verb often has the meaning of “to remove from the scene” (Dt 6:19) and “to destroy as a functioning entity” (Isa 10:7; Am 9:8; Jer 48:42) or simply “to subdue” (Dt 9:3; 28:63). When a nation is destroyed, it ceases to function as a political entity. This verb is used most frequently with God as the subject (41x).

Here God promises to destroy *all the nations that come against Jerusalem.* *Come against* means to come in martial array to attack the people of God. The coalition of attackers is destroyed in that it is no longer effective as an attacking army. The attackers are neutralized and removed from the scene. Ideally such attacking coalitions are broken up when key members are converted. Sometimes they are destroyed through the overturning of the arguments with which they assault Jerusalem. When necessary, the Lord will intervene to destroy the enemies physically.

**C. Great Savior** (12:10): The prophet now begins to show how the new covenant people came to be such, how the church commences the Christian life and obtains the right to the divine protection mentioned in the preceding paragraph (Chambers).

1. **Outpouring of God's Spirit** (12:10a, b, c):
   a. **Action (12:10a): And I will pour**… This v begins with a vav conjunction (and) which suggests that what follows is directly related to that which immediately precedes it. The speaker is Yahweh. The verb pour (r. _pk) suggests lavish provision. The concept of pouring out God’s Spirit was introduced by Joel (2:28) and further developed by Isaiah (44:3 using the r. ntsq) and Ezekiel (39:29).
   b. **Recipients (12:10b): upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem**… Again as in v 7, the house of David refers to the leaders of spiritual Jerusalem, the inhabitants of Jerusalem refers to the citizens of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is used as the designation for the whole of God’s people in accord with the custom of regarding the capital as the representative of the whole nation (Keil).
   c. **Gift (12:10c): the Spirit of grace and supplication.** Spirit refers to the Holy Spirit. *Grace (ch_n)* is what God manifests and the Holy Spirit communicates through his word to the heart of sinners. The Spirit teaches that God is favorably disposed toward those who have violated his law. Cf. Heb 10:29; Jn 16:8. *Supplication (tach'n_nim)* refers to the fruit of grace—entreaty for a specific application of God’s favor. There is a hint in

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198Ex 23:20, 23; 32:34; 33:2; and possibly Josh 5:13-15.
2. **Looking unto the Pierced One (12:10b, c, d):**

   a. **Action (12:10b): and they shall look...** The verb *look* (r. *nbt* in Hiphil) refers to what one does with the eye (Ps 94:9) embracing everything from a mere glance (1 Sam 17:42) to a careful, sustained, and favorable contemplation (Isa 5:12; Ps 74:20; 119:6, 15). It is used of both man’s looking to or upon God (Ex 3:6; Nm 12:8) and God’s looking upon man (e.g. Ps 33:13). The subject of the verb is the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Zechariah does not refer to an ordinary or mere passing look, but a look of faith and hope that is part of the supplication. The same verb is used in the story of the bronze serpent on a pole (Nm 21:9), a passage that Zechariah may have had in mind as he penned these words. It is this verb also that is used in Nm 12:8 when Moses looked upon the form of Yahweh.

   b. **Direction (12:10c): unto me...** The first person singular pronoun identifies the object of the contemplation as the speaker. There has been no indication of any change of speaker. The first person object of the contemplation is the speaker Yahweh. The Holy Spirit leads sinners unto God through the gospel. The emphasis in the passage is upon return to Yahweh, so there is no need to emend MT as some have proposed.199

   c. **Identification (12:10d): whom they have pierced...** The speaker identifies himself as one *whom they have pierced*. The Lord had been pierced, thrust through. *Pierced* (r. *dqr*) means “to slay by any kind of death whatever” (Keil). The verb is used in connection with spear or lance (Nm 35:7-8). Jewish interpreters generally give this word a metaphorical meaning. This, however, is unlikely. In all of its occurrences this verb has a concrete sense, referring to actual piercing, usually by a sword. A shepherd is smitten with a sword in the following ch (13:7). Most likely this v refers to that shepherd, the same good shepherd rejected by the flock in 11:4-14 (McComiskey).

   The record in the Gospels indicates that it was a Roman soldier who did the actual deed of piercing. The responsibility for the piercing, however, rested upon the Jewish leaders who delivered him over to Pilate. In an even deeper sense, the piercing of the Christ was vicarious, i.e., he was pierced to the death on behalf of sinners (Isa 53:5). So in that sense, all of us were responsible for the piercing.

   Some identify the Pierced One as some unknown martyr of Zechariah’s time. This passage, however, invites consideration of a connection with the Suffering Servant of Isa 53 who suffers vicariously for the sins of mankind. This may suggest the nature of the supplication with which the inhabitants of Jerusalem look unto the Pierced One. Both the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmud take the reference to be to the

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199 S.R. Driver (*CB*, 266) pointed out that some fifty MSS support “unto him.”
Messiah.\textsuperscript{200} The Apostle John sees this as a prediction of the piercing of Christ at his crucifixion (Jn 19:37; Rev 1:7). Faith is implied in this look upon the Pierced One, otherwise it would not be possible to account for the intense emotional response to the look that is described in next line.

3. Mourning for the Pierced One (12:10c): \textit{and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a first-born.} The change in person mid-verse should be noted. They look unto me; they mourn for him. Yahweh speaks of Pierced One as distinct in person from himself. So the Pierced One is Yahweh the speaker; yet he is distinct from Yahweh. This identification/ distinction motif prepares the way for the NT doctrine of the Father and the Son.

The bitterness of the mourning is emphasized by two similes. The mourning over the Pierced One is compared to the mourning over an only son. The preservation of the family was deemed of vast importance. The death of an only son was the heaviest blow that could happen (cf. Jer 6:26; Am 8:10). The death of a son is bad enough, but the death of a first-born son is even a more intense loss.

The designations “only son” and “firstborn” are particularly appropriate for the mourning over Messiah. He is the “First-born” of all creation.\textsuperscript{201} He was also the “only begotten” Son of God (Jn 3:16).

If looking unto him whom they have pierced suggests faith in the Pierced One, morning over him implies repentance for the deeds that led to his being pierced. Repentance follows faith. When we come to realize that our sins made his death necessary—that in a very real sense we are responsible for his death—the realization leads to godly sorrow and godly sorrow to repentance (2 Cor 7:10).


1. Lamentation (12:11-14): Clearly the text highlights the mourning that follows correct apprehension of why the Pierced One died. Zechariah already has compared the grief of the penitent to that grief experienced by a family over the loss of an only son or a firstborn son. Now he adds another comparison—that of a grief stricken nation.

a. Intensity (12:11): \textit{In that day the mourning shall be great in Jerusalem like the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo.} In that day refers to the messianic era. Jerusalem should be given its spiritual connotation—the people of God of the messianic era. There was little mourning among the residents of physical Jerusalem when they observed the piercing of Christ. Jerusalem here consists of all those who look on the Pierced One and mourn in repentance. Hadad-rimmon is the location where Josiah, a beloved king, died. For years there was a national lamentation

\textsuperscript{200}Bruce, \textit{NTD}, 112.

\textsuperscript{201}Rom 8:29; Col 1:15, 18; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5.
over this event. See 2 Chr 35:25. Hadad-rimmon may have been a city in the valley of Megiddo.202

b. Universality (12:12a): And the land shall mourn... The land, like Jerusalem, is defined contextually as those who look on the Pierced One and mourn in repentance.203 Once people realize that their sin put Jesus on the cross they plunge into intense mourning and repentance.

c. Individuality (12:12b): every family apart... This language suggests that the mourning would extend to every individual of every family. This is not like the organized national mourning occasions that one reads about at various junctures of OT history. All who reside in the messianic land or kingdom are penitent.

d. Illustrations (12:12c): Zechariah cites four families as illustration of the general principle stated above, two royal families, two priestly families. In each set the first family named is the trunk family, the second a branch. This is Zechariah unique way of representing the entire of both the royal and priestly lines. Jeremiah prophesied that both the Levitical and royal families would be represented in the messianic age (Jer 33:17-22). In the NT age Christians are regarded as brothers of the King of Kings, hence of the house of David. They are also regarded as priests to God (Rev 1:6).

aa. House of David (12:12c): the family of the house of David apart and their wives apart... Even the family at the top of the social/economic ladder will mourn. House of David is the royal family. Their wives apart suggests that women as well as men will look upon the Pierced One and be brought to repentance. Following the custom of the time, they will mourn apart from the men, expressing in their own unique feminine way the sorrow they feel.

bb. House of Natan (12:12d): the family of the house of Nathan apart and their wives apart... This was a branch of the royal family (2 Sam 5:14; Lk 3:31.

c. House of Levi (12:12e): the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart... The priests will join in the mourning.

dd. House of the Shimeites (12:12f): the family of the Shimeites apart, and their wives apart... This is a specific family within the tribe of Levi (Nm 3:18).

e. Reiteration (12:12g): all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. The universality of the mourning is again emphasized, for all the families that remain refers to the rest of the population within the messianic kingdom. None can reside in Messiah’s kingdom that has not looked on the Pierced One. Apart points to private, individual mourning in which people wish to express in their own ways the mourning for the Pierced One. The mourners seek to avoid the eyes of others, even

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202The name Hadad-rimmon does not occur elsewhere in the OT. R. Smith (WBC, 278f) argues that this was the name of a god. In this case the meaning is that the messianic weeping will be as loud and deep as the pagan wailing for their fertility gods.

203The land (ba‘rets) sometimes, as here, refers to the inhabitants of the land (cf. Lv 19:29; 1 Sam 14:25; Ezek 14:13).
members of their own family, including their spouses. This is a good and godly sorrow that leads to repentance and flows from it.

The text gives the impression that looking on the Pierced One is not a one time proposition. Some who were physically present at the site of the piercing looked, then went away and rejoiced that he was dead. Those who mourn, however, are those who see him in their mind’s eye again and again.

2. Purification (13:1): Yahweh will make provision for the cleansing of those who mourn over the Pierces One. The cleansing described in this v proves that the mourning of the previous vv is not the anguish of despair, but the godly sorrow that leads to repentance.

a. Provision (13:1a): On that day a fountain will be opened… On that day sets the time of the cleansing as concurrent with the preceding mourning. Since the mourning appears to be an on-going response to the recognition of the Pierced One, so also must the cleansing be an on-going provision. The fountain is not forgiveness itself (McComiskey), but the means of procuring forgiveness. The fountain will be opened, i.e., made available. No amount of weeping alone can cleanse. Only God can provide the cleansing. The fountain was opened when, on the day of Pentecost, the first presentation of the gospel directed penitent sinners to “repent and be baptized.” Sinners buried in the baptismal pool contact the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin (Rom 6:3; Jn 1:7).

b. People (13:1b): to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The fountain is opened to the very ones who were mourning in the previous vv. Whether the penitents come from the highest levels of society or the lowest, they secure forgiveness in the same way, i.e., at the fountain. All citizens of spiritual Jerusalem share the common experience of the fountain. This is not a fountain filled with blood, but, like most fountains, with water. To this fountain the penitent will come in humble obedience to the command of the Pierced One to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38).

In this passage Zechariah builds on Ezekiel’s prophecy that Yahweh would cleanse his people, give them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them (Ezek 36:25-26).

c. Purpose (13:1c): for sin and for uncleanness. Fountain (m₉₃ r) is used metaphorically in Ps 36:9 for the abundant life that Yahweh provides to those who turn to him. In Jer 2:13 and 17:13 the term is used as a figure for Yahweh himself. He is the fountain of living waters. Here, however, the fountain is a means of purification. The connection between water and purification is firmly established in the Law⁴ and in the earlier prophets.⁵ What Zechariah envisions, however, is not mere cleansing from ceremonial uncleanness, but from the devastating and contaminating effects of moral impurity.

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⁴E.g., Nm 8:7 which speak of “the water of cleansing” (lit., “sin water,” i.e., water that removes sin).
⁵Ezek 36:25 “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean.”
The penitents who plunge into the fountain find complete forgiveness, not because the water is efficacious, but because by divine appointment that is the time and place of cleansing. The forgiveness is total. It removes their sin or guilt (chatta’i). It also removes every stain of uncleanness (nidd_h) caused by their overt disobedience. This OT sketch of the salvation to come recalls to mind the admonition of the preacher to the penitent Saul of Tarsus, “Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name” (Acts 22:16 NIV).

3. **Consecration (13:2):** Having been cleansed from all sin in the fountain, the penitents rise to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:4). They now live in a new land—the kingdom of God—in which God does not tolerate the vices that too often marred the history of national Israel.

   a. **Introduction (13:2a):** *It shall come to pass in that day (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts)…* Again Zechariah sets the timeframe for what he is about to assert as in that day, i.e., the day of mourning over the Pierced One, and cleansing in the fountain. Before making the dramatic announcement that follows, the prophet again reminds his readers that this is an oracle—a most solemn first person utterance—of the all-powerful Yahweh of Hosts. See on 1:3.

   b. **Idolatry removed (13:2b, c):**

      aa. **Names (13:2a):** *I will cut off the names of the idols from the land…* Yahweh declares some 45x in the OT that he will cut off (r. krt) something. In addition to the literal meaning of this root, there is a metaphorical meaning to root out, eliminate, remove, excommunicate or destroy by a violent act of man or nature. In the present passage an act of overwhelming grace—the sacrificial death of the Pierced One—leads to the total banishment of idolatry from the land, i.e., from the citizens of the messianic kingdom. God’s grace wins over hearts that in the past were all too eager to invest physical objects with divine qualities. Names of the idols are all of the attributes that are associated with idols.

      bb. **Remembrance (13:2c):** *and they shall not be remembered any more.* The names of the idols will no longer be remembered, i.e., honored, celebrated, worshiped (cf. Hos 2:17). Those who experience messianic cleansing will have no association with the old idols.

   g. **False prophecy removed (13:2d,e,f):**

      aa. **Perpetrators (13:2d):** *And also the prophets… Prophets* are the false prophets. There is no word in the Hebrew language for "false prophet."

      bb. **Instigator (13:2e):** *and the unclean spirit…* In 12:10 Zechariah mentioned “the spirit of grace and of supplications,” i.e., the Holy Spirit. Now the unholy spirit is introduced. The unclean spirit, mentioned only here in the OT, is probably the lying spirit that works in the false prophets. Cf. 1 Kgs 22:19-23. Ten times in the Gospels demonic spirits are referred to “unclean.” Unclean spirits will be particularly active in the last days of the Christian age.\(^{206}\)

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cc. Expulsion (13:2f): I will remove from the land. The false prophets and the unclean spirit Yahweh will remove (r. ‘br Hiphil) from the land, i.e., his kingdom of redeemed people. The removal is not accomplished by some violent act, but by the overwhelming act of divine grace referenced in the preceding ch. Citizens of Messiah’s kingdom want nothing to do with false prophets any more than they desire to cling to idols. This v is the OT equivalent of “All to Jesus I surrender.”

In the days of Zechariah neither idolatry nor false prophets were current issues. This makes it likely that these two areas of Israel’s earlier transgressions are here used to symbolize the total consecration that follows the cleansing of the messianic age. Those who respond in faith to the Pierced One, who repent, and are cleansed in the fountain will serve the Lord with single-focus commitment. They will not serve other gods; they will not listen to other voices.

The reference to this consecrated land recalls earlier references to the messianic land: Yahweh will remove the guilt of the land in the day that the Shoot appears (3:9). That Shoot is the Pierced One of the present context. Likewise the visions of the flying scroll (5:1-4) and the ephah (5:5-11) depict the removal of evil from the land. Zechariah uses these symbols to depict the purity of the people of God—his land—in the messianic age.

4. Commitment (13:3): Zechariah devotes the next four vv to amplifying his announcement that false prophecy and idolatry will be removed from the messianic land. These vv illustrate the change in perspective and extreme commitment of those who are citizens of Messiah’s kingdom.

a. Hypothetical situation (13:3a): And it shall come to pass if a man shall prophesy yet again... To underscore the assurance that false prophecy will be at an end, Zechariah pens a hypothetical scenario. Shall prophesy indicates that someone claims prophetic inspiration. There is an attempt to revive false prophecy. The language hints that the prophetic powers would cease.

b. Declaration (13:3b): then his father and mother (which) begat him shall say unto him, You shall not live for you have spoken a lie in the name of Yahweh. Father/mother points to the nearest relatives of the false prophet. Those who love him most would not tolerate his prophetic claims. The Law required the execution of those who prophesied falsely. See Dt 13:6-10; 18:20. Parents were required by the Law to stand with God and truth even against their own flesh and blood. The son had spoken a lie in the name of Yahweh by pretending to deliver a message from God. That was a capital crime.

c. Execution (13:3c): And his father and mother which begat him shall pierce him through when he prophesies. Pierce him through means to stab or pierce him, i.e., put him to death. This is the same verb used in 12:10. Under the Law of Moses parents were required to stand against their offspring when the latter were violation of God’s law; but they were
not required to participate in the execution (Dt 21:19-21). So what is envisioned here is a zeal for truth and righteousness that exceeds anything envisioned in Mosaic Law.

5. Conscience (13:4-5): The messianic community will not tolerate false prophecy; but even the pretended prophets themselves will be ashamed of their actions.

   a. Inward shame (13:4a): On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. Prophetic pretenders will be ashamed of their visions. So strong will be the popular feeling against false prophecy that the false prophets will be ashamed to make any pretense to visions. See Acts 19:13-20 for the conversion of false prophets.

   b. Public restraint (13:4b): He will not put on a prophet's garment of hair in order to deceive. A garment of hair is a rough garment meant to deceive.\(^{207}\) This garment was a sign of abstinence from world pleasure, frugality; it was also on occasion a symbol of grief. The hairy garment had become the badge of the prophets. For the false prophet was a cloak of hypocrisy for it was meant to deceive. The point is that in previous times the population warmly embraced the false prophets. In the messianic land prophetic pretenders will not wish to be publicly identified as prophets. In the age to come there will be among the redeemed abhorrence of anything smacking of being untrue.

   c. Forthright denial (13:5): But he will say, No prophet am I. A man who serves (tills) the ground am I; for a man has made (others) buy me from my youth.\(^{208}\) Fearing for his life the suspect emphatically will deny that he is a prophet. The suspect will profess to belong to a vocation that precludes the prophetic call. Cf. Gn 4:2 (“a tiller of the ground”). Made others buy me (r. qnh in Hiphil) suggests that the tiller was indentured (sold) to a farmer or hired out to farmers. From my youth suggests that the tiller had been an indentured servant for his entire life. Thus the suspects point is that he had never had the time to play the role of a prophet.

E. Great Savior (13:6): A question is asked of someone. The usual interpretation is that the suspected false prophet is being grilled about certain wounds upon his body, wounds hitherto unmentioned. Some take the wounds to have been self-inflicted in idol worship with idolatrous friends or "lovers." In this case the false prophet of the previous v is admitting his guilt. Others take the wounds to have been inflicted by the righteous parents who disciplined their wayward son as he pretended to be a prophet; friends then would be family or relatives.

   Unger and Gill argue for a messianic interpretation of the conversation in this v. In the immediate context the only “wounds” of which the text speaks are those of the Pierced One in 12:10. So the main theme of the Pierced One is re-

\(^{207}\) Cf. the mantle of Elijah (1 Kgs 19:13, 19; 2 Kgs 1:8; 2:13, 14) and of John the Baptist (Mt 3:4).

\(^{208}\) Other translations: (1) “for a man made me a possessor (of land) from my youth” Targum; (2) “for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth” (Rashi; Kimchi); (3) “I have been made a bondman from my youth” (ASV).
introduced with dramatic abruptness (Unger). The intervening paragraph is in the nature of an extended parenthesis.

1. **Question (13:6a): If someone asks him, What are these wounds between your hands?** Who asks this question? The Hebrew uses the indefinite third masculine singular. Each individual among those who look unto him whom they have pierced (12:10) asks this question. Like Thomas (Jn 20:25) they examine the wound in his hand and acknowledge him as their redeemer. To whom was the question addressed? Probably it is addressed to the Pierced One.

   The question focuses on certain wounds. The term denotes any "wound" whether unhealed or healed and remaining only as a "scar." The wounds might be the result of an accident or violence done one by another. For this reason the question is asked. The wounds are located between your hands, which are envisioned as stretched out. Hence the wounds were on the back (Rashi) or chest (Wright; Chambers). 209

2. **Response (13:6b): And he will answer, With these I was wounded in the house of friends.** The answer comes from the lips of the Pierced One of 12:10. With these refers to the wounds. The term friends is lit., “my lovers, or those who love me.” The term is not used here of idolatrous "lovers" for when it has this meaning it uniformly occurs under the metaphor of male and female. Hence (male) friends of a male figure are in view. The speaker was not wounded by those who loved him, but in their house, i.e., the house of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the house of those who longed for his coming.

F. **Great Smiting (13:7-9):** Having re-introduced the Pierced One, and having raised the question of the origin of his wounds, the prophet now expands upon that theme. A brief poetic oracle indicates how the wounding took place, and the consequences of it.

1. **Call for this smiting (13:7): O sword awake!** Cf. Jer 47:6. The imperative implies that the sword is an instrument under the control of God; and that the sword has for a time been inactive. 210 The sword represents any kind of instrument that inflicts physical harm (Zech 11:17) or death. Cf. Ex 5:21; 2 Sam 12:9; Isa 27:1. The text does not clearly state that the victim of the smiting dies, but this fact is strongly suggested by the intensity of the mourning over the Pierced One in ch 12.

   The sword is God's will being exercised. Peter explained the matter this way: “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23 NIV). "Not the sword of Caiphas or the

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209 The phrase occurs in Ugaritic in parallel with the word for shoulder. McComiskey citing Gordon, *Ugaritic Texts*. Chambers cites 2 Kgs 9:24, which is between the arms not between the hands. Unger thinks the phrase is equivalent to in your hands.

210 The idea of a sword as a symbol of judgment can be traced back to Jeremiah. The expression “sword, famine, and pestilence” was a favorite of his (14:12, 13, 15, 18; 21:7, 9; 24:10). Ezekiel adapted with slight addition this same expression (Ezek14:1-23). In Ezek 21:1-22 there is a “song of the sword” predicting judgment on Judah.
priests or Pilate or Romans or the sword of impending justice, but the sword of righteous retribution for sins of Israel and the world” (Meyer).

2. **Object of this Smiting (13:7b, c):**
   a. **Yahweh’s shepherd (13:7b):** against my shepherd... Zechariah returns to the motif of the shepherd (9:16; 10:2-3; 11:3-17). My shepherd is not the foolish shepherd of 11:15-17; not the kings who have oppressed Israel (11:5). But the shepherd of Yahweh mentioned in 11:4 etc.—the Messiah who is identified as the Pierced One in 12:10. He is also the shepherd and pierced one of Isaiah 53:5, 6. Ezekiel prophesied that Israel’s divine Shepherd would set up over his people “one shepherd” who is identified as “David my servant” (Ezek 34:23). So Yahweh performs his work as Shepherd through Messiah. Therefore, in this passage God calls him my shepherd, for he is in the fullest sense God’s representative.

   b. **Yahweh’s fellow (13:7c):** against the man that is my fellow (oracle of Yahweh of Hosts). My fellow (‘amiti) means “my equal.” The word occurs only here and in Lv (11x) where it is usually rendered “neighbor.” The term suggests one united to another by the possession of common nature, rights and privileges (Deane). The term implies equality between persons.\(^\text{211}\) The language could refer only to Christ. Cf. Jn 10:30. The shepherd who is smitten is the Good Shepherd of 11:4-14 who is mysteriously identified with Yahweh. This identification is proved by the application of the following clause to Jesus in Mt 26:31.

3. **Result of this smiting (13:7d):** Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered... The imperative again indicates that the sword serves the purpose of God. For this reason when this v is paraphrased in Matthew’s Gospel it reads: I [God] will smite (Mt 26:31). A scattered flock is a flock without a shepherd, a flock destined for misery and destruction. The scattering due to smiting began in Gethsemane and at the cross when even his disciples forsook him and fled (Mt 26:31). But like ripples in a pond, there were ever wider circles of people affected by the smiting of the shepherd. The dispersion of Jews and their denationalization were also results of this smiting. This v builds on the theme of the flock of slaughter and the abandonment by the Good Shepherd depicted in 11:7, 9.

4. **Aftermath of this smiting (13:7e):** But I will return my hand over the little ones. The idiomatic expression “return the hand” is used in a good and bad sense.\(^\text{212}\) Cf. Isa 1:25; Amos 1:8. Here the phrase seems to be used in the sense of assistance or protection, otherwise there would be no sheep left to constitute the remnant that is mentioned in v 9. Jesus may have been interpreting this idiom for us when he paraphrased the previous sentence of this prophecy, then added: “but after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee” (Mt 26:32). Jesus was announcing re-gathering after scattering.

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\(^{211}\) Baron (VPZ, 478f) cites the Jewish commentators Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Izaak of Troki, and Abrabanel who admit that the word “mîthî indicates equality of persons. They identify the “man my equal” to be arrogant Gentile kings. Abrabanel identifies the “man my equal” as Jesus of Nazareth to whom Christians, wrong in his view, attribute equality with God.

\(^{212}\) Cf. NASB rendering, “I will turn my hand against the little ones.”

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The term *little ones* (*ts_אֵּרִים*) is used only here in the Hebrew Bible. In this context it refers to the humble and meek, those who embraced Messiah. They are to be identified with “the poor of the flock” in 11:7 and “the little flock” in Lk 12:32.

5. **Reaction to this Smiting (13:8-9):** In discussing the effect of the smiting of the shepherd upon the flock, Zechariah follows a pattern introduced by Ezekiel. He divides the flock into thirds (cf. Ezek 5:12).
   a. **Fate of those who despise this smiting (13:8a):** *And it shall come to pass, that in all the land (oracle of Yahweh) two parts therein shall be cut off and die.* The land here is used geographically for the v speaks of those who dwell in the land. The land is Palestine where the Good Shepherd tended his flock in ch 11. Two parts of the land is not to be taken mathematically. The figure simply indicates that a remnant will survive. The vast majority of those living in Palestine after the smiting of the Good Shepherd will be cut off and die. On the verb cut off, see on 9:10. Die defines the sense in which the two parts would be cut off. The fulfillment came in those who perished in the war with Rome.
   b. **Fate of those who embrace this smiting 13:8b-9):**
      aa. **Initial salvation (13:8b):** *But the third part shall be left in it.* One third of the flock escaped the great tribulation that comes upon the land. This third represents all those who embraced the Messiah. Through this remnant God will continue to work out his redemptive purposes. The existence of this remnant ensures the continuation of God’s promises of Abraham.
      bb. **Further purification (13:9a):** *And I will bring the third part into fire and I will refine them as the refining of silver and I will try them like the trying of gold.* While the third part of the flock survives some devastating attack on the land, they will yet pass through the fire. Presumably this fire represents persecution. Through much tribulation the early believers were refined and purified.
      cc. **Full access to God (13:9b):** *As for it, it shall call upon my name and as for me, I will answer it.* The third person singular pronoun refers to the third part of the flock that survived being cut off from the land. Collectively this small flock will turn to God. The flock will have full access to God throughout the persecution. The Hebrew emphasizes the first person singular pronoun. God responds positively to the petition of the believers in their times of distress.
      dd. **Divine acknowledgment (13:9c):** *And I will say, It is my people.* The surviving flock (NT believers) collectively will be acknowledged by God as his people.
      ee. **Living testimony (13:9d):** *And it will say, Yahweh is my God.* The surviving third part of the flock will collectively testify to everyone of their commitment to the Lord.

**Final Glimpses of the Coming Day**

14:1-21
Commentators of all schools of interpretation recognize the difficulties of the final ch of Zechariah. The prophet appears to employ highly symbolic, even apocalyptic language, to highlight certain leading features of the coming day of Yahweh. He seems to group his thoughts around the phrase in that day which appears seven times in the ch. It is probably a mistake to assume that these snapshots are presented in chronological sequence. The focus of activity is Jerusalem which is mentioned 11x in ten vv.

A. Picture #1: Assistance in Battle (14:1-3):

1. Jerusalem ravished: a general statement (14:1): Behold a day shall come to Yahweh when your spoil shall be divided in your midst. Behold introduces something unexpected and shocking. In the previous chs Jerusalem has been depicted as impregnable. Now suddenly the city is pictured as subject to a terrible invasion.

A day shall come to Yahweh means that Yahweh’s day is coming. In prophetic thought the day of Yahweh is any time when Yahweh steps on to the stage to implement his purposes. In this case, a devastating attack against Jerusalem provides Yahweh with the opportunity to crush once and for all the enemies of his people.

Your spoil refers to spoil of a city or land, for the possessive pronominal suffix is feminine. The subsequent v identifies Jerusalem as the city under attack. Divided in your midst depicts the enemy as successful early on. They will penetrate the city. Spoil is divided after a battle has been won. The enemy will feel so secure they will divide the spoils in the midst of the subjugated city. So the enemy thinks he has been triumphant over God’s people. But, as will shortly appear, the situation is not what it appears to be.

It is impossible to fix the historical situation for this prophecy. It seems to depict the kingdom of God in its trial, development, and triumph (Deane). Perhaps there is a mingling here of the first destruction of Jerusalem and the last attack in the times of Anti-Christ (Pusey). Laetsch thinks the work of the papacy in ravishing the spiritual Jerusalem is being described.

2. Jerusalem ravished: specific details (14:2):

a. Coming of the enemy (14:2a): And I will gather all nations unto Jerusalem to fight. Having stated in general terms what the future holds for God’s people, the text backtracks to explain how the ravishing came about. God claims responsibility for what takes place. I will gather suggests an active mobilization of the enemy forces. All nations indicates at the very least that the enemies of God’s people are numerous. The phrase probably refers to all Gentiles who are not part of the holy nation. Unto Jerusalem indicates the venue of the coming showdown. These Gentiles approach Jerusalem, not with the idea of conversion (2:11; 6:15; 8:20-22, but with hostility. They come to fight. There is no indication that Jerusalem is being punished for transgression. It appears that God has orchestrated this advance to Jerusalem in order to highlight a dramatic salvation of God’s people and an equally dramatic crushing of God’s
enemies. Perhaps this is another description of the fire by which God refines and purifies his elect (13:9). The final such attack against God’s people is generally designated as Armageddon (cf. Rev 20:7-9).

b. Capturing of the city (14:2b): And the city shall be captured and the houses shall be plundered, and the women raped and half the city shall go out into captivity... The city is Jerusalem. The sufferings described are the usual fate of a conquered city in antiquity. The enemy is pictured within the walls. Half the city shall go out into captivity does not contradict the 2/3 that are destroyed in 13:8. The 2/3 refers to the entire land; the 1/2 refers to the city alone.

c. Deliverance of a remnant (14:2c): and the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. It is not God’s purpose to terminate his people. A remnant will be left in spiritual Jerusalem following the assault by the Gentile nations. This cannot refer to destruction of AD 70, for the city was razed, its inhabitants were slain or sold as slaves (Josephus Wars 6.9).

3. Explanation (14:3): Then Yahweh shall go out and fight against those nations as in the day of his fighting in a day of battle. When things are most desperate for spiritual Jerusalem the Lord appears. Go out is military terminology. It is not likely that he goes out of Jerusalem, for the city has been captured. Yahweh goes out of his heavenly abode. He will fight against the Gentiles (unbelievers) who are warring with great success against Jerusalem. The Lord will fight for his people with the fervor and intensity of a mighty warrior in battle. 214

B. Picture #2: Deliverance (14:4-5): The intention of this paragraph is to indicate how God will preserve the remnant when Jerusalem comes under attack.

1. Intervention (14:4a): And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives which is beside Jerusalem on the east... When the Lord goes out from his place he walks upon the high places of the earth (Mic 1:3; Amos 4:13; 9:5). That concept is here particularized. The first step down from God’s heavenly abode is the Mount of Olives. His feet are the feet of Yahweh. This anthropological expression intersects with history when Messiah’s trod upon the Mount of Olives on numerous occasions.

   The Mount of Olives is mentioned many times in the OT (e.g., 2 Sam 15:3), but only here by this name. This mount rises 600’—187’ over Mount Zion; 295’ above Mount Moriah. The Mount of Olives is beside Jerusalem on the east. It is separated from Jerusalem by the deep Kidron valley.

2. Result (14:4b): and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two (toward) the east and west a very great valley and half of the mountain shall remove to the north and half to the south. Micah saw mountains melting when the Lord went out of his heavenly abode to tread upon the high places of the earth (Mic 1:4). Clearly the Micah passage is not to be taken literally; neither is the

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213The motif of Yahweh leading foreign armies against Jerusalem only to destroy them is fairly common in the OT. See Joel 3:9-14; Isa 10:5-19; 29:1-8; Mic 4:11-13; Jer 25:8-14; Ezek 38:1-23.

214Some think a specific intervention in Israel’s history is alluded to in the phrase the day of his fighting in a day of battle, e.g., the intervention at the Red Sea (Rashi; Targum).
present passage. Here the coming of the Lord results in a gigantic earthquake affecting topographical changes. *A very great valley* is the result of the splitting of the mountain. The mountain splits so as to form an east-west valley. This prediction amplifies the promise of 4:7 that Yahweh will level whatever mighty mountain that might stand in the way of accomplishing God’s purpose. The basic idea is that Christ makes a way of escape for his people when they come under attack.

3. *Flight (14:5): And you shall flee by means of the valley of my mountains for the valley of my mountains shall reach unto Azel. Yes, you shall flee as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.* God’s people will flee from the assaulted city by means of the ravine made by the cleaving of Olivet in two parts. The remnant would find refuge in this chasm. *My mountains* refers to the two halves of the Mount of Olives created when Yahweh forms the great ravine. *Azel* is perhaps Beth-ezel (Mic 1:11), a village on the east of Olivet. Azel may be mentioned to indicate the size of the valley, i.e., adequate to protect all who flee; or the destination of the valley miles from the scene of the attack. The imagery of the v may have been suggested by David’s “valley of the shadow of death” (Ps 23:4).

*The earthquake in the days of Uzziah* is referenced in Amos 1:1. This earthquake was long remembered. Josephus (*Antiquities* 10.4) connects it with the attempt of Uzziah to burn incense (2 Chr 26:19).

The valley symbolizes every means by which God intervenes in the upheavals of history for the benefit of his people. It is not clear whether the valley is viewed as an avenue of escape from the vicinity of rampaging Gentiles or whether the valley itself is the refuge from the conflict. Either interpretation fits with the context.

4. *Return (14:5b): And Yahweh my God shall come (and) all the holy ones with you.* This is the third reference to Yahweh’s coming in this passage. He goes out to fight against those who are attacking Jerusalem in v 3; his feet stand on the Mount of Olives in v 4. Now *Yahweh my God shall come.* Is this coming one of the two previous comings personalized (*my God*) and reiterated? Or is this coming referring to an event that follows the coming to fight and the coming to deliver? The latter is probably the case. Where does Yahweh come? In the light of the rest of the ch, Yahweh comes with his people to reclaim Jerusalem. This coming is glorious, for the Lord is accompanied by *all the holy ones,* presumably a reference to angels. *With you* (fem. sing.) is the reading of the Hebrew text. Most English versions have opted to follow the ancient versions and some Hebrew MSS translating *with him.* But such changes in person are not uncommon (Deane). So this line refers to “a triumphant entrance procession into Jerusalem by Yahweh, his holy ones, and the remnant who were saved in the battle with the nations.”

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215 *Beth* (lit., “house”) is frequently omitted from place names constructed with it. Some take Azel to mean union and see here a union of Law and gospel; Jew and Gentile.

216 Jewish interpreters take with you as referring to Jerusalem and give it the meaning for your sake.

217 R. Smith, *WBC,* 287.
C. Picture #3: Hope (14:6):
1. Dark day (14:6): And it shall come to pass in that day it shall not be light. The glorious things shall shrink. In that day refers to the day of the Lord mentioned in v 1. It shall not be light indicates that it will be a dark day when the Lord comes to rescue his people. Darkness is frequently associated with the day of Yahweh’s intervention against Israel (e.g., Amos 5:20) and other nations (e.g., Isa 13:9-10). Glorious things (y-q_r_t) are probably the heavenly bodies. Shrink (r. q_p) always denotes drawing together, thickening, solidifying, losing some of the characteristic attributes or functions. Thus, the luminaries lose their function of being light bearers. They cease to shine, grow dim so that dusk, gloom, darkness takes the place of light on the earth. The basic idea is that the heavenly bodies shall be darkened. Cf. Joel 3:15; Mt 24:29; Rev 6:12, 13.

2. Hidden day (14:7a): And it shall be a unique day which shall be known to Yahweh. The day of the Lord’s intervention on behalf of spiritual Jerusalem is a unique day, an unparalleled day. It is beyond human experience. The character and time of arrival of that day are known only to God. Cf. Mt 24:36.

3. Hopeful day (14:7b): Not day and not night but it shall come to pass at evening time there shall be light. The time of the Lord’s intervention will not be wholly day or wholly night, but a mixture of both. This has been explained symbolically: There will not be altogether consolation or affliction in that day. At evening time there shall be light suggests that in the midst of trouble and danger, deliverance shall come.

D. Picture #4: Abundant Life (14:8):
1. Source of blessing (14:8a): And it shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem... In that day refers to the day of mingled rebukes and promises. Living waters is fresh, pure, perennial, flowing water. This is a figure for the spiritual blessings—especially God’s Spirit (Jn 7:38-39)—bestowed by God upon his people. The figure of a river symbolizing God’s presence and blessing can be traced back at least to the Psalmist Korah: “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God” (Ps 46:4). Isaiah used the waters of Shiloah that flow softly as the symbol of divine government (Isa 8:6). Joel, Ezekiel and now Zechariah build on that figure, and picture water flowing out from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the kingdom of God, the messianic kingdom. Cf. Joel 4:18; Ezek 47:12. These passages anticipate the description of the river of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev 22:1).

2. Abundance of blessing (14:8b): half of them unto the eastern sea and half of them unto the hinder sea. The eastern sea is the Dead Sea. The hinder sea is the Mediterranean Sea. These two seas served as boundaries of the Promised Land (Nm 34:12; Dt 11:24; 34:2). The Promised Land and Jerusalem depict

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218 Qere reading is vqrot (r. qrr, to be cold), hence plural of coldness.
219 The Qere reads as a noun, “congelation,” probably referring to frost.
220 Other translations: (1) Greek, Syriac, Latin versions: There shall not be light, but cold and ice, i.e., without sun-light terrible cold will prevail on earth. (2) Heidenheim: There shall not be light, either the bright (light of the sun) or the cold (light of the moon) for God’s glory will illumine the world.
the kingdom of God. Ezekiel also depicted this river of life issuing forth from the temple in Jerusalem, bring life even to the waters of the Dead Sea (Ezek 47). The gospel river brings life and refreshment wherever it flows.

3. **Permanence of blessing (14:8c): In the summer and in the winter it shall be there.** This stream of blessing will not dry up in summer as most brooks in Palestine, or be frozen in the winter. "Alike in times of peace and of persecution those waters shall continue in their course" (Jerome). The gospel is preached until east and west shall meet each other.

E. **Picture #5: Exaltation (14:9-11):**

1. **Exaltation of Yahweh (14:9):**
   a. **Extent of Yahweh’s reign (14:9a): And Yahweh will be king over all the land.** The consensus opinion among commentators and translations is that this sentence affirms that Yahweh will be king over “all the earth,” i.e., universally recognized as king throughout the world. The phrase *kol h_rets* can be translated “all the earth” It seems to have this meaning in 1:11 and 6:5. Here, however, it probably is used in its more restricted sense of *all the land*, referring to the messianic kingdom. It is extremely important to correctly understand what this v asserts because it is the key element in assigning the balance of the ch to the post Armageddon Millennium.\(^{221}\)

   Is this v affirming that Yahweh is king over all the land or over all the earth? Context must decide. This v is bracketed by vv that refer to the messianic land, not the entire earth. Furthermore, it is clear that *kol h_rets* in v 10 is used in the restricted sense. It would be very unlikely that back-to-back uses of the same phrase would have different connotations.

   What is the point of affirming that Yahweh will be king over all the land? There was no monarchy in Zechariah’s day, and no prospects of seeing the monarchy restored. Nonetheless, this prophet foresees a kingdom in the future age ruled by Yahweh himself. It is allegiance to this king that unifies the citizens of this kingdom. Earlier prophets spoke of a future in which God’s people would be led by “David their king” (Hos 3:5; Jer 30:9). Perhaps without fully understanding the matter fully himself, Zechariah affirms that this future Davidic king will in some unique way be Yahweh himself.

   b. **Recognition of Yahweh’s nature (14:9b): In that day Yahweh will be one and his name one.** The language echoes Dt 6:4. One (*’ech_d*) stresses unity while recognizing diversity within that oneness. The notion of uniqueness also is found in the usage of the term.\(^{222}\) Yahweh’s *name* is used in the OT to refer to all that the Lord has revealed about himself.

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\(^{221}\)The Psalmist saw Yahweh as king over all the earth in his day (Ps 47:2, 7). So even if the phrase in question had its more universal connotation, it would not necessarily point to universal recognition of Yahweh in some future Millennium. Christ’s authority in heaven and earth in the present age (Mt 28:18) does not mean that he is universally recognized.

\(^{222}\)TWOT, 30.
In pre-exilic times many professed followers of Yahweh recognized him only as tribal deity, one among many. Throughout the history of Israel a large number of Israelites—perhaps the majority—saw no inconsistency in worshiping Yahweh and at the same time observing the rituals in honor of other gods. But Zechariah envisions a time when the people of God will no longer compromise on such a vital issue. They will unashamedly and boldly proclaim the singularity of Yahweh. He alone is God—the only God. In his name only is there salvation to be found (Acts 4:12).

2. **Exaltation of Jerusalem (14:10a):**

   a. *Elevated city (14:10a):* And all the land shall be turned as the Arabah (a plain) from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem and it shall be lifted up. The land refers to the mountainous region of Judah. The Arabah is the flat Jordan valley, the deepest depression on the face of the earth. It was a fertile valley. The basic idea is that all the land Judah becomes flat so that the holy city becomes all the more prominent. Geba is six miles northeast of Jerusalem, the northernmost limit of Judah (cf. 2 Kgs 23:8; Josh 18:24). Rimmon south of Jerusalem is the En-rimmon of Neh 11:29, a town on the southern border of Judah near Beersheba.

   Jerusalem shall be exalted on its hill. This is a way of stressing the spiritual exaltation of the messianic kingdom. Micah and Isaiah also foresaw the day when the mountain of Yahweh’s temple would be established as chief among the mountains; it would be raised above the hills (Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1).

   b. *Permanent city (14:10b):* And it shall remain in its place from the Benjamin gate unto the place of the first gate unto the corner gate and from the tower of Hananel unto the winepresses of the king. The land transformations envisioned in the previous line will not affect the Holy City. Jerusalem shall occupy her ancient limits. Cf. Jer 31:38-40; Ezek 48:15. *It shall remain* sounds a note of permanence.

   Zechariah has already made clear that the Jerusalem he envisioned would be a city without walls (2:4). So in this v the various landmarks of the old wall of Jerusalem must serve a symbolic purpose. The four corners of the ideal city are given. *The Benjamin gate* was in the northeast corner (Jer 37:12). *The first gate* is in the eastern part of the wall. *The corner gate* was in the northwest corner, west of the Benjamin gate. *The tower of Hananel* was on the north wall (Neh 3:1; 12:39). *The winepresses of the king* were probably near the king's garden (Neh 3:15) at the southeast extremity of the city. So Zechariah has sketched an imaginary circumference of the walls of Jerusalem.

   Why does Zechariah focus on the gates of a city that he previously described as wall-less? Clearly these landmarks must be regarded as symbolic. There are at least three possible functions of this symbolism. First, in this v Zechariah may simply be illustrating the growth and

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223Pss 48:1-2 and Ezek 40:2 also depict messianic Zion as a city on a very high mountain.
224This is probably the gate elsewhere called the gate of Ephraim.
225This is probably the same as the *old gate* of Neh 12:39.
stability of the church by the figure of the earthly city Jerusalem, firmly ordered and built (Deane). Second, gates speak of access; messianic Jerusalem is easily accessible to all who might desire to enter. Third, gates and towers also speak of security, a thought further developed in the following v.

c.  **Inhabited city (14:11a): And they shall dwell in it...** Jerusalem was not inhabited at the time of Zechariah except for the few priests who lived in the precincts of the newly built temple. The antecedent of the pronoun *they* is not clear because no plural subject precedes it. The NASB inserts the noun “people”; NIV elects to render the verb as a passive. Both approaches are defensible, and amount to the same thing. The point is that those in Zechariah’s day who were distressed over Jerusalem’s continued desolation even after the exile could be assured that the Jerusalem of the future would be inhabited.

d.  **Secure city (14:11b): and utter destruction shall be no more and Jerusalem will dwell in trust.** Utter destruction (*cherem*) is extermination of a population in a holy war. The term is usually translated “curse” or “ban.” The citizens of Jerusalem shall not incur the curse that was inflicted on transgressors, idolaters and their cities by the Old Law. Cf. Ex 22:20; Dt 7:2; 13:12-15; 20:17. Ralph Smith puts it: “There will be a ban on the ban.” This means that *Jerusalem will dwell in trust (l._bhetach)*, i.e., in security. Trusting Yahweh is the identifying mark of all citizens of messianic Jerusalem. Because sin has been removed there will be no more need for chastisement. The spiritual Jerusalem shall never be destroyed (Deane). Cf. Zeph 3:12-15.

F.  **Picture #6: Protection (14:12-15):** Messianic Jerusalem will need protection from time to time, for there will be those who fight against the place. Zechariah now spells out four additional sources of protection.

1.  **Protection by means of plague (14:12): And this shall be the plague with which Yahweh will smite all peoples who fight against Jerusalem: his flesh shall be consumed while he is standing upon his feet and his eyes shall rot in their sockets and his tongue shall rot in their mouths.** An assault against spiritual Jerusalem forms the background for this v. Most likely this is the same assault depicted in vv 1-2. *All peoples who fight against Jerusalem* are probably the same as all the nations that Yahweh gathers to Jerusalem to fight against it in v 1. *The plague* is mentioned as though it has been previously referenced but is now about to be described. In v 3 the prophet stated that Yahweh would go out and fight against those nations that come against Jerusalem. The means of Yahweh’s fighting has been left unclear until now.

   God will send a contagious affliction upon all peoples (nations; Gentiles) who attack Jerusalem. *His flesh* refers to the flesh of each one of them. The suffixes are singular to indicate that no one will be overlooked. All

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226R. Smith, *WBC*, 288. Smith, however, probably goes too far in asserting that the removal of the ban means there will be no more war, because it is Jerusalem’s safety that is at issue in this v. The peaceful nature of Messiah’s kingdom is portrayed in much clearer pictures elsewhere.
individually and collectively will be punished (Laetsch). The flesh of the attacker will putrefy and molder away while he is standing upon his feet, i.e., was in the very act of attacking Jerusalem. Yahweh’s enemies cannot stand before his might. Eyes shall rot...tongue shall rot indicates that a supernatural plague is in view. The point is that no force, however great, shall be successful in wresting the inheritance of the saints from them.

2. Protection by means of mutual slaughter (14:13): And it shall come to pass in that day great tumult from Yahweh shall be upon them and they shall seize each man the hand of his neighbor and his hand shall go up against the hand of his neighbor. Great tumult from Yahweh refers to a general panic or confusion sent from God. Cf. Judg 7:22; 1 Sam 14:20. Perhaps this panic is the result of seeing what Yahweh did to the first wave of attackers in the previous v. As a result of the panic the enemy begins to fall upon one another with the weapons intended for the people of God. The enemies of God’s people defeat themselves. The point is the same as in the previous v, viz., no force shall be successful in depriving Messiah’s people of their inheritance.

3. Protection by the sword of Judah (14:14): And also Judah will fight in the battle in Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered: gold and silver and garments in great abundance. Again Judah is pictured on the same footing with Jerusalem (cf. 1:12, 19; 2:12; 8:15; 12:2, 5, 6). Judah will fight in the battle in Jerusalem, i.e., God’s people will be unified in the defense of their inheritance. The wealth of all the nations round is the spoil abandoned by the enemy in the confusion. This wealth shall be gathered, but the text does not say by whom. The implication is that this spoil will fall to God's people. Gold, silver and garments are examples of the spoil. The nations had come to spoil Jerusalem; now the wealth of the heathen will be gathered to requite her. Deane writes: The church emerges victorious from persecutions, and is enriched and adorned by the means of those who planned her overthrow.

The theme of Gentile wealth coming over to Zion is part of the larger theme of Gentiles coming to Mount Zion in the last days (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-4). Haggai (2:7) depicts this wealth making the latter day temple more glorious than Solomon’s temple. Isaiah depicted Gentiles bringing their treasures by land and sea to the Holy City (Isa 60:6-9). The development of the wealth-to-Zion theme in Zechariah (2:11; 8:22-23; 14:14, 16) differs from these earlier portrayals in two respects. First, Zechariah says nothing about the Gentiles coming to the temple. Second, here the wealth is not voluntarily brought to Jerusalem. In view of the concluding vv of this ch, Zechariah probably viewed the entire messianic Jerusalem as a temple (cf. Rev 21:22).

4. Total defeat of attackers (14:15): And the plague of the horse, the mule, the camel, and the donkey and all the cattle which shall be in those camps will be as this plague. The devastating plague of 14:12 falls on the animals as

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227 The preposition could be translated against, but that does not seem to fit the context. Nothing else in this section suggests that Judah and Jerusalem are at odds with one another.

228 In Mt 6:19 garments are also included among the treasures that one might be tempted to store up on earth, for moths are a danger.
well. Those camps are those of the attacking armies. The animals named are a mixture of war and pack animals. The animals named may have been assigned to units for military or supply purposes; or they may have been plunder seized in prior campaigns. By cattle Zechariah may be referring to food supplies. Two thoughts are conveyed by this v. First, the wealth that does not fall to God's people will be destroyed. Second, the triumph over the forces of evil will be complete.

H. Picture #7: Celebration (14:16-19):
1. Pilgrimage for worship (14:16):
   a. Worshipers (14:16a): And it will come to pass that all who are left from all the nations (that) went up against Jerusalem… In vv 12-15 the forces attacking spiritual Jerusalem appear to be totally destroyed; but this v suggests that some of the attackers will survive. Another possibility is that this v refers to the rest of Gentiles who did not actually participate in the attack against Jerusalem, i.e., the non-combatants. In either case Zechariah foresees a day when Gentiles who were once hostile to the people of God are converted.
   b. Place of worship (14:16b): even they shall go up… As Gentile armies once went up against Jerusalem, so would Gentile converts go up to the heights of Zion for worship purposes. The language is suggested both by the elevation of physical Jerusalem, and by the enhanced elevation attributed to spiritual Jerusalem (cf. v 10). Where once they (or their brethren) had attempted to exterminate Yahweh’s worshipers these converts will now be numbered among those devoted to the Lord.
   c. Regularity of worship (14:16c): from year to year… Under the Mosaic system males were required (and females were welcome) to attend three annual festivals at the Jerusalem temple—Passover and Pentecost in the spring, and Tabernacles in the fall. Zechariah portrays Gentiles streaming to Jerusalem from distant lands every year. This is the OT way of depicting worship that results from a lifetime commitment—worship that is both faithful and regular.
   d. Focus of worship (14:16d): to worship the king, Yahweh of Hosts… The primary purpose for the annual arduous and expensive pilgrimages to Jerusalem is worship. This is the only usage of the verb worship (r. _chh in Hithpa.) in Zechariah. The verb means to “bow down, prostrate oneself before a superior; to worship.” The pilgrimage recognizes Jerusalem as the proper place for the worship of the king of all the earth (cf. v 9). The king is identified as Yahweh of Hosts (see on 1:3). No longer would the Gentiles venerate Molech—the divine king—to whom they had offered their children as sacrifices in OT times.
   e. Occasion of worship (14:16e): and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Tabernacles was the last of the three annual feasts and perhaps the most important. It is called the feast par excellence (cf. 1 Kgs 8:2). Tabernacles was an occasion for thanksgiving for harvest vintage. During temple times sacrifices were brought on this festival on behalf of the nations of the
world and prayers were offered for rain. The feast commemorated Israel's sojourn in the wilderness and divine protection there. It was the most ecumenical feast of the mosaic system.

It is a mistaken application of this v to assume that Christians should observe the mosaic feast of Tabernacles, or that such Mosaic practices will be revived at any point in the future. In prophetic literature Christian worship is consistently represented under the symbols of OT worship. The basic idea is that under Messiah's reign the Gentiles are converted to true religion and worship God in regular, orderly fashion (Deane).

2. Punishment for failing to worship (14:17): And it shall come to pass that if any from the families of the earth will not go up unto Jerusalem to worship the king, Yahweh of Hosts, even upon them there shall be no rain. Failure of periodic rain in Eastern countries meant drought, famine, and distress. In a spiritual sense, rain represents the grace and blessing of God. These are withheld from those who refuse to worship him. Cf. Isa 60:10-12. The v assumes that in the age envisioned by Zechariah believers and unbelievers will live side by side, the former blessed, the latter deprived of blessing.\(^\text{229}\)

Such is the situation during the Church Age.

3. Specific example: Egypt (14:18-19):

a. God's judgment negatively stated (14:18a): And if the family of Egypt neither goes up nor enters, then (rain will not come) upon them. Zechariah gives a specific example of the principle stated in the preceding v. The ancient land of bondage is cited as a representative of all Gentiles who will not submit to the King of Kings. This sentence is difficult to translate; it appears to be elliptical, hence the words supplied in parenthesis. Goes up follows the motif of the two previous vv. Enters (“take part” NIV) seems to be redundant, for if the Egyptians did not go up they could not enter the city and share in the worship. Perhaps the thought is that to avoid the punishment, the Egyptians must not only start out, but enter whole heartedly into the worship of Yahweh in spiritual Jerusalem.

b. God's judgment positively stated (14:18b): It will be the plague with which Yahweh will plague the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Reference already has been made to a plague that strikes those who attack Jerusalem (vv 12, 15). That plague will come upon Egypt if they refuse to acknowledge the King.

c. God's judgment judicially stated (14:19): This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations which do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Punishment (ch_t_') is lit., sin. But the word often bears the meaning of the consequence or effect of sin, hence, punishment. The word means to miss the mark and face the consequences. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes conversion and submission to the Yahweh.

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\(^{229}\)A number of commentators stumble on this v, arguing that it is purely hypothetical. Supposedly Zechariah uses a hypothetical situation to convey a sense of absoluteness. In their view, no non-believing nations will exist at this time, i.e., during the so-called Millennium or the new heavens and earth.
I. Picture #8: Holiness (14:20-21): Whether in public life, religious life or private life holiness will pervade every aspect of the life of God’s people in the messianic age.

1. Previously unholy becomes holy (14:20a): In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses HOLY TO YAHWEH... Bells of the horses are probably small metallic plates suspended from the necks or heads of the animals for the sake of ornament and making a tinkling noise when striking against each other. They may have had the names of the owners inscribed on them. HOLY TO YAHWEH was the inscription on the golden miter of the high priest (Ex 28:36). The basic idea is that the ornaments of worldly pomp and warlike power become as truly consecrated as the very miter of the high priest. These horses may be viewed as providing transportation to Jerusalem for the feast.

2. Previously holy becomes holier (14:20b): and the pots in the house of Yahweh shall be like the bowls before the altar. Under the mosaic system the pots in the house of Yahweh were vessels of inferior sanctity. They were made of bronze rather than gold. They were used to remove ashes from the altar (Ex 27:3). The bowls before the altar were vessels of superior sanctity. They were used to hold the blood for sprinkling upon the altar and libations. These vessels were made of gold.

3. Previously common becomes holy (14:21a): And every vessel in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be HOLY TO YAHWEH OF HOSTS and all that sacrifice shall come and take of them and shall boil in them. In the messianic age all distinction between sacred and secular comes to an end, because all shall now be alike holy (Perowne). All vessels shall be consecrated and used in divine service. Levitical distinctions are abolished. Cf. 2 Tim 2:21. All the vessels would be suitable for the most holy purposes. The basic idea is that the old Levitical distinctions in degrees of holiness in society (priests, Levites, people), temple (outer court, holy place, holy of holies), animals (clean and unclean) disappear.

4. Irreclaimably profane forever shut out (14:21b): And in that day there shall be no longer a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh. The picture of the holiness of the messianic Israel continues in this statement about the exclusion of the Canaanite. Cashdan thinks Canaanite refers here to a merchant. Jesus twice drove out of the temple courts the money makers who exploited pilgrims with the sale of animals and vessels. For this use of Canaanite see Prov 31:24; Job 40:30. Probably it is best, however, to regard Canaanite as a proper name—a reference to an unclean person who had not consecrated himself to the service of God. Such a person will be excluded from the house of God in the messianic age. Cf. Joel 3:17. The house of Yahweh is God’s temple, the church, and heaven itself. Cf. Rev 21:27.

Bibliography

230The LXX translates bridle and, by extension, the Hebrew word may have this meaning.
231Baldwin, TOTC, 207.
232Cashdan thinks the v is saying that the pots normally used for cooking consecrated flesh will be used as sprinkling bowls, so numerous will the sacrifices be.


GJ *Grace Journal*


JETS *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*.


SCJ *Stone-Campbell Journal*
