

Zechariah

by Graham Jones - The Church at Gun Hill

Chapter 1 v 1

Introduction

Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest (Nehemiah 12 v 16). When he spoke, he did so by the inspiration of God, as the Word of the Lord came to him. Zechariah was one of the privileged ones who returned from exile to Jerusalem in the days of **Ezra** to engage upon the work of rebuilding the temple there.

Words from Haggai

Although, in Zechariah 2 v 4, he is described as just a lad or a youth, he was, nevertheless, very much concerned about the decline of God's people and sought to encourage them in the temple building work. **Haggai** had prophesied at the same period as Zechariah, speaking, in fact, in the sixth and seventh months of the same year. The Jews had begun the building work with some enthusiasm, but in the face of local opposition and difficulties, they had given up and settled down to a comfortable existence in the land. Haggai challenged them to examine their lives. Was it time for them to dwell in their well appointed houses and this house, the temple, lie waste? For all their self-indulgence, they had gained little:

"Consider your ways. You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages, earns wages to put it into a bag with holes... you looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. 'Why?' saith the Lord of hosts. 'Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man to his own house. Haggai 1 vv 5-9

Just after the Jews had been prompted into action by Haggai, Zechariah prophesied in the eighth and eleventh months. Ezra 5 v 1 and 6 v 14 explain:

"Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem... And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zecharah the son of Iddo."

A Word to Nebuchadnezzar

Right at the beginning of the exile, God had already revealed in a vision to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, that the times of Gentile power would continue until the Messiah comes to establish His kingdom upon earth. In Daniel 2 vv 36-45, there is the account of the mighty king's dream. None but Daniel could tell the king what the dream was and what it meant. The king had seen a huge awe-inspiring image, the head of which was gold, its chest and arms silver, its belly and thighs brass and its legs iron with feet part iron, part clay. In the end, a stone, cut without hands, struck the image at its feet, smashing them to pieces, resulting in the whole image's being smashed to tiny pieces. The stone became a mountain which filled the whole earth.

The subsequent interpretation which Daniel gave revealed that God was showing the span of Gentile dominion in the world in successive empires. This dominion, beginning with the Babylonian empire of Nebuchadnezzar, would continue in the Medo-Persian Empire, followed by the Greek and Roman empires. Gentile dominion would continue until its final overthrow at the coming of the Messiah (the stone

cut without hands). He will then establish His kingdom, encompassing the whole world. Zechariah's prophecy looks across the years from his times and immediate future to the end of Gentile rule at the coming of God's anointed One.

An Earlier Word from Hosea

Well before the exile, **Hosea** had also foretold that the children of Israel would abide many days without a king, but that in the latter days, they would seek the Lord their God and David their King (Messiah) (Hosea 3 vv 4,5). In the meantime, the Jewish people would remain among the Gentiles **"as a vessel wherein is no pleasure."** This again was confirmed by Jesus when He declared that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21 vv 24-27)

We are currently living in the last phase of that Gentile dominion. In Europe there is some of the strength, the iron of the old Roman Empire, but just as iron and clay do not mix, so the various parts of this last stage will not firmly bind together. Its unity is a fragile unity. Jesus is coming soon.

Final Note

Zechariah's prophecy spans the times of the Gentiles and looks at the progress of God's earthly people right up to the restoration of Israel and the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1 vv 2-6

A Call to Repentance

Haggai had given assurance, a month or two earlier, that there would be a time when the nations, the Gentiles, would be shaken (Haggai 2 vv 6,7,22), at which time Israel would return to her former glory (Haggai 2 vv 7,9) and blessing (2 v 19). The promise was and is sure, but God's grace could not be separated from human responsibility - this is a lesson that we also need to learn well: we cannot presume upon Divine grace.

The Principle of Repentance

The fulfilment of the promises must begin with repentance. That was the message of John the Baptist; that was the message of Jesus as He began His public ministry (Mark 1 v 15). And the message which came through Zechariah was no different: "Turn to me," cried the Lord, "and I will turn unto you." (v3). The parallel passage in the New Testament is found in James 4 v 8: **"Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."** This way to the blessing of God is a fundamental principle underlying the Gospel of our salvation. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter exhorted the crowd to, **"Repent and be baptised..."** Paul emphasised that his preaching insisted on **"repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."** Furthermore, a continual attitude of repentance, of turning away from the works of the flesh, is essential to our exercising faith in God at all times.

Warnings of the Past

Zechariah warned the people to learn from the past and not to be like their forefathers who had failed to heed God's warnings. They had not repented of their evil ways. **Amos, Joel, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah** had all proclaimed God's words, but the words had fallen on deaf ears. God had been longsuffering, but despite that, eventually judgment did come (v6), just as God had forewarned right at the beginning, in

Deuteronomy 28 vv 15-68. Let this be a lesson also for our own times: do not count God's longsuffering as slackness (II Peter 3 vv 9,15).

"Where are your fathers?" challenged God through Zechariah. They had come to nothing. Their present situation, as people who had returned to the land after a long exile, was testimony itself to the failure and judgment of earlier generations

Warnings for the Future

God was again making His voice heard but all who hear God's Word need to act on it today. "Do the prophets live forever?" While God is speaking through His servants, that is the time to listen. At the time of the great Flood God warned that His Spirit would not always strive with man. To be sure, His word is eternal and what He has spoken will surely come to pass - He is the Lord of Hosts - but unless there is repentance, judgment is inevitable. Repent! That was the message to Israel, God's earthly people, years before in the time of Isaiah, but they took no heed: **"I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walks in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."** (Isaiah 65 v 2). That is still the message today: **"But to Israel He says, 'All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.'"** That repentance will eventually take place in the nation. Zechariah prophesied, **"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him..."**

There will be a shaking of the nations. There will be a judgment on those who have afflicted God's people, but God's people must repent and return to God with all their heart.

Chapter 1 vv 7-17

The First Vision

Three months later, Zechariah was given a series of eight visions of which **the vision among the myrtle trees** was the first. By now, the people were well advanced in building the temple, probably in the expectation of an immediate restoration of the nation. **Jeremiah** had prophesied that the Jewish exiles in Babylon would return after seventy years (Jeremiah 25 vv 11,12). **Daniel**, himself one of the exiles, had become excited about the prospect when, some years before Zechariah, he had read Jeremiah's words: "...I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

Then **Haggai**, only a few months previously, had promised that God would shake the nations (i.e. the Gentile powers - Haggai 2 vv 6,7). Naturally, the people were anxious to know when this would be. The answer came to Zechariah in a vision.

The vision was of a man on a red horse standing by night among the myrtle trees in the valley. Behind him were horses, red, speckled and white. (v8) However, the man is also called **the angel of the Lord** (vv 10 & 11). Now appearances of God in human form (theophanies) do occur in the Old Testament. When three men visited Abraham, one lingered to reveal to Abraham what was about to happen. This 'man' is suddenly called 'the Lord'. The one who appeared and spoke to Zechariah was acting as a mediator to intercede on behalf of the people, to cry out their deepest inner groaning, **"O Lord of hosts, how long...?"** but also to bring revelation from God to His people. We know, of course, that there is only One mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2 v 5) This is none other than the eternal Son of God. In fact, the whole Trinity is represented here: The Father, the Lord of hosts; the Son, the man or angel who intercedes; and the Holy Spirit, who moves to and fro through the earth.

The Symbolism of the Vision

The symbolism of the vision is instructive.

- Night symbolises the darkness and oppression of God's people. It stands for adversity and affliction. When Jesus was approaching the deepest point of His suffering for us, despised and rejected, at that moment when Judas left to betray His master, John makes the observation, "**and it was night.**" (John 13 v 30). This certainly had been the continuing state of the Jews, but, praise God, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Psalm 30 v 5)
- As for the **myrtle trees**, they are an appropriate symbol of God's people in the circumstances they were experiencing, for the myrtle is an **evergreen**, a picture of eternal life. Its **white flowers** gleamed out in **purity**, its **berries** provided nourishment but, most significantly, its **leaves**, when crushed, released a **fragrant perfume**. Truly, that is the character of God's people. In times of hardship and trial, the inner, fragrant beauty is revealed.
- Of further interest is the fact that the branches of the myrtle were used for the booths made for the **Feast of Tabernacles** (Nehemiah 8 v 15), the only festival to be retained in the future, restored Israel (Zechariah 14 v 16). Then, the Feast of Passover will be fulfilled in Christ, the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, in the full outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon His people. But the Feast of Tabernacles, the third of the three great 'Pilgrim Festivals' will declare the **pilgrim character** of the people, utterly dependent on God.
- In Isaiah 55 vv 12,13, the myrtle tree is part of the symbolism of joy, rest and peace - God's fruit instead of the thorns and briars of the works of the flesh - when "**all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**" Altogether, the myrtle trees are an apt symbol for God's people.
- However, for the time being, they are in the **valley** (or, the bottom), down in the depths of affliction and darkness. Nevertheless, just as He had promised (Haggai), the Lord was and is there, in the valley, with His people. **Never forget that!** In the deepest depths, in the sorest trials, the Lord has promised to be with His people always. What does the Psalmist say? "**Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.**"

Divine Explanation of the Vision

Now the interpreting angel stood with Zechariah to explain the vision of the horses: "**I will shew thee what these be.**" (v 9) They were, in fact, sent by God to walk to and fro through the earth. Certainly this gives us, and would have given Zechariah, the necessary clue for a Scriptural understanding. In II Chronicles 16 v 9, God revealed that He was aware of the state of the nations: "**For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.**" Further understanding is provided by Revelation 5 vv 6,7, where it is the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ slain for us, whose seven eyes represent "**the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.**" To be sure, Zechariah is in mind here, for in Revelation 4 v 10, the prophet speaks of the seven eyes - "**They are the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro through the whole earth.**" (Consider also Proverbs 5 v 21, Jeremiah 16 v 17, Zechariah 6 v 5) If the idea of God's having seven spirits sounds strange, let it be said that this is a figurative way of showing the perfect work and operation of God's Holy Spirit, for seven, in Scripture, is the number of perfection or completeness (Isaiah 11 v 2 has an interesting comment on the sevenfold Spirit resting on the Messiah).

Thus, what Zechariah saw was the perfect watchfulness of the Holy Spirit of God, observing the state of the nations with the welfare of His own people in mind. There was, however, no sign of the foretold shaking of the nations for the report that these horses brought to the Lord was that the earth was still and at rest. (v.11)

The meaning of the colours of the horses, if one compares this with Zechariah 6 vv 2-8 and Revelation 6 vv 1-8, might be understood in terms of their being executors of God's judgments as war and bloodshed (red), disease and pestilence (speckled, grised or bay) and crushing, overwhelming, bloodless victory

(white). These things are yet reserved for the nations, those who will be the enemies of God's earthly people Israel.

And so...

For the people of God, beginning to find hope, that might have been a depressing vision, but the Lord, in the midst of His people, cried out in sympathy with their heart and in intercession. The Lord knew and in all their suffering, He was suffering too ([Isaiah 63 v 9](#)). The 'angel of His presence' called for mercy. Surely seventy years of bearing God's wrath were enough (v.12). You see, that is the ministry of the Son of God; He is our great High Priest, the One who intercedes before the Father on behalf of His people. God communicated His concern to Zechariah through the interpreting angel who then commissioned Zechariah to proclaim the Lord's concern for His people and His displeasure with the oppressing nations (vv 13-15). So although nothing seemed to be happening, the people would be encouraged because they now had the word of God. Always cling to the promises of God, not on what your eyes tell you!

Even more powerful is the indication in v. 16 that God had already answered the prayer. Isaiah gave us God's mind on this: **"Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."** ([Isaiah 65 v 24](#)) God assured that He had returned to Jerusalem in mercy, for the good of His people. The temple would be rebuilt (v.16) and a line stretched out upon Jerusalem, not this time for destruction (cf. [II Kings 21 v 13](#)), but for measurement with a view to rebuilding (cf. [Ezekiel 40 v 42](#)). The return to prosperity (prophesied also in [Isaiah 2 vv 2,3](#)) is yet to come upon God's people; it has never yet been fulfilled in the terms of [Zechariah 1 vv 16 & 17](#). When Zechariah spoke of God's dealings with His people, the promise of restoration, and the judgment of the nations, he seemed to have little awareness of the long, intervening period of the 'Times of the Gentiles' following the Jewish rejection of the Messiah. That seems to be like a hidden valley between the high mountain peaks of God's dealings with Israel. Make no mistake, however, though it tarry, wait for it; the promises will be fulfilled.

Chapter 1 vv 18-21

The Second Vision

When Zechariah was pondering on the second vision, with its report that the Gentile powers were still and at rest, he must have wondered when the promised 'shaking of the nations' would come. When would the yoke of these nations be thrown off and Israel move into the prosperity promised of God? Speedily came the revelation in a second vision. He saw four horns. These horns were frayed or cut back ('terrified' in the NIV) by four carpenters or craftsmen.

The Four Horns

In Scripture, the horn is a symbol of power or strength. These four horns stand for the four great Gentile empires or world powers **"which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it."** They are the same four powers, extending from the beginning of the Babylonian exile until the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God showed to **Nebuchadnezzar** in his dream. [Daniel chapter 2](#) recounts the story of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation by Daniel. The king saw a huge image, bright and terrible in aspect. Its head was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass and its legs of iron with feet part of iron, part of clay. God was revealing to Nebuchadnezzar what would happen after him. The interpretation made it clear that the image represented the four great world empires from Nebuchadnezzar until the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold who would be followed by three further, inferior empires, diminishing in strength and glory. In the unfolding of world history we witness these as the Medo-Persian, the Greek and the Roman empires, the latter appearing in two stages - the iron legs being the strength of the might that was once the Roman Empire and the feet, part of iron, part of clay, being the 'end-time' manifestation, having some

of the strength of the dominion of ancient Rome, but fragile in alliances of elements which do not really mix.

Daniel himself later had a vision of the same world empires. Four great beasts came out of the sea. **Babylon**, or more specifically, Nebuchadnezzar, was like a lion with eagle's wings. The **Medo-Persian** Empire was like a great bear, unevenly balanced, whilst **Greece** was represented by a leopard with four wings on its back. Finally, the **Roman** Empire was depicted by a 'great and terrible' beast with great iron teeth. This beast was ruthless in its destructive power. It also had ten horns amongst which a further little horn arose. Daniel kept watching until the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ and the scenes of the final judgment.

The ten horns of the fourth beast are seen again by John in the book of Revelation. He is told that they represent ten kings yet to come which will have power for a short while with the last, evil world ruler (known as the Beast). (Revelation 17 v 12)

The Four Craftsmen

Four craftsmen came to fray, or cut back, the power of these empires. Possibly the means used are also those portrayed by the four horsemen of Revelation chapter 6, or **the four sore** judgments of Ezekiel 14 v 21: the sword, famine, wild beasts and pestilence. All this is yet to come to a head but the end of those nations is foretold in Zechariah 12 & 14. Jeremiah promised that God would make a full end of those nations but not of His people Israel (Jeremiah 46 v 28). God's people needed to know that, whatever the strength of successive world empires against them might be, such power would be limited and restricted by God.

Ultimately, we know through Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, that a stone, cut without hands, struck the image at its weakest point, the feet, and reduced the whole structure to tiny pieces, blown away by the wind of God's judgment. The stone became a mountain which filled the whole earth. That stone is Christ, who will overthrow all Gentile dominion and establish His kingdom of peace on the earth.

Restoration

There will be a restoration of God's earthly people, Israel; there will be a judgment of the nations. It will come; God's Word is sure.

Chapter 2

The Third Vision

Zechariah's third vision of the man with the measuring line gave an assurance that there would indeed be future prosperity and blessing for the nation of Israel. Jerusalem would be rebuilt but, not, in fact, until after its final destruction as portrayed in Zechariah 14 vv 2ff.

The Measuring Line

In Zechariah 1 v 16, where God gave assurance of His presence in Jerusalem where the temple would be built again, the certainty of the fulfilment of all His purposes toward Jerusalem was guaranteed by the fact that **"a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."** When God draws up plans, they are followed through to final completion. Here the man with the measuring line determines the length and the breadth - an indication that more specific details are to be supplied. (Ezekiel's vision of the future millennial temple is also accompanied by actual measurements - Ezekiel 40-42).

The future re-building will no longer be dependent upon man's devices, such as strong walls and fortifications, but upon God. Neither will it be possible to contain the abundance of God's blessings within human boundaries. The city's protection will be a wall of fire, the fire of God, about it. Just as in the earlier history of the people of God, against their enemies it will afford protection, but to the Lord's people within it will be the **Shekinah** Glory of the presence of God. Do you remember how it was when the Israelites reached the Red Sea? Approaching from behind was the whole chariot-equipped might of the Egyptian army. What chance did a bunch of unarmed, escaped slaves have? God was their salvation. The pillar of cloud came between Israel and the Egyptians. To the Egyptians it was darkness; to the Israelites it was light. Later, in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud was the visible evidence of the presence of God in the tabernacle. By night it was seen as a pillar of fire.

God's dwelling will not be in just a temple but in His people, just as He now dwells in His people, the spiritual seed, the Church:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" I Corinthians 3 v 16

"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2 v 22

Did not John the Baptist rightly declare that the Lord would baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire? This is the glory of His abiding and indwelling presence (II Corinthians 4 v 6). And in heaven **"the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."** (Revelation 21 v 23). However, to the ungodly, our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12 v 29)

Summons to the People

The Lord knew that, by the time this prophecy would be ripe for fulfilment, the Jews would have been scattered among the Gentile nations. That dispersion, of course, began with the **Roman** defeat of the Jews and the destruction of Jerusalem and the second temple in 70 AD. But even at the time of Zechariah, despite a return of the people to the land, many had remained in the place of their captivity, Babylon. They had settled down there. A new generation had also arisen which knew no other life. They were not too bothered about God's promised land, probably even preferring the country of their exile. God, therefore, summoned His people from Babylon, the land of the north (vv 6 & 7). It was a call to separation, first, to enjoy the abundance of God's blessings but, second, to avoid being caught up in the outpouring of judgment on the Gentile powers. (see Jeremiah 50 vv 4,5)

Even in our present dispensation, the same principle is at work. God's call to His people still is that they should separate themselves from the system of their former captivity - the world and the spiritual Babylon of false religion. Paul asked, ***"What fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?... come out from among them and be ye separate.."*** (II Corinthians 6 vv 14-18; see also Revelation 18 vv 1-4) What a lot believers miss when they settle in the world! What untold sorrows vex their souls as they dwell in spiritual filth! Remember how righteous Lot vexed his soul every day by continuing to live in an ungodly place of compromise. (II Peter 2 vv 6-8). Isaiah 48 v 20, Jeremiah 50 vv 8-10 and 51 vv 6-10 & 45 all exhort God's people to flee from Babylon and the wrath upon it. As it was for the earthly seed, Israel, so it is also for the spiritual seed, the Church: it is no time to remain in Babylon. Be separate for judgment is coming.

The spirit of all the four Gentile powers is still at work. Babylon, the first of the empires and the place of the original, organised rebellion against God (Genesis 10 vv 8-10; 11 vv 1-9), although crushed by the Persians so long ago, still lives as its spirit, or influence, has permeated all succeeding empires. In the end time, according to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision, all the work and influence of the four empires will be utterly destroyed by the Messiah. In Revelation 13, John saw a vision of the last world empire, the latter day manifestation of the Roman empire, rising up out of the sea, that is, out of the chaos of the disorganised people and nations for those times. It was represented by a beast which had some characteristics of all four beasts of the four empires in Daniel's vision (Daniel 7). There was something of the leopard of Greece, something of the bear of Medo-Persia and something of the lion of Babylon.

God's intention is to pursue His glory (v8) by establishing His purposes concerning His people and against the nations which had spoiled Israel. In spite of Israel's disobedience, God's earthly people are still the apple of His eye (i.e. the pupil, the tender, sensitive, vital part of the eye - see Deuteronomy 32 v 10; Psalm 17 v 8; cf. Isaiah 63 v 9). God will shake His fist (hand) at the nations. There will be a reversal of Jewish fortunes at the expense of the nations (v9). When has this ever happened since the days of Zechariah? Of course, it never has; the fulfilment is reserved for the future.

Rejoicing

The prospect of this afforded an opportunity for great rejoicing, because then the Lord will have come and will be dwelling in the midst of His people. At His first coming, it was in humiliation and with no reputation (Philippians 2 vv 7,8), but at His second advent, it will be in power and majesty. In the first instance, the Word was made flesh (John 1 v 14; Malachi 3 v 1); in that future day, the Lord will dwell among all His people and He will be their light and glory.

Furthermore, in v.11, Zechariah foresaw that the Gentiles would be brought into God's blessings as well, not that there should be two peoples (the Church and the Jews) but that both should be one. Thus Abraham was promised that his seed should be as the sand on the shore (=earthly seed, Israel) and as the stars of heaven (=spiritual seed, the Church). Thus also, Paul explained that the middle wall of partition, which divided Gentiles from Jews in the Temple courts, had been broken down. Both had been made one in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2 vv 14-18).

Although earthly Israel seems not to be in her proper place yet, never forget that they are the Lord's, His possession, His inheritance. (vv12,13). All flesh will be silent when this millennial bliss is manifested, for the Glory of God will cover the earth. He will have risen from the habitation of His holiness. No more shall evil abound nor people say, "Where is your God?" God will be in obvious control. The message is sure. Be separate! Rejoice in the Lord!

Chapter 3

Joshua, the High Priest

Blessings have been promised to God's earthly people, but first they must be cleansed. It is the same principle at work for us today. Without holiness, no-one shall see the Lord. (Hebrews 12 v 14)

The Fourth Vision - An Unclean People

The fourth vision was of Joshua, the high priest, standing in God's presence. Yet he was filthy and unclean. As high priest he stood not just for himself but as representative of all the people of Israel. To be sure, he would bear the emblems of the twelve tribes on his shoulders and on the breastplate (Exodus 28 vv 9-21). In other words, it was the whole people of Israel, returned from the exile, which stood in this unholy condition before the Lord.

Standing at Joshua's right hand was Satan, the adversary, his purpose being to resist the people of God, or, if one follows the seemingly repetitive Hebrew text, "to be an adversary" - והשטן עמד על-ימינו לשטנו: Immediately, the role of Satan in the story of Job comes to mind, one of continually opposing God's people and accusing them before the Lord. His aim was to frustrate and destroy the purposes of God. Satan is the adversary, the active enemy of all God's people. He is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12 v 10); he is the devourer and the destroyer (Revelation 9 v 11 mg.); he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8 v 44). See how he stood here ready to capitalise on any failure and fault. Do not listen to him but, rather, look to God!

The representative of the people was Joshua, a name which means "The Lord saves". In Greek, it is represented by the name Ἰησοῦς (Jesus). You see, here is an excellent picture of our representative in the presence of Almighty God, our Great High Priest, the Man Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2 v 5). He became man, bore our sins, took all our sinful filthiness upon Himself and not only experienced the revulsion of God against sin, but took all the punishment for it as judgment was poured out upon Him on the cross. It was our sin, for He Himself had none. His life was perfect.

Joshua had to do or say nothing. It was the Lord who dealt with Satan; it was the Lord who rebuked him. Job had cried out for such a daysman – a referee or mediator, when he had been the object of the adversary's actions (Job 9 v 33). But now that God was moving for the salvation and restoration of His people, Satan had no say or influence. He was silenced. Since it was God who thus dealt with the situation, it would have been useless for Joshua to have worried about it. All he could do was trust God. What a lesson for us too! We have a mediator, the man Christ Jesus, who ever lives to intercede for us. (I Timothy 2 v 5; I John 2 v 1; Hebrews 7 v 25; Romans 8 v 34). So none can condemn us or make any accusation against us. It is God who justifies us; our trust is in Him.

When we examine the reason for this intervention, we find it was that God had chosen Jerusalem; He had chosen His people. This is indeed Divine grace. Hence it is not a matter of human effort, but of God's choice. ***"It is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy."*** (Romans 9 v 16). God's people, therefore, have no need to fear Satan's allegations, for who can resist God's choice and God's work? Israel, according to the flesh, are God's people; they are chosen. We too are a chosen people (I Peter 2 v 9). Sinners we may have been, but now sinners saved by God's grace – brands plucked from the burning.

Cleansing, Clothing and Communion

The condition of the people was displayed in the filthy, revolting garments which the high priest was wearing as he stood before God. Whatever we may think of our own condition, it is certain that in God's presence it will be shown up for what it is – filthy. For “...**we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.**” (Isaiah 64 v 6) But God's grace is greater than our sin – Praise the Lord! He took the old away that His people might be clothed in new garments, thus signifying that God would yet transform His earthly people into what He wants them to be. It will be God's work of forgiveness and imparted righteousness. This is the Christian's present testimony, that “**old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**” (II Corinthians 5 v 17) It will be Israel's too. In anticipation of this, Isaiah cried out, “**Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem...**” (Isaiah 61 v 10).

Then in verse 4, Zechariah himself exclaimed, “**Let them set a fair mitre on his head!**” Without that covering Joshua would have been incomplete, unable to perform his priestly ministry. That fair mitre bore the golden plate with the inscription ‘**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**’ (Exodus 28 v 36). It was a plain token that both priest and people were set apart to God. As for us, the Lord is our covering (II Corinthians 11 vv 3 & 4); He is our holiness. Without Him we are incomplete. He is our fair mitre by whom we are sanctified and through whom we enjoy full communion with God, by whom we have boldness to enter into the holiest (Hebrews 10 vv 19ff).

However, to enter into the fulness of blessing – whether it be earthly or spiritual Israel – the human response of faith is required. Thus, in verse 7, the Lord gave His people a promise of moving in God's works and in the heavenly places (that is, ‘**among these that stand by**’ – the heavenly hosts), **if** they would observe God's way. All this is yet future for earthly Israel, although, for the Church, it is ours now by faith (Ephesians 2 v 6).

The Branch

The key to the fulfillment of these promises to God's earthly people was conveyed in a revelation to Joshua concerning the Messiah, Whom God called ‘**My Servant – the Branch**’. The Hebrew word for Branch here is צמח ‘Tsemach’.

In II Samuel 7, God promised David that He would establish the kingdom to David's seed forever. Isaiah, using a different Hebrew word for ‘branch’, foretold that there would come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse (David's father), and “**a Branch shall grow out of his roots...**” (Isaiah 11 v 1). In the fulness of time this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ Who is the Branch of Zechariah 3 v 8. An examination of the Old Testament scriptures reveals that there are only five places where this Hebrew word Tsemach occurs and two of those may be paired together, providing four interesting aspects of the Branch in His offices and work:

1. Jeremiah 23 v 5: “**Behold the days come, says the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch** (cf. Jeremiah 33 v 15), **and a King shall reign and prosper and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.**” Here the Branch is connected with His office as King, Sovereign Lord, the Lord our righteousness (Jeremiah 23 v 6). This too is the aspect of Jesus that Matthew presents to us in his Gospel – Jesus the King.
2. Zechariah 3 v 8: This is the Scripture which we have before us and which refers to the Branch as ‘**My Servant**’. Isaiah spoke of the Messiah as God's Servant (Isaiah 42 v 1) and especially as

the one who would suffer, not for His own sins, for He had none, but for the sins of others (Isaiah 53). This too is the portrayal of Jesus given in Mark's Gospel – Jesus the Servant.

3. Then, in Zechariah 6 v 12, the Branch is 'The Man' who will build the Temple of the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy those wonderful words that there is **"...one mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus"** (1 Timothy 5 v 2). Was it not the Man Christ Jesus who declared, **"I will build my Church..."** (Matthew 16 v 18)? Again, this is the picture we have of our Lord in Luke's Gospel – Jesus the Man.
4. Finally, Isaiah declared that the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious (Isaiah 4 v 2). Whilst we appreciate the Truth that Jesus is the King Who came to serve, He is also God Who became man. He is Jesus the Man, but He is also Christ, the Lord from heaven. In John's Gospel He is Jesus the Lord, the One who manifests God's glory, Whom John brings before us.

A further aspect of the fourfold work is the description of the four living creatures in Ezekiel 1 v 10, for each one had four faces and the likenesses of the faces were of a lion, an ox, a man and an eagle. The lion stands for King; the ox is known as a domesticated beast fit for work, the servant; the man represents the human aspect and the eagle which soars on high, the heavenly. Little wonder that these creatures have become symbols of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. How remarkable and well interwoven is the Word of God! (Compare this also with the four 'living ones' of Revelation 4 v 7).

In concluding these comments on the Branch, let it be understood that Jesus is no mere descendant of David. One of the elders, in Revelation 5 v 5, described Him as **"the Root of David"** and, in Revelation 22 v 16, Jesus Himself testifies, **"I am the Root and Offspring (or Branch) of David."** Hence we find the apparent enigma of Psalms 110 which Jesus cited to demonstrate His own Deity – If David referred to his own descendant as Lord, how can He be his son? The answer can only be found in the revealed truth of the gospel that He Who is God (Philippians 2 v 6) became man and made Himself of no reputation. Thus He is the Root but He also humbled Himself to become the Branch that He might bless us with His fruitfulness (Isaiah 4 v 2).

The Stone

The metaphor changes in verse 9 to that of the stone. The allusion seems to be to the headstone of the new temple building as indicated in chapter 4 vv 7-9. In the Messianic fulfillment, however, we know that the headstone and chief cornerstone of the foundation of that building which God is building is Jesus Christ Himself. There was a story that in the building of the original temple, the stones were cut to shape away from the temple site itself. When they began to assemble the building, there was one odd-shaped stone which seemed to fit nowhere and so it was rejected. Eventually, however, it was realised that this was the keystone or cornerstone which locked the whole edifice together. The stone which was rejected by the builders turned out to be the most important stone of all (Psalms 118 v 22). The picture is so appropriate because it is just what happened to Jesus of course. He who was rejected by His own people as not fitting their ideas of what the Messiah should be, turned out to be the headstone and chief foundation stone (Matthew 21 v 42; Ephesians 2 v 20). Moreover, Jesus is the stone who will eventually come, as revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in the dream interpreted by Daniel, to destroy the Gentile powers which have oppressed God's people. That stone **"cut without hands"** (i.e. by God), will become a great mountain filling the whole earth, the Kingdom which God will set up and which shall never be destroyed (Daniel 2 vv 33,34 & 44). Whereas Christ IS building His Church, of which He is the foundation stone, this final manifestation in Daniel, which has relevance for God's earthly people Israel, has yet to be fulfilled.

Next, in Zechariah 3 v 9, attention is drawn to seven eyes engraved in the stone, symbolic of the perfect fulness of the Spirit which dwelt in the Messiah, for the seven eyes are the seven spirits of God as witnessed in the book of Revelation 5 v 6 (seven is the expression of perfection rather than a literal multiplicity of beings). It was also a reminder that God watches over His word to fulfil it perfectly (Zechariah 4 v 10).

In the day when the Messiah, the Servant is brought forth for His earthly people, when God will in faithfulness have performed His word, He will remove the iniquity of the land (that is the land of Israel) in one day. At last, for the Jews and all the earthly descendants of Jacob, there will be a once-for-all sacrifice for sin. There will be no further necessity for the yearly Day of Atonement, but the Messiah, Christ Jesus our Lord, will be recognised as the One who has provided that perfect, once-for-all atonement; it was completed when He died on the cross of Calvary. We who are born again of God's Spirit know that perfect work of Christ now (Hebrews 9 vv 24-28; 10 vv 12-14). God's earthly people Israel, although at present blind to this provision, will eventually know it, when Jesus the Branch, the suffering Servant, is brought forth to them (Zechariah 13 v 1).

Then, as assured in chapter 3 v 10, there will be peace, joy and prosperity throughout the land. This has not yet been seen in all the troubled years of Israel's history, but that time of millennial blessing will certainly arrive (Micah 4 v 4).

Chapter 4

The Lampstand and the Olive Trees

In Zechariah chapter 4 we have set forth before us the people of Israel restored to a place of testimony, of witness and of shining forth God's glory. The fulfillment of the prophecy was near, but in its fullest sense it is still yet to be.

The Lampstand

The symbolism of the Lampstand may be summarised as follows: it represents the proper witness of the Lord's people. The original piece of tabernacle furniture was made of one piece of gold, speaking of its heavenly, Divine worth. It was pure gold but it was beaten into shape, this being a token of the way in which God's people, through suffering, are to become the people He wants to fulfil His purposes. To fuel the lights of the Lampstand a supply of oil – a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit – was provided. The branches of the stand were seven, representing the perfect witness (shining forth) of God's people under His power. O, the grace and mercy of God!

In the book of Exodus, the maintenance of the Lampstand, the trimming and re-filling were the responsibility of God's people (Exodus 27 vv 20,21). That the light went out in times of the nation's backsliding and unbelief is a sad commentary on human failure and one from which we too must learn (I Samuel 3 v 3). The Lord does warn His church of the dangers of losing the lampstand-witness in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. However, Zechariah's vision of the lampstand was remarkable in that it received a continual supply of oil from the two olive trees via two golden pipes into a reservoir. From this reservoir seven pipes supplied each of the lamps. The reservoir was kept filled so that there was an abundant supply. Now we know this figure in the reality of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon believers. The Lord fills us to overflowing. There is a continual supply of the anointing upon our lives to empower us to do God's will. John says, "***The anointing which you have received of Him abides in you...***" (I John 2 v 27). Israel will know that restoration to bear witness to God's glory, to His grace and mercy, in a coming day.

God's Work

Without that supply of His Spirit, no work can even be attempted for God. Our committee meetings and forward planning, our methods and organisation are all fruitless if there is no empowering by the Spirit of God. For as the word given to Zerubbabel (the ruler in Zechariah's time) confirmed, it is not by might, nor by power (that of human effort) but by God's Spirit that this perfect work shall be accomplished. There can be no witness apart from the enabling of the Holy Spirit for no flesh shall glory in His presence (I Corinthians 1 v 29).

The Chief Stone and the Day of Small Things

The story of the headstone has already been recounted. Nothing would stand in the way of Zerubbabel's seeing the work of the restoration of the temple being completed. (v9). Every mountain of opposition and every obstacle that stood in the way would be smoothed out in the face of faith and trust in God, as the work was finished according to the perfect standard of the plummet (plumb-line) in Zerubbabel's hand. The headstone, the one which fits perfectly and in which the whole building would be fittingly framed

together, (see [Ephesians 2 v 21](#)) would be seen in its proper setting as it was brought forth to crown the work. Cries of **“Grace unto it!”** would demonstrate the eventual recognition by the people of its importance, just as in the last days God’s earthly people will realise the identity and importance of Jesus, their Messiah. In the meantime, God’s people were encouraged that, although they might currently despise the day of small things, the work would come to fruition, the day of restoration would arrive, for God was watching over His word and His promises with a perfect watchfulness as signified by the seven eyes.

The Two Olive Trees

There seem to be at least three levels on which we can appreciate the ‘two olive trees’ prophecy. Often in scripture there is an immediate and a distant fulfilment of prophecies. In each view the olive trees are the two anointed ones, or the two בני־הַצֶּהֶר (sons of oil) which stand by the Lord of the whole earth. For Zechariah’s time there was a fulfilment in Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, the governor (of royal seed). As priest and ‘king’ both would have been anointed to serve God and His people. Thus there was an indication of a people restored under God in Zechariah’s time. Nevertheless, we know from history how far short of perfect restoration that fell and so we must look to the future for the final fulfilment.

First, there is a perfect completion in the work of Jesus Christ, for, as can be seen from the prophecy of [Zechariah 6 vv 12 & 13](#), the Messiah, the anointed One, would fill both offices of priest and king. He it is who makes sure to His people a constant supply of the Holy Spirit so that the witness of His people is bright. “I am the Light of the world,” declared Jesus. **“He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.”** ([John 8 v 12](#)). Then in [Matthew 5 v 14](#) He said to His disciples, **“You are the light of the world.”**

However, let it be remembered that these prophecies in Zechariah do have an application to God’s earthly people, Israel, and Scripture does confirm a further fulfilment in relation to Israel. In [Revelation 11 v 4](#), the two olive trees appear again, this time with two lampstands. Here they are God’s two witnesses who prophesy for three and a half years. There is a definite allusion to the prophecy of Zechariah. At this stage of human history the church will have been raptured, snatched away to meet the Lord. The Holy Spirit’s influence will largely have been removed from the earth. But here, and for the benefit of His earthly people, Israel, God will not have left Himself without witness. Those two witnesses, no doubt, will seek to build and place the headstone, Jesus Christ, in His rightful place. Ultimately, their witness will be rejected and they will be murdered. After their resurrection and ascension to heaven, untold sorrows and tribulation will break out upon the earth. In character they seem to be like Moses and Elijah, for they have power to summon plagues and rain and to call down fire from heaven ([Revelation 11 vv 5 & 6](#)). They both stood before the Lord of all the earth on the Mount of Transfiguration ([Mark 9 v 4](#)) where it was later confirmed by Jesus that Elijah must come and restore all things as foretold by the Old Testament prophets ([Mark 9 v 12](#)). Israel’s lamp at this time will have long been extinguished and the second lampstand of the Church ([Revelation 1 v 20](#)) will no longer be available, but God will maintain that basic witness to Truth with the minimum required under the law – in the mouth of two or three witnesses. (In the case of Jesus, He is to us like the two witnesses: **“I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me. It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me bears witness of Me.”** – [John 8 vv 13-18](#)).

Even that final, basic witness will be rejected until God pours the Spirit of Grace on His people at the end of the tribulation period ([Zechariah 12 v 10](#)).

Chapter 5

Dealing With Sin

Whether in an individual or in a nation, God's attitude to sin is uncompromising: it must be rooted out.

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

(1 John 3 v 8)

In Zechariah 3, the vision of Joshua, the high priest, showed cleansing to be God's work. Then the lampstand vision in chapter 4 illustrated the truth that God's cleansed people will be empowered by Him for service and witness. The vision in the present chapter of the flying roll reveals that sin must be harshly dealt with and cast out.

The Flying Roll

The roll, or scroll, for that is what it was, had a precise measurement – 20 cubits by 10 cubits (about 30ft by 15ft or some 9 metres by 4.5 metres). This, in fact, was the measurement of the Holy Place in the tabernacle and later of the porch in Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6 v 3).

Now the Holy Place was the place of God's provision for His people as signified by the shewbread and, typically, where we feed on the Living Bread. It was the place of His people's witness to His glory as seen in the lampstand which was supplied with the holy oil. It was the place of the worship of His people at the golden altar of incense which burned with holy fire. It was a place set apart and holy; it was a place of full communion. Nothing sinful or fleshly could contaminate that holy location. The measurement represents the standard revealed by God to Moses in the holy mountain. And there, in that vision of the flying scroll, the measurement of which was so accurately recorded, God reminded His people of the Divine standard, revealed from heaven, which was necessary for that blessing of full communion. Even to us Christians the reminder is timely, for God has not dispensed with the Law but, rather, the Law is fulfilled in Christ. Whilst the ceremonial regulations, the shadows of the true, are now redundant and find their full completion in the work of Christ, the moral law holds good as firmly as ever and, as Jesus taught in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, is not simply a matter of outward actions but of the thoughts and intents of the heart. For the believer, the manifestation of the Christ-life – and, therefore, of that moral law – will be the consequent outworking of salvation. Ultimately, Christ Himself will be the measure of judgment (Acts 17 vv 30 & 31). To His earthly people God publicly displayed His standard so that all might know. The flying scroll was like one of those aeroplane advertisements we sometimes see, trailing across the sky so that all may see and know.

A Curse

Because it, like the Law, represented an absolute standard, it was seen as a curse (v3). All who fell short were condemned and, indeed, all HAVE sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3 v 21).

The wages of sin is death. The apostle Paul pointed out in Galatians 3 v 8: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written (Deuteronomy 27 v 26) ‘Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them.’”

Stealing and Swearing

Since it was a scroll it had two sides, each of which would have been inscribed. That the Law, summarised in the Ten Commandments, has two aspects, having been written on two tablets, was no coincidence. The two facets represented duties towards God and duties towards our fellow man. That was why Jesus summed up the Law in two commandments: ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... and the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”*** (Matthew 22 vv 37-40).

Here, stealing summed up the breaches of duties to fellow man, whether it be stealing his life, his possessions, his wife, his good name and so on. Using God's Name in vain (i.e. swearing) is an apt token of that attitude which fails to give God His rightful place, for it involves, in essence, being against God, His Name and His nature. If God's earthly people persist in these attitudes, God's Law will be there, hovering, just like a falcon, ready to swoop. God will not have sin in His people whom He, in grace and mercy, will have restored. God's word will prove to be their utter destruction if they choose to ignore it. It will be like a hammer to break the rock in pieces (Jeremiah 23 v 29). It will be like a two-edged sword piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (Hebrews 4 v 12). If God's people knowingly go against His word, offending man and God, it will prove to be the destruction of those things which have a wrong place in their lives. God will have a holy people, separated unto Him and so the vision spoke of possessions being totally consumed (timber and stones – v4). The vision, you see, represented a determination that a cleansed, restored people should keep the Law and honour God. That their own houses and luxurious comfort held a wrong place in their hearts was certainly confirmed by Haggai's earlier denunciation of the people for dwelling in their own panelled (i.e. nicely appointed and decorated) houses whilst God's house was lying waste and in neglect.

Dispensationally, however, this vision is a figure of the millennial reign of Christ as foretold in the prophecies of Psalm 2 vv 8-9, Revelation 2 v 27 and Revelation 12 v 5, when He shall rule over the nations with a rod of iron, when sin and wickedness will be subdued under the rule of Christy and His saints, and when, for a thousand years, Satan and his angels will be bound.

Spiritually, there is an application now, that the standard God expects of us is perfection, His perfection – absolute purity. He ***“...has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He has chosen us in Him... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”*** (Ephesians 1 vv 3-7).

There has been cleansing and empowering for service and here, in this vision, we see sanctification.

The Ephah, Talent of Lead and a Woman

Whereas the preceding vision applied to the individual's responsibility to be apart from sin, the next vision concerned the sins of the nation – sins of idolatry, cheating, injustice, greed and selfishness. Isaiah, years earlier, had pleaded with the nation in God's name, to forsake its sin, to put away the evil of their doings, to cease from doing evil, to learn to do well, to seek justice, to relieve the oppressed and so on. He lamented over the fact that God's people had been seduced away from the Lord. Where once there had been justice and righteousness, there were now murderers and thieves. (Isaiah 1 vv 16-27). Surely the Proverb is true: ***“Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”*** (Proverbs 14 v 34). And that applies to our nation too. Godlessness will always lead to a corruption in morals and lifestyle. If God's people ate to prosper, all sin must be cast out.

1. The Ephah

The ephah was a commercial measuring standard of about seven and a half gallons. It was also the name given, as here, to the container used for measuring such a quantity. The law instructed the people to use a just ephah (Leviticus 19 v 36; Ezekiel 45 v 11), that is, not to give short measure. However, the character of Babylon in the people tended to encourage them to disregard this command. Indeed, this had been a fault in the people prior to the exile and one of the many reasons for their downfall. They would make the ephah small and the shekel great (less weight for a greater price), falsifying balances by deceit (see also Amos 8 v 5). Thus all corrupt practices had to go. Here was such a corrupt standard which resembled the practices throughout the earth (v6). It was NOT God's standard. It had to go.

2. The Talent of Lead

Apparently, there was a lid to the ephah, fittingly made of base metal, about fifty six pounds. Momentarily it was removed to reveal the evil contents, the source of all the trouble, but immediately it was slammed down again to prevent the escape of the wickedness within. Lead was a symbol of corruption in the house of Israel, for they had become as dross to the Lord (Ezekiel 22 vv 18-20), but God's intention was to purge the dross out of His people.

3. The Woman Sitting

The ephah contained a woman who sat in the middle of it. She was a picture of that false system which would entice and seduce God's people away from Him. In Revelation 17 vv 1-5, she is observed as the great whore who sits upon many waters (that is, she rules and oppresses many peoples and nations). She is Babylon the great, that vile, false, counterfeit religious system that opposes God. To be sure, after the Babylonian exile, she was cast out as the Jewish nation was purged from its former idolatry and spiritual adultery. Nonetheless, the Babylonian system was, and is, still at work. In Revelation 2 vv 18-23, she is portrayed as Jezebel who claims to speak God's words but, in fact, seduces her victims into spiritual adultery. The Apostle Paul's concern for the Corinthian believers was that they should not be deceived in this way (II Corinthians 11 vv 1-3). Cast out the evil system; be separate from it lest you get caught up in the destruction for which it is doomed (Revelation 18 v 4).

4. The Two Women

The ephah, with its contents, was carried away by two women. They had wings like a stork. In Leviticus 11 v 9, it is an unclean bird and, according to Jeremiah 8 v 7, one which knows the appointed times for migration. Evil must depart when we let God cast it out; it knows its appointed times. In their wings is the wind, which, in Scripture, is symbolic of judgment (Isaiah 1 v 16; 64 v 6; Haggai 1 v 9; Luke 3 v 17). These two women could be said to represent two sisters – the nations of Israel and Judah in their old, unclean, ungodly natures:

“...there were two women, the daughters of one mother: and they committed whoredoms... and the names of them were Aholah (means ‘my tabernacle’) the elder, and Aholibah (means ‘my tabernacle in her’) her sister: and they were mine... Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem is Aholibah. And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine... and when her sister Aholibah saw this, she was more corrupt...” (Ezekiel 23 vv 2ff).

Now they were being banished forever, despatched back to Babylon. The vision was like saying goodbye to the bad past for good. There may well be significance in the fact that the ephah was lifted up between heaven and earth, for this is where the god of the power of the air, the devil, operates (Ephesians 2 v 2). Jesus too was lifted up between heaven and earth and that is where sin was finally dealt with.

In this case the evil is banished to Shinar – the place in Genesis 11 where man's rebellion against God found organisation after the flood. It is the original site of all paganism and world empires. It

is Babel – confusion. Verse 11 indicated that there the evil system would be established and set upon her own base, because that is where it originated. From there it has infiltrated world systems. In the New Testament it is Rome that bears the name Babylon in the book of Revelation. In spirit it has the same commercial principles and is seen in its final manifestation as a seducing, corrupt harlot (Revelation 17), ultimately to be destroyed (Revelation 18). The exhortation to God's people is still, "Be separate!"

Chapter 6

The Four Chariots

As we now come to the final vision, let us just recall the previous seven visions to note how there is a progression of ideas. In the first vision, God demonstrated that He was well aware of the apparent imbalance that existed in that God's people were suffering adversity whereas the oppressing nations were seemingly at rest. God was with His people in all their suffering. To allay their fears the second vision revealed that those Gentile powers would be cut down, whilst the third vision promised a restoration of the people to Israel with God dwelling in the midst. The pathway to that restoration, however, must first be through God's provision of cleansing as seen in the fourth vision of Joshua the high priest. At that time, the Lord's people will also be restored to a place of full witness empowered by the Spirit of God. They will be cleansed and filled like the lampstand of the fifth vision. That is when the headstone, Jesus the Messiah, will be placed in His rightful position. That the sin will be firmly dealt with both in the individual and in the nation was clearly advertised to the people in the sixth and seventh visions of the flying scroll and the ephah. Now that God's people have been dealt with, cleansed, empowered to serve and sanctified, now that judgment has begun at the House of God, God can deal with the nations, the unrighteous and the ungodly. And thus we are to understand the eighth vision. Four chariots came from between two mountains of brass. In the chariots were red, black, white and grisled or bay horses respectively.

The two mountains I take to be Divine witnesses (two being the minimum legal requirement) of the righteousness of God in judgment. When there was none righteous, none to seek the Lord, and when His people had gone into exile as the result of their sin and disobedience, God called the mountains of Israel as witness that He would deal with the heathen and restore His people (Ezekiel 36 vv 1-15). The two mountains stand also for the two nations, Israel in the North and Judah in the South (just as the two women in the previous chapter). Centuries earlier, God had given commandment to Moses that blessings for obedience be pronounced upon Mount Gerizim and curses for disobedience on Mount Ebal (Deuteronomy 11 v 29; 27 vv 12,13; Joshua 8 v 33) – two permanent, Divine witnesses of the word of God.

Note that the mountains are of brass, which in Scripture is a symbol or type of God's judgment in righteousness. It is seen in the brazen altar in the tabernacle and the brazen serpent in the wilderness. As the Lord moves in judgment, His feet treading evil underfoot are portrayed as being of brass (Daniel 10 v 6; Revelation 1 v 15) and, in that the Lord's people will have some involvement, they too are shod with brass (read Micah 4 vv 11-13). In 1 Kings 7 v 15, the two pillars before the Temple were made of brass and were named Jachin (meaning 'established') and Boaz (meaning 'in it is strength'). Thus God's people are manifested as having been dealt with by God and so are established and strong in Him. Finally, we see a restored Israel and for them and through them judgment will be executed upon the nations.

What Are These?

The prophet asked a direct question about these vehicles that emerged from between the mountains and the answer in verse 5 was clearly related to the chariots since verse 6 distinguishes them from the horses which seem merely to be agents. The chariots are the four spirits (or winds) of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. Now Psalms 68 v 17 speaks of angels as chariots. In Revelation 7 v 1, John saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth so that the wind should

not blow on the earth. In that setting there was an atmosphere of judgment, but it was, as yet, under restraint. Daniel had a vision of the four winds of heaven striving upon the Great Sea as there was a moving in judgment upon the restless peoples of the earth. So here, in Zechariah, the chariots (angels) or the four winds of heaven had been unleashed in judgment upon the heathen nations.

It is interesting to note the succession of world empires foreseen in [Daniel chapter 7](#). Babylon was represented by a lion with eagle's wings (the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's vision [Daniel chapter 2](#)); Medo-Persia by a bear devouring much flesh (the silver breast and arms in [Daniel 2](#) and the ram in [Daniel 8](#)); the Greek Empire by the leopard with four heads (the belly and thighs of brass in [Daniel 2](#) and the he-goat in [Daniel 8](#)); the Roman Empire by a fourth beast different from the rest and terrifying (the legs of iron in [Daniel 2](#)); and finally the latter day manifestation of the Roman Empire by the ten horns of the fourth beast (the feet and toes of potter's clay and iron of [Daniel 2 v 41](#)). There is something of all these empires surviving to the end times, for that latter day manifestation of the Roman Empire was seen by the Apostle John to possess the aspects of a leopard (Greece), a bear (Medo-Persia), and a lion (Babylon) - [Revelation 13 v 2](#). Similarly, in Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image, the whole structure of gold, silver, brass, iron and iron/clay would not be destroyed until the Messiah – the stone cut out without hands – should strike the feet and destroy utterly the empires of man ([Daniel 2 v 45](#)).

As the angelic messengers in [Zechariah chapter 6](#) moved in judgment, the agents of destruction (the horses in the chariots) went to their allotted areas. The red horses had no mention in this respect. They represented bloodshed and war as revealed also in [Revelation 6 v 4](#). The power of Babylon had already been subdued, and that is why only the red horse of [Zechariah chapter 1](#) was ridden by a man. It had been tamed. That is why the red horse did not travel to any particular location. However, the black horses went forth into the north country – at the time that would have indicated the centre of Persia's dominion, Persia which had devoured 'much flesh'. Black would suggest destruction by famine and death (cf. [Revelation 6 vv 5,6](#)).

The white horses went after them, pursuing and quickly subduing. Indeed, Alexander the Great did just this (see also [Daniel 8 v 21](#)), making Babylon his capital. The white horse would symbolise a swift, faitly bloodless victory, going forth conquering and to conquer ([Revelation 6 v 2](#)). Where the rebellion against the Lord first began, where man first organised himself in oppressing fellow man (world empires), in Babel or Babylon, the Lord's Spirit could now find rest for the rebellion had been subdued.

As for the grisled or speckled horses, their destination was the south country. This was one particular province of the Greek empire subdued in the Roman campaigns in Egypt as well as in the east. It will be noticed, however, that in the fourth chariot there were also bay horses and these correspond to what we have seen in the Daniel visions, to the latter day manifestation of the Roman Empire. These pale, bay horses (or, strong gorses – see mg.) sought to go to and fro through the earth (v7) and were permitted by God to do so, thereby growing into an empire that influenced the whole world. And they will continue to do so until the time of the end when the whole system of man's empires, of the times of the Gentiles (nations), will be destroyed to make way for Christ's millennial kingdom. The name of the pale horse in [Revelation 6 v 8](#) was Death, and Hades followed as surely as that final destruction will come upon the nations. The Lord will be glorified in His people in that day.

The Elevation of God's People

Now concerning the outworking of God's promises, we have seen the progression of thought in the visions, that God would restore His people, even though currently they are oppressed and afflicted. Here

God assured that He would not only restore and bless His people but would lift them up in their Messiah. The like truth we know now spiritually in that God "...has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus..." (Ephesians 2 v 6). Furthermore, to fulfil His purposes, God uses men, earthen vessels to contain His glorious treasure. It was specified that those of the captivity, those that had been in exile, far off from the promises of God, under bondage, would be the ones that God would use. And who are we that God should raise us to heavenly places? Surely we were sinners, strangers to the covenants of promise, afar off from God. Yet He found us, saved us, filled us and raised us up.

The names of the three men mentioned are, in themselves, instructive. **Heldai** means 'gliding swiftly past', i.e. transient and thus has reference to worldliness. **Tobijah** means 'the goodness of the Lord' and **Jedaiah** 'the Lord has known'. **Josiah** carries the idea 'the Lord has founded' and he was the son of **Zephaniah** 'the Lord has hidden, or secreted'. There is a logical sequence of thought conveyed in these names. The people were in a situation which was hopeless, which made everything seem pointless. All was transient and fading. But the goodness of God had brought them deliverance, this goodness being the basis of all His redemptive work. Certainly the people merited nothing in themselves. Neither was this goodness of God inaccessible to His people for God had known and felt for His people in their suffering. In the Egyptian bondage centuries before, God had declared that He had seen the affliction of His people and had heard their cry (Exodus 3 v 7). So the people whom God had known and whom, in His mercy He had rescued, were to be brought into the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. Transformed, His people are brought into the Lord's presence, separated unto Him. They are His building (1 Corinthians 3 v 9), His workmanship (Ephesians 2 v 10); they are what He has founded. Furthermore, as Josiah came from Zephaniah, so this foundation springs from the fact that His people have been hidden in Him, and from the foundation of the world this has been in the eternal purposes of God. (Read Ephesians 3 vv 9-11).

The Crowning of Joshua

Crowns were made of silver and gold to be set upon the head of Joshua, the high priest. In chapter 3, we saw Joshua as the representative of the people, filthy and in need of cleansing. Here He was (and is) representative of the Messiah to His people. Like Melchizedek, after whose eternal order Christ is also a priest (Hebrews 6 v 20 to 7 v 3), the Messiah is both Priest and King. In His priestly function He works for our redemption and silver, in the Bible, is associated with redemption (the shekel of silver, the shekel of the sanctuary – Leviticus 5 v 15; 27 vv 3ff). As King He comes to reign over His people and the gold crown represents His Kingship. The two functions are confirmed in v 13 "... **He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne...**"

In the time of Zechariah, there were two separate offices. References to Zerubbabel, the governor, seem to be veiled in the nameless pronoun "he" in v13 as it expounds the work of both the priest and the ruler. The same verse concludes that the "**counsel of peace shall be between them both**", that is, between Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the ruler. But in the Messiah, the Branch, whom both of these foreshadow, the two offices will be united in one man – the Branch (v12) who shall 'branch up from under him' ('grow up out of his place' – AV) that is, He will have lowly origins. (cf. Isaiah 53 v 2). Nevertheless, the Messiah would not remain in that state of humiliation; He would be crowned. Indeed, we see Him now "**crowned with glory and honour**" (Hebrews 2 v 9). In Revelation 14 v 14 He wears a golden crown, but in Revelation 19 v 12, His head bears many crowns.

In the immediate context, Zerubbabel, the ruler, would build the temple (4 v 9), but this too is but a type of the spiritual temple which the Messiah is now building, which temple are we, built together as living stones (I Peter 2 v 5; I Corinthians 3 vv 16f). There are also indications that there will be a millennial temple (Haggai 2 vv 7-9; Ezekiel chapters 40 to 42; Isaiah 2 vv 2,3). These prophecies are as yet unfulfilled.

The Crowns Distributed

The Victor who won the crowns, in His great grace, distributed them to the people for a memorial. So too the Lord distributes crowns to His own. In I Thessalonians 2 v 19, Paul speaks of a crown of rejoicing, in II Timothy 4 v 8 of a crown of righteousness and in James 1 v 12 there is mention of a crown of life as also in Revelation 2 v 10. I Peter 5 v 4 tells of a crown of glory. With what mighty blessings does the Lord fill and complete His people! He alone, however, is worthy of all honour and glory and thus, in Revelation 4 v 10, the crowns of the twenty four elders, who themselves represent the Church, were cast before Him in order to ascribe greatness to the Lord alone. So the crowns that Joshua wore are given to the people who have been brought out of captivity and placed in the temple to remain in God's presence as a memorial, an everlasting testimony to His greatness.

It will have been noted also that there have been a couple of name changes. Instead of Heldai, there is Helem. In place of the former reference to transience, the new name conveys the idea, at root, of 'bound together' and therefore implies 'health' or 'recovery'. This is significant in the context of the restoration of God's people. The substitution of Hen for Josiah is also important, for the new name means 'favour' or 'grace'. Indeed, God had founded and established His people as was indicated by the name Josiah, but it was and always is according to His abundant grace.

The promises of God continued to assure that more should return, that the temple would be built but that obedience was essential. That there is also a reference here to the latter day return of God's people and the building of the millennial temple seems certain in view of the context which refers, in addition to things current at the time of Zechariah, also to things associated with the coming of the Messiah at the end time.

Chapter 7

Babylonian Questions

In the fourth year of Darius (two years later), the temple had almost been completed. Messengers came to ask questions of the priests, those questions revealing the true heart of the people concerned. There are those in every age who, although they have an outward form of right religion, inwardly, their hearts are not in it. It was through Zechariah that the word of the Lord came in answer.

A Question of Deeds

The appointed representatives wanted to know whether, now that the people had been restored and the temple rebuilt, there was any point in fasting in the fifth month – weeping and separating. Although the fast was an expression of grief over the destruction of the former temple (II Kings 25 vv 8,9), it was not a God-appointed one but, rather, a voluntary action. Over the years, however, the fast had become an institution, a tradition of men, an outward act but no longer with any power. Now it was a chore and a burden to observe the fast. How often have revivals or re-discovered truths been reduced to such as men have merely imitated their predecessors but have not known the power of God themselves? Hence the people saw the fast in terms of weeping and separating and “for so many years” (v3). Their ends in observing the matter were purely selfish. Instead of weeping before the Lord and separating themselves unto God, it was a weeping and separating from others in self-pity for what they had lost. In the whole affair, there was a failure to enter into the joy of the Lord. Yes, there is a weeping to be done, but what joy lies before the people of God. Does not the Psalmist give us wise instruction? **“*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*”** Psalm 126 vv 5,6.

Jesus said, **“*Blessed are you that weep now: for you shall laugh.*”** Luke 6 v 21

Then again the Scripture says, **“*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.*”** Psalm 30 v 5

And consider Jesus **“*Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...*”** (Hebrews 12 v 2). Ministry costs and these questioners were clearly not prepared to pay the price – that is, to see self dead and God all in all. Therein is the reward.

In verse 2, the phrase ‘house of God’ translates the Hebrew ‘Bethel’, but that is also the name of a place. The meaning is more likely to be that they of Bethel had sent the messengers in question. Certainly, in Scripture, the temple is not referred to as the ‘house of God’. The place which bore the name ‘house of God’, on the other hand, where once the Lord revealed His glory to Jacob, became a place of corruption in the time of Jeroboam, the king of Israel (I Kings 12 vv 29-31 and 13 v 1; Amos 4 v 4 and 7 v 13; Jeremiah 48 v 13). To encourage the people to remain in Israel (north) and not to go up to Jerusalem in Judah (south), he had two golden calves made, setting one up in Dan and the other in Bethel. Priests were also created to offer to the idols in both places, priests who were chosen **“*of the lowest of the people.*”** (I Kings 12 v 31). Amos the prophet taunted the people of his day in an effort to shake them into a realisation of their shortcomings: **“*Come to Bethel and transgress*”** (Amos 4 v 4). It had become a by-word for rejection of God and a cause of great shame.

In the time of Zechariah, some exiles had returned to Bethel ([Ezra 2 v 28](#); [Nehemiah 7 v 32](#); [11 v 31](#)), and, bearing in mind its history, it is interesting to note that the question came from here. Furthermore, the names of the two mentioned reveals the same sort of character. Sherezer was a Babylonian name which may well have been combined with the name of a god, and meant 'May (name of a god – Nergal?) protect the king.' Regem-Melech means 'friend of the king'. If these names are contrasted with the names in the previous chapter, which names were all God-bearing names, the significance will become apparent. During the exile, Daniel (a God-bearing name) was given the Babylonian name of Belteshazzar, but he never appears to use it. The fact that these Jews did use theirs hints at compromise, a retention of a certain degree of worldliness, a form of religion, but with their heart not in it. A current plague for the Church is the scourge of compromise. One cannot serve God and the world.

The question was addressed to priests and prophets, but when the answer came it was through Zechariah and it was addressed to the people AND the priests – a reminder that all need to be in a right relationship with God.

Self or God

When God's word came to them, it began in the form of a question which challenged their motives. In effect, they had moaned, "Do we have to fast any more?"

God had countered, "Did you fast unto Me?"

The answer was clearly in the negative. Their motives had been selfish, as were their times of feasting too (v6). They had lost the temple, their land and homes, and quite simply they wanted them back, in a self-pitying, self-gratifying way. Surely the Lord had given warning after warning in the past to get their heart right but His words had fallen on deaf ears. When the people had lived prosperously, had not the Lord spoken to them so clearly by the earlier prophets, whose words were still available for their reproof and instruction? Through Isaiah the Lord had spoken about the true nature of fasting. [Isaiah 58 vv 3-5](#) describes well their own selfish approach to fasting:

"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and You see not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and You take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord?"

Such an exercise becomes an affliction of the soul with the idea in view of making God hear prayers, but it is not the fast that God has chosen. How many approach fasting in the same way today, simply as a means to getting prayers answered? It is an outward form of self-denial but, in fact, something in which the flesh can glory. This betrays a selfish attitude and a wrong relationship to the Lord. Jesus taught that our times of fasting should be private, not to men but unto the Father ([Matthew 6 vv 16-18](#))

True Self-Denial

True self-denial and, therefore, true fasting, will involve turning away from self and self-interests, and reaching out to others. It will be concerned with true justice, with mercy and compassion (v9). Amos (a former prophet) had cried out for justice to run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream

([Amos 5 v 24](#)), but these had been sadly lacking then, as they cheated in business and oppressed the poor ([Amos 8 vv 4-6](#)). Through Zechariah, the Lord showed the people that true fasting would consist in not oppressing the needy, whether they were widow or orphans, strangers or poor, just as Isaiah had done ([Isaiah 1 vv 17,18](#)). In the New Testament, James adds his inspired comment: **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”** ([James 1 v 27](#))

In their hearts there should not even have been the imagination of evil (cf. [1 John 4 v 20](#)). This is the fast God has chosen; this is what happens when God’s people fast unto Him. Eating and concern for one’s own physical needs become secondary as one is taken up with the needs of others. So Isaiah continues in chapter [58 vv 6-10](#):

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house; when you see the naked that you cover him? ...If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul.”

Heed the Warnings of the Past

In verses 11 to 14, God was teaching the lesson of history, that in the past His people had refused to hear. It is not that they were not told but rather that they had shrugged off God’s words and preferred their own disobedient self-indulgence. Their hearts became hardened so that eventually they could not respond and ultimately came under the wrath of God. In their time of judgment they cried out to God, but it was too late. As they had refused to hear Him, so He could not listen to them (cf. [Jeremiah 11 v 11](#)). As a result, they were scattered throughout the nations, and the land of promise had been left desolate. It is an abiding principle that God’s Spirit will not always strive with man. There was opportunity for salvation in the days of Noah but, the day came when the door of the ark was shut. Then it was too late. All cries for mercy and help were then made in vain. There is coming the Day of Judgment. Now is the day of opportunity to get right with God and to do His will. After, it will be too late - there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. With what concern did the Lord plead with His people to learn the lessons of history, which lessons we too do well to consider. There can be no compromise. Outward observance of certain rituals will result in tedium and restlessness to be back in the world – just as was the case here in Zechariah. “Can we not stop this fasting now? What’s the point?” True heart-faith will result in zeal for God and for others. All the will of God will be a delight for His people. Can we learn from the past?

Chapter 8

In this chapter we observe that Zechariah still had more to say in reply to the messengers from Bethel, but here the message is divided into two definite parts, each starting with the declaration, ***“The word of the Lord came to me saying...”*** (vv. 1 and 18). The first part is itself divided into seven sections – a number which indicates completeness and perfection and that is just what God seeks to assure with regard to His work towards His people. Three sections make up the second part, and three, of course, is a number which speaks of Divinity – certainly it is God Who is revealed here, working in His people both to will and to do His good pleasure.

The Completed Work

Promises of future blessings to the nation of Israel were poured out in verses 1 to 17, promises of restoration, peace, happiness and prosperity. As the sevenfold “Thus saith the Lord of hosts” indicates, the whole range of the work and the blessings is perfect. Nothing is wanting.

1. **Verse 2:** The people had experienced the wrath of God in the experience of the Babylonian exile, but that wrath did not cast them off forever. God was described as jealous for Zion. He wants His people; He wants them exclusively for Himself. He will not share them with another. Therefore, God in His ‘jealous fury’ purged them and will purge them until they are fully His.
2. **Verse 3:** Here the great declaration is, “I am returned unto Zion.” Ezekiel had witnessed the unthinkable spectacle of God leaving Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10), but now the assurance was of God’s return to dwell in the midst that city – that is, in a central position of Sovereignty. When God has that position, then His nature permeates the whole, the city becomes the city of Truth, the mountain of the Lord of hosts, holy and indestructible. As it will be for Jerusalem when these Scriptures have their final fulfilment, so it is for us now when we let God have His rightful place in our lives. This is the beginning of all blessing. ***“Blessings abound where’er He reigns...”***
3. **Verses 4 and 5:** The vision of old people and young children filling Jerusalem gave assurance of a settled, peaceful existence with all the benefits of the wisdom that comes with age and experience (see Proverbs 3 vv 2 & 16), and all the energy, zeal and joyfulness of youth: ***“Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s”*** (Psalms 103 v 5; see also Isaiah 40 vv 29-31).
4. **Verse 6:** Now these promises might sound so wide and vast to a small remnant of God’s people who must have been tempted again and again to lose hope. But should it be marvellous, so fantastic, to Him with whom nothing is impossible? Let none of God’s people stagger at the promises of God, but rather, let us be believing.
5. **Verses 7 and 8:** When the Lord promised the restoration of His people Israel, He was not just talking about a handful of exiles returning to Jerusalem and then struggling to build the city and the temple. He intended to effect a full restoration. From east and west, from all lands where they have been scattered, God will bring them back to dwell in Jerusalem in that full and proper communion with Him, which is in truth and righteousness. When God has His rightful place, He restores His people to their proper place. Isaiah spoke of such a restoration when His people should be brought together from the four corners of the earth and will know that He is Lord. (Isaiah 11 vv 11,12; 45 vv 4-6). Yet such a full recovery, especially to a spiritual awakening has not happened to the nation of Israel. Neither are these prophecies fulfilled in the Church, although parallel truths apply. As God deals with and blesses the earthly seed (Israel – as the sand of the sea shore – Genesis 22 v 17), so He in principle and in reality deals with the heavenly seed (the Church – the stars of heaven – Genesis 22 v 17).

No, these promises have yet to be fulfilled in the Lord's earthly people, Israel. There will be a full return, from the USA, Russia and many other places, leading to a spiritual rebirth of that nation which, at the moment, is either unbelieving or holding to a dead form of religion.

6. **Verses 9 to 13:** In view of all this, the people were exhorted to move and act in faith, to let their hands be strong in the work, for although there had been much opposition in the beginning when the foundations had been laid, at the time of the fulfilment of the prophetic word given, God will prosper His people and build. Truly, ***“except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.”*** (Psalm 127 v 1). The people will be prosperous and fruitful, for the vine (v12) is a symbol of the nation of Israel. Indeed, God will give the increase and cause His people to possess their inheritance. Tragically, they had been cursed and scattered (v13), the inevitable result of their own folly in ignoring the warnings of God. (Read Deuteronomy 28 vv 63-68). Through Jeremiah God had spoken, ***“And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all the places whither I shall drive them.”*** (Jeremiah 24 v 9). They had become **Lo-ammi** – ‘not my people’ (Hosea 1 v 9), a state in which the nation of Israel still finds itself today. Has God cast away His people? Paul takes up the theme in Romans 11: ***“God has not cast away His people which He foreknew ...there is a remnant according to the election of grace ...through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy ...for if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead? ...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles (nations) be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved.”*** (Romans 11 vv 1-26).

In fact, Hosea continues to affirm that ***“...in the place where it was said unto them, You are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, You are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah AND the children of Israel be gathered together...”*** (Hosea 1 vv 10 & 11). They were a curse but will be a blessing, both Judah And Israel (v13), for God will save them. Yet God still expects that response of faith seen in the exhortation repeated here, ***“Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”***

7. **Verses 14 to 17:** God's purpose was to bless – as, in fact, it always has been, and in that blessing God expects certain principles – truth, justice based on truth and peace, with not even the slightest conception of evil thoughts against another. This sincerity and reality is characteristic of those that are now born into God's kingdom as John explains in his epistle: ***“Whosoever hates his brother is a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.”*** (I John 3 v 15). Similarly, the nature of the future, restored people of God will be derived from that Messiah who is full of grace and truth.

The Reply to the Bethelites

From verse 18, the word of the Lord was a direct answer to the question of the Bethelites. God had spoken first what they needed to know but now what they wanted to know.

1. The original question in chapter 7 v 3 concerned one fast in the fifth month. God perceived that this was not the complete story and so the reply in its completeness referred to four such fasts:
 - a) In the fourth month there was a fast to mourn for the capture of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 39 v 2).
 - b) In the fifth month was one to mourn for the burning of Jerusalem (II Kings 25 v 8).
 - c) In the seventh was one to grieve for the murder of the governor, Gedaliah (Jeremiah 41 v 2).
 - d) In the tenth one to commemorate the siege of Jerusalem (II Kings 25 v 1)

None of them was Divinely appointed; all were of man's devising. And what self-pitying, miserable times they were. Yet God replied here, not that they should be discontinued but, rather, transformed into seasons of joy and gladness. This is certainly Messianic, for He whom the Lord has anointed will ***"appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."*** (Isaiah 61 v 3). This has not yet been fulfilled in the earthly Israel but it is our testimony that God always wonderfully transforms the dull, dutiful, empty religion of man into a joyous, living reality. Surely the waste places shall be repaired, the desolations of many generations, and the people will greatly rejoice in the Lord (Isaiah 61 vv 4,10 & 11): ***"For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."*** (Isaiah 51 v 3).

2. **Verse 20:** Israel and Judah (both parts of the nation) will be united in hasting to return to the Lord and in so doing will encourage others (v 21) with the result that many shall come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord and pray: ***"Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away."*** (Isaiah 51 v 11).
3. **Verse 23:** A further result will be that at last the Jews will be elevated in the sight of the nations, for God will be with them: ***"Arise, shine for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising."*** (Isaiah 60 vv 1-3). What a glorious completion to that work which God has purposed and begun in His earthly people Israel!

Chapter 9

Greece – An Instrument of God’s Judgment

Here we start the second part of the book. Before God’s promises have been fulfilled upon His people, they will have to endure much. The revelation of these intermediate times from Zechariah onwards is the concern of the following chapters.

Dealing With the Enemies of God’s People

The thought to which we return here is the question which has been examined before – that of when the oppressors of God’s people are going to be dealt with. Here begins an unfolding of God’s dealings with the nations, first through the Gentile empires and then in the coming of the Messiah. This then is the burden of the word (v 1) for it is heavy in judgment.

Syria

Three main cities of Syria, representative of the nation as a whole were selected. Judgment would be **“...upon the land of Hadrach and Damascus shall be its resting place,”** not to destroy it but to trouble it. And who can deny that Damascus, which has been a source of oppression and enmity against God’s people, has also suffered terrible judgments over the years. **Hamath** also was mentioned. This period of judgment upon Syria was fulfilled when Alexander the Great crushed Syria during the 4th century BC, having defeated the Persian Emperor Darius. At that time, individuals (‘the eyes of man’ in verse 1) and all the tribes looked to the Lord for deliverance. What a shame that so often it takes a disaster to occur before God’s people seek Him.

Phoenicia

Zidon quickly surrendered to Alexander, but Tyre, thinking herself strong (v3), resisted. Tyre had been a cruel enemy of God’s people and, at their expense, had become very rich. The Lord had spoken against them through the prophet Joel: **“Yea, what have you to do with Me, O tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? Will you render Me a recompense? And if you recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompense upon your own head; because you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly things...”** (read Joel 3 vv 4-8).

As a seaport, Tyre was regarded as Queen of the Sea and, indeed, in the time of Alexander, it was an island fortress about half a mile from the shore, with massive walls up to 150 feet high. Seemingly it was impregnable. But what had God said? Years earlier, through the prophet Ezekiel, God had declared His opposition to Tyre and pronounced its eventual and utter devastation, that its walls and towers would be broken down and that it would be scraped clear like the top of a rock. Finally, it would be a place for spreading nets on and would be built no more (Ezekiel 26 vv 3-12). Whilst Nebuchadnezzar brought the start of that assault, here in Zechariah, we get a picture of the Alexandrian campaign.

Ezekiel 28 provides an insight into the reasons for God’s attitude as it reveals the spiritual nature of the opposition inspired by Satan himself:

“Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus; Because your heart is lifted up, and you have said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God...”

***“You seal up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You have been in Eden, the garden of God; ... you are the anointed cherub that covers; ...you were upon the holy mountain of God...
“You were perfect in your ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you...
“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty...”***

(Ezekiel 28 vv 2, 12ff.)

Speaking of the future destruction of Tyre, Isaiah said, ***“The Lord of hosts has purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.”*** God will surely break down all human pride. The silver and gold will be as the dust and filth of the streets. What use were riches then? In the Day of Judgment, they cannot save or give comfort. So in the New Testament we read, ***“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all evils: which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”*** (I Timothy 6 vv 9-12).

Angered by the defiance of this city, Alexander ripped up the stones from old Tyre and built a causeway to the island fortress. Having blockaded it from the sea, he massacred its ten thousand inhabitants. Ezekiel 26 v 14 and Zechariah 9 v 4 were duly fulfilled. Tyre was dispossessed, her sea power broken and she was burnt with fire. Prophecies on the doom of Tyre range from Joel in the 8th century BC, Isaiah in the 7th/6th century BC, Ezekiel in the 6th to Zechariah in the 5th. Certainly, every word spoken by the Lord, even though it may seem to tarry, is sure and steadfast.

Philistia

After this, Alexander turned to Philistia – Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod. Zephaniah had prophesied that Gaza would be forsaken and Ashkelon would become a desolation; they of Ashdod would be driven out and Ekron rooted up. (Zephaniah 2 v 4). Ashkelon was de-populated in the Alexandrian campaign as Zechariah 9 v 5 suggests. Gaza was besieged for five months and, eventually, having been seized its king was dragged through the streets before being killed. Ashdod indeed was occupied by foreigners – the bastard or ‘mongrel race’ that is mentioned in Zechariah 9 v 6. Ekron would become as a Jebusite (9 v 7). David, when he captured Jerusalem, incorporated its conquered occupants, the Jebusites, as a servant people. So the same idea is present here in v 7, of purging some of the Philistines of their failure to observe the Jewish food laws prohibiting blood and probable idolatrous practices associated therewith so that they, as the Jebusites, could serve God. According to Josephus, such a merging or incorporation of the Philistines among the Jews did occur.

God Encamps About His People

This next verse (8), spoke in few words about the marvellous protection by God of His people. Imagine the fear of the Jews as Alexander conquered the Syrians, Tyre and Zidon, and then came marching past Jerusalem to the cities of Philistia. Surely Judah would be next. But what did the Lord say? He assured the people that He would encamp about His house because of the Greek army, the army which was passing by to the cities of the Philistines and which would be returning. But no oppressor would be able to pass through the city of God’s people for God was protecting it. What actually happened is uncertain. As far as most historians are concerned, Alexander simply by-passed Jerusalem but this does seem strange for a man who was determined to conquer every square inch of the known world. Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, records an interesting tradition, which, if there is truth in it, would explain the

silence in the records of Alexander and would also glorify God in the miraculous deliverance of His people:

“So Alexander came into Syria and took Damascus; and when he had obtained Sidon, he besieged Tyre, when he sent an epistle to the Jewish high priest, to send him some auxiliaries, and to supply his army with provisions; ...but the high priest answered the messengers that he had given his oath to Darius not to bear arms against him; and he said he would not transgress this while Darius was in the land of the living. Upon hearing this answer, Alexander was very angry; ...he threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oath. So when he had ...taken Tyre, ...he came to the city of Gaza...

“Now Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem; and Jaddua the high priest, when he heard that, was in agony, and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonian, since the king was displeased at his foregoing disobedience. He therefore ordained that that the people should make supplications, and should join him in offering sacrifices to God ...whereupon God warned him in a dream ...that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest should appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent...

“And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession with the priests and the multitude of citizens... Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with the mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest. The Jews also did altogether, with one voice, salute Alexander and encompass him about; whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind.”

When Alexander was asked why he had adored the high priest, he replied, ***“I did not adore him but that God who has honoured him with his high-priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other person in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the Divine conduct...”*** (Antiquities of the Jews XI 8:3-5)

Whatever the details of the events surrounding Jerusalem’s deliverance, what a testimony it was to the joy of trusting in the Lord in the direst of circumstances! God will exalt His name ([Philippians 2 vv 9-11](#)). The Psalmist could call God his refuge and fortress ([Psalm 91 vv 5-10](#)). May we always be assured of God’s keeping presence, we who are kept by the power of God ([1 Peter 1 v 5](#))!

Whilst verse 8 has seen fulfilment in the protection from Alexander, it also has relevance for that future day when Jerusalem will be surrounded by Gentile armies and, at the point of apparent defeat, will find that God is her mighty Protector and Deliverer.

The Messiah (Part 1)

It must be understood that Zechariah and other OT prophets saw the restoration of the people of God as one continuous event but did not see, certainly not in any detail, the intervening Gentile years nor the Church Age. The matter is quite straight forward for, as far as the Church is concerned, that was a mystery which was hid in God from the beginning of the world until the Church began (Ephesians 3 v 9). Thus events which to us seem to be separated by a couple of thousand years, were seen as one continuous event by Zechariah. In verse 9, Zechariah saw beyond Alexander's times to the coming of the Messiah, but what is described in the subsequent verses as one successive chain of events, we now appreciate as happening in two stages – the first and second advents of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is depicted a recognisable scene – the entry of Jesus, the Messiah, into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday. Zechariah saw no rejection of that Messiah, no intervening period of the Church, and thus proceeded to describe the deliverance that God will bring to His earthly people. The King is coming, the King of Glory (Psalms 24 vv 7-10), to His city. Therefore, rejoice and shout! And indeed, in that day when Jesus approached Zion, the people did rejoice and praise God (Luke 19 v 37). Note, however, that the exhortation was twofold, directed to God's people as daughter of Zion and daughter of Jerusalem! This could be dismissed simply as a Hebraism – a typical use of parallel phrases, repeating the same thing in a different way – but there is a thought here that the Lord has in mind the twofold aspect of the promise made to Abraham concerning his seed, that his descendants would be as the stars of heaven (the heavenly seed, the Church – Zion being the heavenly city of God as taught in Hebrews 12 v 22ff.) and as the sand of the sea shore (the earthly seed, Israel – Jerusalem being the earthly city). In any event, the appeal to God's people as daughter stands in strong contrast to the harlot system of Babylon from which the people of Zechariah's time had so recently emerged. That system has spawned many harlot daughters, a growing evil in our own time, so that in the end-time she is portrayed as Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth (Revelation 17 v 5). By comparison to the harlot daughters of false religion, God's people are seen as one (daughter is in the singular) and as a pure virgin. Thus she was described by Hezekiah to the Assyrian king, "The virgin, the daughter of Zion..." (Isaiah 37 v 22). In II Corinthians 11 v 2, Paul spoke of espousing the believers as a chaste virgin to Christ.

When Matthew quoted this verse from Zechariah, he said, "***Tell the daughter of Zion...***" It seems that he had in mind also the prophecy of Isaiah 62 vv 10-11, "***Behold the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Sa to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes...***"

John, on the other hand, quotes, "***Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold your King comes...***" seemingly considering the encouragement of Zephaniah 3 vv 14-16 as well: "***Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice... it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not!***"

God's people, you see, have been informed in the eyes of the whole world of His provision of salvation; they need encouragement not to fear but to trust so that they may rejoice and shout in faith at the mighty provision of God which He has given in the Person of His own Son, Jesus, the King of kings. Matthew heard the crowds as they cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" (Matthew 21 v 9), whereas John recorded the words of those who shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel!" (John 12 v 13). This is He of whom the prophet spoke when He declared, "***For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.***" (Isaiah 9 vv 6,7)

He is just, coming in righteousness and having salvation; indeed, as Isaiah showed in the verses already quoted from chapter 62, He IS salvation. That is why, in the Gospels, the crowds cried, "Hosanna!" for that Aramaic word meant "Save now!" It was derived from a basic root of 'Yasha' which means 'bring salvation' plus 'na' meaning 'now'. The crowds apparently had in their thoughts the idea of military deliverance from the Roman oppression and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel at that time. But the salvation that Jesus brought was far greater in its scope and – sad to say – the leaders of the earthly people of Israel in the main rejected it. For He came in a lowly manner or, as Matthew said, He was meek. He made Himself of no reputation. He humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2 vv 5-7). He came, riding not on a military war horse prepared for battle, but on a humble beast of burden, an ass, a colt, the foal of an ass. Later that week, He was openly despised and rejected. How grieved was our Lord when He came in the way prophesied by Zechariah, only to be rejected and slain by those for whom He came. No wonder, on that day, that He wept over the city. If only its people had known the things which belonged to its peace; Jerusalem knew not the time of its visitation (Luke 19 vv 41-44). And so there is a gap between Zechariah 9 v 9, when Jesus came to Jerusalem nearly two thousand years ago and verse 10 when, in the future, He will deliver and restore His people Israel, when out of Zion shall come the Deliverer Who will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11 v 26; Isaiah 59 v 20).

The Messiah (Part 2)

A careful reading of Scripture would have prepared the Jews for the Messianic salvation. As Jesus Himself declared, "**My kingdom is not of this world...**" (John 18 v 36). He could have called more than twelve legions of angels "**But how then shall the Scripture be fulfilled that thus it must be?**" (Matthew 26 vv 53,54). To save His people from their sins, He had to die alone. When the Lord returns, His weapons will not be puny human means of warfare such as chariots, horses and the battle bow. Rather, he will cut His people off from relying on these. Neither Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Israel), nor Jerusalem (the southern capital of Judah) shall rely on them. Psalms 20 shows that God's people trust solely in Him: "**Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.**" (Psalms 20 v 7). Verse 9 of the same Psalm serves as a specific reminder of what we have just considered: "Save, Lord..." It is the same word as used in Zechariah 9 v 9; it was the crowd shouted on Palm Sunday.

Isaiah 2 vv 6-10 speaks of the fact that God forsook His people because they had forsaken Him and their land was full of horses and chariots. The protection of man had also brought the corruption of man. Later, the prophet is quite definite in his warning: "**Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses and trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong: but they look not unto the holy One of Israel neither seek the Lord.**" (Isaiah 62 v 1; read also Psalms 33 vv 16ff.). And is there not a warning here for us also, that to trust in worldly advice, support, provision, security for the future and so on is vain? Our trust is in God and He seeks to bring us to that place where we rely wholly on Him.

In the particular context of this verse, of course, the Lord was speaking of the work He would do amongst His earthly people in bringing them to trust Him. Micah prophesied more particularly about the birth of the Messiah and His rejection by Israel, who would be scattered among the Gentiles. He saw the eventual purging of the people of Israel from idolatry, wickedness and from trusting in the strength of man to deliver: "**...I will cut off your horses out of the midst of you, and I will destroy your chariots.**" (v.10; Micah 5 vv 2-15).

In the end, God will deal with the heathen who have oppressed His people, eventually bringing peace (Zechariah 9 v 10), as the Lord establishes His millennial kingdom. Then shall He reign supreme from sea to sea and from the river even to the ends of the earth (cf. the Psalm for Solomon – Psalm 72 v 8). Whilst the words literally mean from the Dead Sea to the Mediterranean, from the river Euphrates to the borders of the land (i.e. of Israel – see Genesis 15 v 18), the implication is undoubtedly that His reign will be universal. God's people will be reunited under His reign.

God promised to deliver His people from the dry, waterless pit in which they had become ensnared. They had committed two evils in forsaking the Lord, the fountain of Living Waters and in digging their own cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water. They had forsaken God, the source of their life and gone their own way, a way which led to death and destruction. Maybe, for the returned exiles of Zechariah's day, those who had come back with high hopes, there seemed to be no satisfaction, no purpose and no joy in serving God. Although back in the Promised Land, everything seemed such a pointless struggle. But here God assured that, in His eyes, the deliverance had been wrought, even though in the process of time, many long years might have to elapse before its eventual manifestation. The basis of their deliverance was the **blood** of their covenant, **not** any human merit. The covenant made with Abraham had been sealed by blood. It was God's promise, confirmed by an oath forever. It is important to realise that the covenant ceremony described in Genesis 15 was performed, not, as was the usual practice, by both parties to the agreement, but by God alone, a deep sleep having fallen upon Abraham. The promise of the land to Abraham's seed was completely unconditional. It was and is an everlasting covenant (Psalm 105 vv 9-11 and Genesis 13 v 15). Later, at Mount Sinai, God agreed with the descendants of Abraham to be their God and to protect them, if they would obey His commandments. (Exodus 24 vv 3-8). That Mosaic covenant was also sealed by blood, but it was conditional upon the obedience of the people. Sadly, they broke the covenant and had to endure the Babylonian exile as a consequence. However, although that covenant was broken, God will still honour His unconditional promise to Abraham. There will always be a remnant with whom and through whom God will work to fulfil His promises to His earthly people, Israel, the descendants of Abraham. We know too that it is by the blood of the New Covenant that God's perfect work of Redemption has been accomplished for us and ultimately, when Israel returns to the Lord, for the sins of His earthly people as well. Here in Zechariah, God welcomed His people to return to Him, their stronghold, their mighty fortress and protector (v12), they who were still prisoners, seemingly lacking liberty but nevertheless possessing the hope. This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where 'hope' is used with the definite article. In other words, this is not any hope, a vague wishing, but **THE** hope, the looking for the Messiah (even as we know Him as Christ – the Messiah – in us, the Hope of glory. (Colossians 1 v 27; see also Titus 2 v 13). To them who thus look for Him in such expectation is reserved a double portion – that inheritance which was reserved for the eldest son – for they shall become sons of God, heirs and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

Antitypes of the Maccabean Era

In the remaining verses of this chapter, the allusion seems to be the deliverance of the Jewish people from Greek dominion in the second century BC, in the time of the Syrian-based Greek ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This man, who believed himself to be an incarnation of the Greek god Zeus, was a cruel tyrant who oppressed the Jews, erected a statue of himself as Zeus in the Temple at Jerusalem, a shocking abomination for the Jews, and then made the Jews sacrifice pigs to it. Epiphanes (meaning 'illustrious one') was the divine title he gave himself but the Jews spoke of him as Epimanes (meaning 'madman'). He was the vile person of whom Daniel warned in prophecy (Daniel 11 vv 21f); he is the one who prefigures the end-time vile person, the false prophet who will cause people to worship the beast and serve the antichrist. The final verses of Daniel chapter 8 move from Alexander (v21), through to

Antiochus IV (v23), foreshadowing the false prophet of the latter days who will stand up against the Prince of princes (v25). Paul also wrote about this deceiver, describing him as ‘the man of sin’ who will be revealed before the Lord comes again. As Antiochus had tried to do, so this false prophet will exalt himself against God, sitting himself in the Temple as God. (II Thessalonians 2 vv 3,4; Daniel 11 v 36). In Revelation 13 v 1, John saw a beast rise out of the sea, a beast which had seven heads and ten horns, the latter symbolising ten kings or kingdoms. The beast is the antichrist leader of the Gentile powers – represented by the leopard, bear and lion features, whose power derives from the dragon, or that old serpent, Satan himself. It is apparent that this rapid rise to power will take place at a time of instability, when the Gentile nations, like a restless sea, will be in turmoil. However, John also saw another beast coming up out of the earth or the land. Here the land had reference to the land of Israel, settled again in the land of promise, which is where this person will appear. He is depicted as having two horns like a lamb, but with a voice like a dragon. This is the great deceiver, of whom Antiochus IV was the type, the man of sin, the false prophet.

Well, in the time of Antiochus, the people, led by Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, rebelled and, after a bitter struggle, finally drove out the Greeks, cleansed and re-consecrated the temple. It was a time of great rejoicing in the Lord, a time still commemorated by Jews every year at their festival of Hannukah (in the New Testament it is mentioned as the Feast of the Dedication – John 10 v 22). In these verses at the end of Zechariah 9, it was this victorious overthrow of Greece (which was, in fact, named in verse 13) that was being foreseen, and it was through His people, Judah and Ephraim, that God worked to achieve this. God used people rather than human military methods (horses and chariots) but in it all, it was the Lord Who was fighting to ensure deliverance, for the Lord was to be seen over them; it was His arrow that struck the blow of defeat, His trumpet or voice that sounded the advance with whirlwinds of the south – the fierce, Divine wrath of the Maccabean revolt.

Verse 15 is a description of the victory God gave to His people as He defended them, an overwhelming victory in which they were utterly satiated. The imagery was that of the temple sacrifices, with bowls filled and the horns of the altar besmeared with blood. God was the Saviour of His people, His flock, in that day. With that last expression one is reminded that, whilst the immediate prophecy related to the success of the Maccabean campaign, there is, nevertheless, a foreshadowing of events of the latter days when God will deliver His people out of the grip of strong delusion. As Isaiah expressed it: **“Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.”** (Isaiah 40 vv 10 & 11).

Certainly, God spoke of the crushing defeat of the latter-day enemies of His people in such sacrificial terms in Ezekiel’s prophecy (Read Ezekiel 39 vv 17-19).

As jewels in a crown they will be set in the proper place prepared for them: **“They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him.”** (Malachi 3 v 17). As an ensign for all to behold, they shall be lifted up: **“And the Gentiles shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory: ... You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.”** (Isaiah 62 vv 2,3). How great is the goodness of the Shepherd who came to save the sheep; how great is the beauty of the One who laid down His life for the sheep! At His first coming there was no beauty that they should desire Him (Isaiah 53 v 2).

Abundant provision is always betokened by corn and wine. The corn helps the young men grow and flourish (The meaning behind the AV 'cheerful'), and wine brings joy. One might even see here the corn and wine as types of the bread and wine we share in communion, themselves symbols of the body and blood of Christ, through which we have life in all its abundance. What the Lord has promised, He will restore and give to His people: "The Lord has sworn by His right hand, and by the arm of His strength, Surely I will no more give your corn to be meat for your enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink your wine, for the which you have laboured." (Isaiah 62 v 8).

Chapter 10

The imagery of the Maccabean rebellion is still present here, but with reference to the final events of which it was a type.

Ask the Lord

Verse 1 has a connection with the previous chapter where it seemed that God had assured that every need would be met. In the land of Israel, one of the greatest needs was for water, refreshing water. The early rains came in the autumn, and then, when the crops were growing to maturity, there would be the latter rains of March/April to swell them ready for harvest. Now these rains came according to God's word as the result of obedience:

“And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain...” (Deuteronomy 11 vv 13,14).

In this section of Zechariah, the people of the end days are encouraged, having already seen the blessings of the former rains, to ask for fulness, for rain in the time of the latter rain: ***“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.”*** (Joel 2 v 23). This of course, typified the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2 v 28), and would be accompanied, according to Zechariah, by lightnings (see v 1 mg. and compare with Acts 2 vv 16-18; James 5 vv 7,8).

God will yet pour out His Spirit upon His earthly people as He has already done upon His Church (Zechariah 12 v 10).

Whom Had They Asked?

They had once asked idols, teraphim, as it says in the Hebrew. These were household gods. How people love an independent, home-religion, that costs nothing, requires no effort and no commitment. It keeps all that the world offers but has the outward trappings of religion. It reminds me of the Israelites of old when God appointed a place for the people to come together to meet with Him. There was to be a continual burnt offering at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, ***“where I will meet with you, to speak there unto you. And there will I meet you, to speak there unto you. And there I will meet with the children of Israel...”*** (Exodus 29 vv 42,43). But the people committed idolatry in the matter of the golden calf which resulted in urgent action to deal with the problem. Moses moved the tabernacle of the congregation to a place outside of the camp of God's people. Sin always causes separation from the Lord. However, ***“it came to pass that everyone who sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation.”*** (Exodus 33 v 7). What of the rest? When the Lord talked with Moses, ***“all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.”*** (Exodus 33 v 10). In the New Testament, as in the Old, the Lord wants no such independence and separation of His people. His people are united; they are one.

Jacob's wife, Rachel, stole her father's teraphim (Genesis 31 v 34), the loss of which left Laban distressed and annoyed. He sought earnestly to recover them for, although idols of gods, they were his possession and also signified entitlement to his inheritance. They appealed to greed and all that is selfish. Much later, Jacob, after God had dealt with his self-centredness and stubbornness, disposed of

all such things that were found amongst his family's possessions (Genesis 35 vv 2-4). The apparent security of such house-based, independent 'religion' is false; it is vanity. It flatters, elevates and pampers self instead of crushing it.

Diviners too had been consulted. If idols had been recognised by some as lifeless and dumb, this had driven them to those who purported to speak truth about the future fortunes of His people. Diviners included those who were called soothsayers and necromancers. Today we might call them astrologers and spiritist mediums, fortune tellers and clairvoyants. They are all liars whatever their guise. They have seen a lie and have told false dreams. That is because those whom they contact are not the departed dead, but demonic spirits which are subject to the father of lies - that is the devil, Satan. In Deuteronomy 18 vv 9-15, all such divination, witchcraft, consulting with familiar spirits (demons), and necromancy are forbidden as an abomination to the Lord. Yet this is what God's people had done. It was rebellion. ***"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry..."*** (1 Samuel 15 v 23).

What Was the Result?

With no shepherd, the people went astray and in taking heed to false advice the people of Israel had no one to lead them to pastures green. They were afflicted and troubled. They had no shepherd for they had rejected the Lord, if not openly, certainly in their hearts. Further, the under-shepherds, those who were leaders, had fled in their own self-interests, bringing God's rebuke and anger upon them. The very ones who should have been responsible for leading the people into truth and keeping them from error had failed because they had no heart to serve. In the New Testament we discover that it is the character of those whom God appoints to leadership to serve and to put self last (John 13 vv 12-17; Philippians 2; John 10).

Ezekiel 34 contains a stinging rebuke of the selfish shepherds of Israel, who fed themselves and did not tend the needy, leaving them to be scattered upon the face of the earth. But God promised to search for and to restore His flock, setting over them One shepherd – the Messiah – and giving the assurance, ***"There shall be showers of blessing."*** This promise in Ezekiel 34 v 26 is the very blessing asked for in Zechariah 10 v 1.

Observe also that in Ezekiel 34 v 17, God spoke of a judgment when rams would be separated from the he-goats. Zechariah 10 v 3 describes the same judgment. An identical scene was portrayed by our Lord in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25 vv 31 to 46. All impure strains with traces of the world will be removed from God's people. God will deal with the blind leaders of His people as well as with the oppressing nations as we have seen in the foregoing chapters. Moreover, God will transform His people, as shown at the end of Ezekiel 34, and this was expressed symbolically in the change from wandering sheep to majestic war-horse (v3). At His first coming, He will be carried, as it were, by a superb war-horse – His people will support Him going forth to conquer. This is our Lord Jesus in Revelation 19 vv 11-16, King of kings and Lord of lords, sitting upon a white horse.

The Messiah's Victory

Verse 4 then speaks of the Messiah who would come forth from God (or possibly the implication is out of Judah), the various comparisons made describing His work.

An old prophecy was that one day the Lord would raise up a prophet from among the people of Israel like Moses to whom the people would listen (Deuteronomy 18 v 15). He is the One Shepherd, My Servant David of whom Ezekiel spoke in the passage already considered from Ezekiel 34 v 23. He is the corner, that is, the foundation stone of all that God intends to build in Zion, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation (Isaiah 28 v 16). It is Jesus who is the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows into a holy temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2 vv 20,21). He is, as we have already seen, the headstone (Zechariah 7; Matthew 21 v 42; Romans 9 vv 32,33; I Corinthians 1 v 23).

Then the metaphor changes. He is also the nail or, which is more understandable, the tent pin, the central pole of the tent. Later, they were installed in houses because they served a useful purpose: they had been developed to bear on hooks all the chief utensils and ornaments of the household, exactly as the Messiah is described in Isaiah 22 vv 22 & 23 – ***“And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place... and they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house... all vessels...”*** The nail had to bear the burden of the work vessels of the house as well as the glory of the ornaments. So too, Christ the Messiah, is the One who bore our burdens and those of His earthly people as well, but He also, in His exaltation, manifests the glory of the Father.

Turning from the symbolism of houses and buildings, we are now presented with the Messiah as Conqueror, for He is the battle bow, the representation of military might and power (Habakkuk 3 v 9). When John beheld the Messiah coming at the end time to deliver His people, he saw Him riding on a white horse, going forth to war against the enemies of God and His people. The Maccabean victories and cleansing of the Temple were a mere foretaste of this final conquest. Judah would be totally inadequate of herself. Another, the Messiah Himself, would ride her into battle and victory.

Finally, every exactor of tribute (AV ‘oppressor’) would come forth together. To be consistent with the whole verse, this must also refer to the Messiah, the One who, together with His people, will exact tribute from all the nations. The once despised and rejected – Messiah and people – will be exalted before the eyes of the whole world. Every knee shall bow (Philippians 2 vv 10,11 – see also Ephesians 1 vv 10, 20-23). To be sure, He is King of kings and Lord of lords, for He will rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 19 vv 15,16). His people, so long a persecuted people, will be as the mighty men trampling the enemy, because the Lord will be with them (Zechariah 10 v 5). The military strength of Greece and, in particular, of Antiochus IV, was inadequate against God in the times of the Maccabees; so also will it be in the time of the man of sin and the final conflict. The riders on horses will be confounded. God’s people will indeed be able to sing again the song of Moses: ***“I will sing unto the Lords, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song and He is become my salvation...”*** (Exodus 15 vv 1,2). It is a glorious song of deliverance. Then shall they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, for the One who was slain for the sins of His people. The earthly foes shall be crushed (the Song of Moses); the enemies of sin, death and Satan will be destroyed (the Song of the Lamb) and all nations shall worship before Him (Revelation 15 vv 3,4).

Restoration

The remaining verses of the chapter are clearly for the latter days, for God will bring about a complete restoration of Judah and Joseph, i.e. the southern and northern kingdoms, all twelve tribes of Israel. There will be no remembrance of the sins and failings of the past, for in His mercy God has promised that they shall be as though they had not been cast off. Ezekiel chapter 37 contains the famous vision of the valley of dry bones which were brought together, were covered with flesh and skin which, when God’s breath had come into them, lived. ***“These bones,”*** said God, ***“are the whole house of Israel.”*** (Ezekiel

37 v 11). The vision was of the restoration of God's earthly people. Furthermore, Ezekiel was instructed to inscribe two sticks – one for Judah and the other for Joseph and Ephraim (i.e. the northern tribes of Israel) – which he was then to join together. For ***“Thus says the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all... and David my Servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one Shepherd...”*** (Ezekiel 37 vv 15-24).

Our Lord also spoke of this in Matthew 24. Verse 15 appears to be in that period of time which follows the rapture of the Church, because it draws attention to the abomination of desolation which we understand will be set up in the re-built Temple half-way through the seventieth week spoken of by Daniel (Daniel 9 v 27 - See separate series of studies in Daniel). In short, this is an end-time period of seven years in which God, after all those years since the crucifixion of Jesus, resumes dealing with his people Israel again. It follows the rapture of the Church and is that period of time we call the Great Tribulation. In Jeremiah 30 v 7, it is called ***“the time of Jacob's trouble”*** and will, therefore, be particularly a time of God's dealing with His earthly people preparatory to their repentance and Messianic deliverance. The instructions following verse 15, therefore, have particular relevance to the Jewish remnant living at that time. They will endure great tribulation – as indeed will the rest of humanity that does not submit to the beast and his mark (Revelation 13); they are the elect, God's chosen ones of whom He speaks in verses 22,24 and 31. At the end of that tribulation period, then shall appear the Messiah, the Son of man and all the tribes of the land (possibly an original Hebraism rather than the Greek 'of the earth' – in Hebrew 'the land' = Israel. In modern Hebrew it is the name of an Israeli newspaper) will mourn and the angels will gather together the elect of Israel.

They of Ephraim, the northern tribes, will be absolutely thrilled, their heart rejoicing as if through wine, for God will hiss for them to summon them together. The word 'hiss' in Hebrew signifies a shrill whistle such as a shepherd might use to call his flock together. The idea seems to correspond with Jesus' revelation in Matthew 24 that God will send His angels to gather the elect, with a trumpet and with a great voice (v31 mg.). At that time, it will be observed that God's earthly people have increased just as they increased mightily at the time of the persecution in Egypt. Moreover, it will be realised that the dispersion of Jews throughout the world (the diaspora) was not for the purpose of destroying them but, as a sowing of seed, so that they might grow (Hosea 2 v 23). (The Lord used the same principle of dispersion with the Church after the stoning of Stephen in order to produce growth). In these lands, the dispersed Jews are to live and their children and descendants, until the time for return. They will come out of Egypt, the first oppressors of God's people and from Assyria, the area of the destroyers of the northern kingdom. To Gilead and Lebanon shall they be brought, that is, to the east as well as the west of the river Jordan in the north. With all the military activity and unrest currently in these areas, it certainly is interesting to watch further developments. Although Israeli withdrawals have taken place, the groundwork is being done for ultimate occupation, for there will be so many of the Lord's people to accommodate.

No obstacle will hinder the Lord's work, neither the sea of affliction nor deep rivers, neither the persecutions of centuries nor the long occupation of the land. The pride of Assyria, the sceptre of Egypt, the strength and glory of world empires will be banished by the mighty working of the King of kings, for the Lord will strengthen His people with a mighty outpouring of His Spirit which will enable them to live and operate in His name. Read Ezekiel 37 vv 10, 13 & 14!

Chapter 11

The Destruction of the Land

In chapter 10, prosperity, blessings and victory were foretold for God's people, the Maccabean rebellion and deliverance prefiguring the victory over the man of sin and the nations of the end time. Now the mood changes in chapter 11, where we are presented with scenes of ruin and destruction, for here is an insight into the punishment of the people for their wickedness. At one level the destruction was that meted out by the Roman armies but again, at another level, this is a mere fore-shadowing of the final invasion and crushing of the land by the northern armies in at the time of the latter-day Roman Empire. Daniel chapter 11 vv 40-45 describes the Egyptian attack upon the Syrian and northern ruler which will trigger off the invasion by the northern armies. Ezekiel 38 vv 8 & 9 and 14-16 reveal how the vast northern hordes will swarm upon the land of Israel when God's people will have been gathered there out of the nations (v8). When they will be living in safety and peace, then Gog of the North will come forth – in the latter days. The cause of this devastation can be traced back to the Jewish rejection of their Messiah which, in the end-time, they will turn from in true repentance.

The initial verses of chapter 11 portray the devastation caused by the devouring, crushing Roman army (See Daniel 7 v 7) as it penetrated into the Promised Land from the north. So inevitable was the success of the Roman conquest that no other advice could be given to Lebanon than ***“Open your doors!”***: Do not resist! The evergreen cypress trees might well howl at the sight of the once majestic and lofty cedars now brought crashing down. But there is no hope for human strength or glory in the face of God's judgment and truly the fire is an apt symbol of Divine judgment. His feet are ***“like unto fine brass as if they burned in a furnace...”*** (Revelation 1 v 15) That is judgmental. Our God is a consuming fire (Hebrews 12 v 29). Not even the mighty oaks of Bashan, its 'impregnable' forests, could hold out. All was spoiled, even down to the lush, fertile river plain, the pride of Jordan. From the loftiest cedar and strongest oak to the weakest cypress, from the peaceful shepherds to the aggressive young lions, none would escape judgment. Isaiah 2 vv 10-22 gives a latter day application.

Zechariah had foretold the coming of the Shepherd – the Messiah (chapter 9 v 16; cf. Ezekiel 34 v 23). Then he proceeded to record His rejection and its consequences.

The Flock of the Slaughter

Zechariah was instructed by God to act out the role of shepherd to feed His flock. The flock of the slaughter is an apt title for God's people whom, because they have rejected the Lord, He has appointed for judgment, just as lambs for the slaughter. Their dispersion, reproach, defeat by enemies and so on, have been the appointed lot: ***“Yea, for Your sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.”*** (Psalm 44 vv 9-22)

The sad story was confirmed by Jeremiah, that the Lord's people would be lost sheep, that they would be devoured by those that found them, because they had sinned against the Lord (Jeremiah 50 vv 9-22). Certainly, from the time of their rejection of Jesus the Messiah, they have been exposed to terrible treatment, from the Roman crushing of the Jews in 70AD, to persecution by Crusaders and throughout the Middle Ages in Europe; from the Russian pogroms in the nineteenth century to the Holocaust inflicted by the Nazis in the twentieth. As Zechariah 11 v 5 indicated, they would be slain or sold as mere property to be disposed of with no feeling of compassion or conscience. This too would be done in the name of God; their own leaders would not seem to care and that does seem to reflect the attitude of the

Sadducees in Jesus' day, for they were prepared to sell their principles for their own selfish position under the Romans and for their own wealth. There would be no pity or mercy from God so that in spite of their calling unto Him, there would be no deliverance (as seen in Psalm 44).

Internal strife between Jew and fellow-Jew would result in downfall and an eventual crushing by their king (v6). Was not God their King? No, for they had vehemently declared in rejecting the Messiah, ***"We have no king but Caesar."*** (John 19 v 15) So God delivered them over to the Romans and to their king whom they had chosen. The land was smitten by their king and there was no deliverance. There would be no use then, as in many subsequent persecutions, to cry out, "Why didn't God deliver us when we called to Him day and night?" For in the day of their visitation they knew not their Deliverer and Saviour. But there will always be a remnant, because of His covenant with Abraham and His steadfast covenant love. There will always be a seed in whom the unconditional promises of God to Abraham can be fulfilled. Such are the poor of the flock: those that have not lifted up their souls to vanity. God will feed and pasture them (Zephaniah 3 vv 12,13).

The Two Staves

Bearing in mind the pastoral imagery that was being used, the two staves could well be interpreted in terms of the rod and staff of the shepherd as mentioned in Psalm 23 v 4. The rod was a club for warding off wild beasts, whilst the staff was the crook used to keep the flock on the right path. Names were given to these staves of 'Beauty' and 'Bands'. Beauty is that beauty of grace whereby God keeps His people and delivers them from the enemy. Bands, or 'binders', is a word which signifies that union of God's people as He shepherds and guides the flock. God cut off the three shepherds, the leaders of Israel, in one month. In other words, in a very short time, the three pastoral offices of prophet, priest and king would be abolished. (see Jeremiah 1 v 18; 2 v 8). By the time of Jesus' birth in Roman times, the prophetic voice had been silent for some four hundred years – that is why John the Baptist attracted so much interest. The king, King Herod, had been reduced to a puppet figure, who was only a half-Jew anyway and, not long after his death, a Roman procurator was appointed over Judaea. The only office remaining was that of the priesthood and it was the chief priests who were instrumental in securing the rejection of the Messiah. Soon that office too was cut off following the Roman victory and destruction of the temple in 70 AD. ***"My soul loathed them,"*** said the Lord, ***"and their soul also abhorred Me."*** (v8) Truly, they rejected Him and thus experienced His judgment, a judgment which also affected the flock which, leaderless, would not be pastured and fed, which, dying, would have no one to care for them and which, wandering, would become separated whilst those left would bite and devour one another.

The staff called Beauty, the club which afforded protection for God's people, was destroyed as the covenant between God and His people, the conditional covenant of Sinai that God would protect His people and care for His people if they obeyed His voice, had been broken. They had disobeyed. Therefore, God would not protect them. Though it was broken, the poor of the flock, the faithful remnant would know that what was happening was of God.

From verse 12 there is a vivid description of the rejection of the Good Shepherd. As an indication of the nation's estimation of Him, they would value Him at thirty pieces of silver which, in Exodus 21 v 32, was the price of a gored or pierced slave. This, we should need no reminding, was the price paid to Judas for his part in betraying the Messiah who was then to be pierced on the tree. It is interesting to note that Judas is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name of the nation – Judah; he thus stands as the representative of the whole people who despised and rejected the Lord and esteemed Him not (Isaiah 53 v 3). This 'goodly price' (a touch of sarcasm here) would be cast unto the potter in the house of the Lord

as an acting out of the contempt for the valuation. Of all manual workers, the potter was regarded the least. He made the cheapest vessels (read II Timothy 2 v 20). Matthew (27 vv 9 & 10) refers to this passage but includes a quotation about buying a potter's field and appears to attribute the whole thing to Jeremiah. It is more likely that Matthew was quoting from a collection or compilation of OT Messianic proof texts containing 'field' and 'potter' quotes from both Jeremiah and Zechariah but naming only Jeremiah, who did indeed buy a field (Jeremiah 32 v 7) and who had observed the potter at work (Jeremiah 18). Judas, in fact, cast the money, after the betrayal, back into the Temple, the House of the Lord, whereupon, the chief priests bought the potter's field with it (Matthew 27 vv 3-10).

The second stave was also destroyed, that is the staff which kept the flock together. The brotherhood between Judah and Israel would be destroyed; the people would be dispersed among the nations. Assyria had already destroyed the unity of Israel. Babylon had deported many Jews and even though there was an eventual return, the Romans would complete the disruption of the nation and the scattering of the flock.

The Worthless Shepherd

Finally, Zechariah was instructed to change his role to that of a foolish shepherd, for from the rejection of the Messiah, only selfish leaders would be in charge of God's people, leaders who would give nothing but take all. The Jews would become outcasts with no rights.

Jesus warned of the hireling shepherd, the one who was only interested in personal gain, for in time of trouble he would run away and the flock would be scattered (John 10 vv 11-14). Jesus came in the name of the Father and was rejected but if another should come in his own name he might well be received (John 5 v 43). In rejecting Jesus, the Jewish people had confessed, "His blood be upon us and on our children." (Matthew 27 v 25). When Antichrist appears, him will they receive in his own name, but how he will tear and extort from them! This ruler of the latter day manifestation of the Roman Empire, this 'idol' (i.e. worthless) shepherd will be responsible for many woes which will come upon God's people but ultimately, he will be destroyed. The right arm of his power will be dried up; the right eye of his ability to perceive and aim at God's people, darkened. The end of the beast and the false prophet is described in Revelation 19 v 20.

Chapter 12

The first burden in chapter 9 was upon the land. Here the second burden is for Israel and is mainly to do with the coming of the Messiah – for us that will be the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice how often the phrase “in that day” occurs – chapter 12 vv 3,4,6,8,9 & 11 and also in chapters 13 and 14. “That day” is the Day of the Lord. Following the rapture of the Church, there will be a seven year period of tribulation. It, or certainly the last half of that period, is the time of ‘Jacob’s trouble’. As the crushing and destruction of God’s people gets to the point where no escape seems possible, then will come the Day of the Lord. For God’s people it will mean deliverance; for the ungodly it will mean judgment.

The Siege of Jerusalem

All that happens and will happen in world events and concerning Israel is of the Lord. He is the One who stretches forth the heavens as a curtain (as it says in Psalms 104 v 2), who lays the foundation of the earth and who forms the spirit of man within him. So the Omnipotent God has these political manoeuvres well within His control.

From verse 2, one deduces that an invasion of the land will have taken place, although there are no details of the attack. The Roman invasion of Zechariah chapter 11 pre-figured this latter-day attack. Daniel 11 suggests that then northern ruler (i.e. Syria or via Syria) and the southern ruler (i.e. Egypt) will start the conflict which will result in a large northern invasion. From Revelation 16 v 12, it appears that vast hordes of troops from the east will become involved and the western empire of the Beast will clearly be in the thick of it too. Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 describe the northern invasion and the countries caught up in the conflict. Many nations will be greedy to gain control of Jerusalem, not least because of the oil gains, but although both Judah and Jerusalem will be under siege by nations longing to drink the spoils, God will make the city a cup of trembling for them. The effect will be just like a man who has drunk poison as he reels and staggers about in his death throes; so also, in the end, will the war against Judah and Jerusalem prove to be the destruction of those oppressing nations. ***“Now also many nations are gathered against you, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel: for He shall gather them as sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make your hoofs brass: and you shall beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the earth.”*** (Micah 4 vv 11-13).

If one reads Isaiah 51 vv 17-23, one discovers that this is a just retribution; for Jerusalem (and its people) had herself suffered God’s rebuke and had drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling. But in that day, Isaiah foresaw that God would take that cup from Jerusalem and place it in the hands of those who had afflicted His people. Jerusalem will become a burdensome stone for all people. It may look so easy to lift but will prove to be too heavy, more than they can handle, cutting in pieces those on whom it falls. Yet the nations will not be deterred in their headlong onslaught. It will be as if they were carried along by blind hordes, oblivious to the dangers ahead, being spurred on by riders, as it were, afflicted by madness. In blind insanity, the nations will surge on towards their own destruction. People often ask how the world would be so mad as to get caught up in a Third World War. Here we see the mad fanaticism that provides the explanation. Here, at last, is the shaking of the nations foretold by Haggai (Haggai 2 v 7), after which, he promised, that the Desire of all nations, the Messiah, would come.

Upon Judah, however, God will open His eyes, that is, after nearly two thousand years (if, as we think, His coming is imminent) he again will deal with them as His covenant people (see 11 v 10), for the times

of the Gentiles will have been fulfilled, the treading down of Jerusalem will be at an end ([Luke 21 v 24](#)). Then shall the governors of Judah begin to have a heart faith and trust in God – not a king, notice, but governors, a Parliament style maybe, as Israel currently has, quickened to belief.

Deliverance and Restoration

When God steps in to deliver His people, it will be through His people. God, as now, will work through those whose hearts are open to Him. They will be like the fire of judgment which will consume the enemy like dry wood or straw. Salvation will come first to the country dwellers of Judah, those ‘tent-dwellers’ living outside the city. As the besiegers reel back, so those outside Jerusalem will destroy them. Then there will be no boasting upon the part of Jerusalem that they overcame through their own power, or the strength of the fortified city (v7). In reality, it will be the Lord who defends His people (v8). Even the weakest will be as strong as David and the house of David as God (the Messianic line) as the angel of the Lord (Jesus) before them. Ultimately, destruction will come upon all nations that have opposed Jerusalem.

Messianic Visitation

Apparently the mighty deliverance is all of a part with a change in the people’s attitude towards their God, for there will be an outpouring of God’s Spirit upon the Jewish people, the Spirit of Grace and supplications. The outpouring will be upon leaders (the house of David) and upon the people (inhabitants of Jerusalem) alike. This is not the promise of [Joel 2 v 28](#) but, rather, the power of the Lord to humble and grant repentance unto life. Then, as always, in response to repentance and faith, their Messiah will be revealed, but the One whom they will see, will be the same One who was despised and rejected, the One Whom they pierced, the crucified One. The Scripture was partially fulfilled in unbelief in [John 19 v 37](#), but at this future time (spoken of also in [Revelation 1 v 7](#)) it will be in true repentance. And note carefully that **God** says, “*...they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.*” – the Messiah is indeed God the Son.

Their mourning for past rejection will be so genuine and deep that one could compare it only to the mourning one might experience over the death of an only son. And certainly He is God’s only begotten Son. To be sure, the extent of the wailing and grief will be so widespread that it will be comparable to the national mourning that was exhibited (and commemorated annually) when the godly king Josiah was killed at Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon ([II Kings 23 v 29](#); [II Chronicles 35 v 22](#)). This made all the more significant by the fact that this site will also be the scene of the last, great battle of Armageddon.

Every tribe and family of Israel at that time, although presently seemingly all mixed up, will be inseparable. The family of David and Nathan (a son of David who was in the line of royal descent to the Messiah – [Luke 3 v 31](#)), the royal line will mourn apart. The family of Levi and Shimei, who was a grandson of Levi ([Numbers 3 v 21](#)), will mourn apart – that is, the priestly line. Husbands and wives will separate themselves to mourning and fasting, indicating the sincere and genuine nature of this national repentance.

Chapter 13

Israel's Cleansing

The nation of Israel will have repented and turned in faith to God and their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, God will provide the necessary cleansing.

The Fountain of Cleansing

Again, the phrase 'in that day' occurs, showing that this is the time of the Lord's return to earth. It will be at the end time of the tribulation period that a fountain will be opened to Israel, the fountain of blood that flows from Calvary, from the Saviour's wounds, opened through that piercing mentioned in chapter 12 v 10. The word fountain implies that there is a gushing, continual supply. There will be no room for sin or uncleanness in the Kingdom of God. All must be cleansed by the blood. There is no other way. Those who benefit from the availability of this cleansing will range from the ruling family (house of David) to the poorest inhabitant of Jerusalem. At last, the cleansing represented in Zechariah 3 v 4 under the picture of Joshua the high priest, will have been fulfilled.

New Creation – Death of Old

All that led them, enticed them away from total commitment to God had to be put to death, cut away. It was not just a question of stopping the practices but of removing them from their heart. This is that true circumcision which is of the heart (Deuteronomy 10 v 16; 30 v 6; Romans 2 vv 28,29; Colossians 2 v 11). Thus the names of idols will be cut off out of the land, not just the idolatrous practices. Their remembrance shall cease; they will be forgotten: ***“For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name... And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yea, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.”*** (Hosea 2 vv 17,19,20)

False prophets will also be a thing of the past as even the outward forms of dead religion are removed. The unclean spirit, active immorality, the impure and selfish living of this modern age will go (Ezekiel 36 vv 21-29a). God's word is that there will be no compromise. Every evidence of the old nature must be harshly dealt with and to the extent that even one's own son is to be killed in the event of his giving a false prophecy (see Deuteronomy 18 v 20; 13 v 6). There can be no mercy on the old nature. What was once tolerated can no longer be tolerated. So there will be no deceit, no outward form of a prophet (cf. Elijah and John the Baptist), no rough garment, and no presumption to speak in the Lord's name (v4). The false prophet will then seek to hide his deceitful role and, as an idol shepherd, act as if he has been a humble labourer all his life. When challenged about the wounds between his hands – the result and therefore the evidence of the practice of self-inflicted wounds in the idolatrous rituals of the land – he might well seek as an excuse that they were received in a brawl with one-time friends. However, the words do seem to have a Messianic ring to them. Whilst, indeed, they do refer to the false prophets who will seek to evade judgment, they do seem to echo the situation of Jesus Christ, the True prophet, who came to His own and His own received Him not, who bears in His hands the wounds inflicted upon Him in the house of His friends.

The Messiah and the Remnant

Indeed, whereas Zechariah 11 compares the foolish, worthless shepherd with the Good Shepherd, in Zechariah 13, the false prophet is compared with the True, and how He was wounded in comparison with the false one's self-inflicted wounds. Verse 7 clearly applies to the Messiah and is thus interpreted by Jesus Himself in the New Testament: "All you shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." (Matthew 26 v 31; Mark 14 v 27).

In mind here is the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, the smiting of the Shepherd, whereupon the sheep would be scattered. The sword which would be invoked by God – as an instrument of judicial execution (see Romans 13 v 4) – was symbolic of God's judgment upon sin (see Psalms 17 v 13). Isaiah's famous chapter explains: "***Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted... Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief: when You shall make His soul an offering for sin...***" (Isaiah 53 vv 4 & 10).

God calls Him 'My Shepherd', that is the Good Shepherd, the True One (see John 10 v 14), and the man that is 'My Fellow'. Now this is an interesting description to find in prophecy concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, for the word 'fellow' denotes 'one on equal terms with...' This is nothing else than an affirmation of the Trinity. The Word (Jesus) was God (John 1 v 1). Hence in Zechariah 12 v 10, the words of God are, "***they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced.***"

Not many years after the rejection of Christ, the nation of Israel was indeed scattered, becoming the diaspora, without a shepherd, as they have continued to be for more than nineteen centuries since. Persecution and suffering have been their lot. From just a few, a faithful remnant, the little ones (see chapter 11 vv 7 & 11), will God's hand be turned back. In that future tribulation, two thirds will be cut off and die and just a third left who will be preserved through the fire to be refined as silver, tried as gold, purged, ready for the millennial kingdom. Revelation 7 vv 1-8 records the sealing of the faithful remnant of Israel that they should not be hurt in the final outpouring of judgment. They appear in revelation 14 vv 4,5, virgins, without any blemish, redeemed from among men.

In the midst of this fire of adversity will come this calling upon God mentioned in Zechariah 12 v 10. God will hear and deliver them. They will be His people and He will be their God (Jeremiah 32 v 38; Ezekiel 37 v 23; Hosea 1 vv 10 & 11). They had been sown in the earth (referring to the Dispersion) "***...and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.***" (Hosea 2 v 23).

Chapter 14

Final Invasion of Jerusalem and Messiah's Deliverance

In these last few chapters there has been a frequent overlapping with regard to time. Here, in these last chapters, a more literal interpretation is needed to understand the full message of Zechariah, rather than the spiritualisation in terms of the Church, which has frequently been the view offered by Reformed Christianity. God has a purpose for earthly Israel; let us not lose sight of that by explaining everything away in terms of what God has done for the Church. Zechariah knew nothing of the Church, though, doubtless, much can be expounded in parallel terms. The OT prophets knew nothing of the Church for, as Paul explains, it was a mystery, hid in God (Ephesians 3 v 9), and made manifest only now in this Gospel age. As far as chapter 14 is concerned, nothing has yet been fulfilled and these things will be completed only on the Day of the Lord, that day when the Lord will return to the earth (with His Church, all the saints who will already have been untied with Him at the rapture – v.5) to deliver His people from the attacking nations which will be seeking to crush Israel. Here we have, as it were, an 'action replay' of chapter 12 and as we observe more closely, it is revealed that the Gentiles will actually begin to occupy the city of Jerusalem and will be sharing out the spoil inside it. There will be pillaging and raping as the seemingly victorious armies cash in on their success. But notice too that, although the nations of the world seem to be taking the initiative, it is God who will be gathering the nations to battle. All will be within His control. They think that they will be rushing to victory, whereas God will be drawing them on to destruction (12 vv 3ff.; Zephaniah 3 v 8 - Ezekiel 38 and 39 catalogue the nations which will be involved in this battle). Daniel 11 v 40 speaks of an Egyptian-Syrian clash. Daniel 9 v 27 mentions a covenant, a treaty, an alliance involving the Western Empire of Antichrist and earthly Israel, an agreement which will be broken. Revelation 16 v 12 reveals the number of the hordes which will pour into the land from the east – 200 million. What a battle! What impossible odds for this tiny people of God! No wonder, according to verse 2, that half shall be taken into captivity with only a remnant remaining. Yet, it is at this moment of being crushed, with the enemy in the very streets of the city that the Messiah, the Lord from heaven, will intervene on the behalf of His people to fight against those nations. Here is the fulfilment of all that the Lord had promised through Zechariah in the earlier chapters regarding the destruction of Israel's oppressors.

The Second Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Jesus will return to the earth. In the same way that He went, so will He come back (Acts 1 v 11). How did He go? As He ascended, ***"a cloud received Him out of their sight."*** (Acts 1 v 9) How will He return? ***"Behold, He comes with the clouds."*** (Revelation 1 v 7; Daniel 7 v 13). From where did He ascend? It was from the Mount of Olives. And when He returns, His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives. It was from this very place that the Shekinah glory of the presence of God had departed from Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian captivity (Ezekiel 11 vv 22 & 23). It will be to this same spot that He and the glory will return. Then through the Eastern Gate He will return to His Temple (Ezekiel 43 vv 1-4; 44 v 2). That gate is still blocked today, but then it will be opened. ***"It is for the Prince,"*** (Ezekiel 44 v 3) that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Glory. In fact, that area by the Mount of Olives is a favourite Jewish burial place, the idea being that, at the resurrection, they will be ready to enter Jerusalem with the Messiah.

Geographical Changes

As the result of a great earthquake, the Mount of Olives will split, half moving northward and half southward, leaving a huge East-West valley (apparently there IS an East-West fault line running through

the mount), with Jerusalem elevated as a mount in the middle. From Jerusalem living waters will flow out and down to the Mediterranean Sea on the one side and to the Dead Sea on the other (v8). Bearing in mind the fact that the Dead Sea and the Jordan valley are very much below sea level, considerable flooding could alter the coastlines. Jerusalem could well become accessible to sea traffic and, therefore, set up as a great centre for the millennial age. These upheavals will also provide a way of escape for the remnant. Revelation chapter 12 provides some symbolic representation of this situation. The vision there is of a woman who brought forth a man child. A great red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns, which had cast down a third of the stars of heaven, was ready to devour the child, the One who was to rule the nations with a rod of iron. The Son was caught up unto God to His throne. Now the woman is Israel, the man child is Jesus Christ, and the red dragon is the devil, or Satan. Then, in Revelation 12 v 6, the situation jumps to this tribulation period which we have been considering. The woman, representing the faithful remnant of Israel – the sealed ones – flees into the wilderness where God protects her for three and a half years (1,260 days). Meanwhile, one learns that the heavens have been purged by the blood and Satan cast out. Hallelujah! When Jesus ascended to heaven, it was in victory. Satan no longer had any grounds to accuse the saints before God. And so, cast down to the earth, he persecuted the woman, Israel, who is nevertheless marvellously protected and provided for by God for those three and a half years of intense tribulation (time, times and half a time). From the mouth of the serpent issues a flood to destroy Israel. Maybe it is a flood of nations, but the earth opens her mouth to swallow the flood and deliver the woman.

This is the situation depicted by Zechariah, for by this earthquake the people will be enabled to flee just as they did in the days of Uzziah. Now the reference to Uzziah's earthquake is interesting, for Amos the prophet wrote both before and after that event and seems to connect it with the voice of God from heaven. In Amos 1 v 1, two years before the earthquake, the prophet foretold that God would roar from Zion. In Amos 3 v 8, after the quake, he declared, "***The lion has roared; God has spoken.***" (Amos also made mention of a flooding of the land – Amos 9 v 5). Thus people did not just flee from the earthquake but from the voice of God. At the rapture of the Church, about seven years before these final stages of the Second Advent of Christ to the earth, the Lord will "***...descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God...***" (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16). But this is all part and parcel of the ONE second coming, for in Matthew 24 vv 30 and 31(mg.), describing the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven, it states, "***He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice...***" Here is the cause of the earthquake (see Hebrews 12 v 31mg.) and the ensuing flood of waters.

And He, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord my God, shall come and all the saints (that is, the holy ones, the sanctified ones, the Church) with Him - 1 Thessalonians 3 v 13; Jude v 14; Deuteronomy 33 v 2 all express the same truth. In that day, so it seems, the light from the sun and moon will be obscured; it will be neither clear nor dark. Matthew 24 again supplies the reason, for immediately after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon not give her light and the stars of heaven shall fall from heaven. Truly the shaking will not only be on earth but in the heaven too (Hebrews 12 v 26).

When Will the Lord Come?

When will the Day of the Lord be? Well, no man knows. Even Jesus, in his humanity here of earth, declared, "***Of that day and hour knows no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.***" (Matthew 24 v 36). Zechariah agrees that it is one day known to the Lord. There IS a definite time, but only God knows. Having said that, we know that it will be seven years after the rapture of the Church and three and a half years after the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, has been set up. Further, there are certain indications concerning the time of year. In what year will He come? Only

God knows, for the Jewish calendar is not based on our calendar and the chief festival days do not, therefore, occur on the same date of our calendar each year. But there seems to be strong evidence to suggest that these events in Zechariah coincide with the Jewish New Year. Rosh Hashanah, which is the Jewish New Year's Day goes back to the beginning of creation. In Leviticus 23 v 24 and Numbers 29 v1, it is called the seventh month because, at the time of the Exodus, the month Nisan, the Passover month, was made the first month of the year. But the creation month still remains as New Year for the purpose of numbering the years from the beginning. The reader will have observed that the New Year is ushered in with the sounding of trumpets (rams' horns – shofars). This is just how the coming of the Messiah will be heralded, with the sound of the trumpet. Indeed, it will be a new beginning, quite in keeping with the day of Rosh Hashanah. Further, the keeping of Rosh Hashanah is a time of mourning, repentance and forgiveness, culminating, on the tenth day, in the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), a day of solemn fasting and repentance (Leviticus 24 vv 27ff.). In OT times of course, the high priest made atonement for the sins of the people with the blood of the sin offering. Chapter 12 of Zechariah ended with the coming of the Messiah, the mourning and repentance of the people and finishing with the great Atonement when the blood of the Lamb would be made available for their cleansing (in chapter 13 v 1).

It is with the coming of the Messiah that life-giving waters will flow out of Jerusalem continually, in winter and in summer (v 8). Joel confirms the fact (Joel 3 v 18); Ezekiel details carefully the life-giving flow which pours from the Holy Place towards the East so that the Dead Sea will team with life (Ezekiel 47) – see also Revelation 22 vv 1 & 2.

It was at the Feast of Tabernacles (see Zechariah 14 v 16) that Jesus shouted “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spoke He of the Spirit...” (John 7 vv 37-39). What we have experienced spiritually, the land will experience physically as it is restored and prepared for the millennial reign, when the Lord will be King over all the earth. There will be ONE lord and His Name One (Revelation 3 v 12). Judah, from Geba in the north to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will be as a plain but Jerusalem will be exalted, lifted up and inhabited safely (vv 10 & 11).

Scenes of Final Judgment

As for the nations which opposed God's people, they will be destroyed when the Lord delivers Israel. The description of flesh, eyes and tongue consuming away is reminiscent of nuclear warfare and of what happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The devastation, as God's wrath against ungodliness and wickedness is outpoured, will be terrible. Joel saw fires and pillars of smoke, possibly this causing sun and moon to be darkened (Joel 2 v 30). Malachi said that day would burn the wicked as an oven burns stubble (Malachi 4 v 1). Paul knew that when Jesus returns it will be “***with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...***” (II Thessalonians 1 vv 7 & 8). In Revelation, the scenes are brought into operation with the outpouring of the seven vials of God's wrath upon the earth. With the outpouring of the sixth vial, the way is prepared for the phenomenal invasion from the East (Revelation 9 v 16). An army of 200 million is a vast army in today's world; it must have been an impossible figure for John's day for, on present estimates, that was the entire world's population at that time – men, women and children. Demonic spirits go forth to gather the nations to the great battle, the battle of Armageddon (Joel 3 vv 2-12 calls it the valley of Jehoshaphat, for his name means 'God has judged' – read Joel 3 vv 2, 9-16). Then the seventh vial is poured out. The earthquake takes place. It is so great that there has never been one like it before. Judgment comes, resulting in the destruction of the Beast and the kings of the earth together with those that followed him. (Revelation 16; Revelation 19 vv 11-21). Confusion and tumult will

be upon the people (Zechariah 14 v 13), but Judah will fight and prosper. All that is unclean will be dealt with (v 15) as God's people emerge victorious.

Afterwards, there will be a world-wide acknowledgement of the King, the Lord of hosts. Truly, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2 vv 10-11). You see, in between verses 15 and 16 something will have happened to the defeated heathen. Revelation 20 v 2 records it. The devil will be bound for a thousand years – the duration of the millennial kingdom. Although there will still be worldly idea working in depraved natures, although the remains of the world (Egypt) system will be on every hand (vv17-19), the source of its power will have been bound. People generally will not have the inclination to resist God. Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron for a thousand years (Revelation 20: 12 v 5; Psalm 2 vv 6-9) and there will be no enemy to deceive or lead astray. Everyone will be required to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Now this again is interesting, for the Feast of Tabernacles begins on the fifteenth day of the Jewish New Year – yet another confirmation of the time in question. The Feast of Passover will not be required for Christ, the true Passover, was sacrificed for us (I Corinthians 5 v 7) – it is done. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) will not be required for this commemorated the giving of the Law at Sinai, but with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2, His Law was written in our hearts. God will also pour out His Spirit on His earthly people. However, the last of the three pilgrim feasts will still be required for this has to do with the earthly pilgrimage. The millennium will be only temporary. Eventually, God will create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness (II Peter 3 v 13). Thus the Festival of Tabernacles will be a reminder that, although the Lord will be reigning on earth, God's people will still be looking forward to eternity's day; they will be in an attitude of depending wholly on Him with no root in earthly things. As Zechariah's prophecy does not continue until eternity's dawning, it is fitting that the Feast of Tabernacles should be stressed, to point forward to that joyous expectation and hope. Tabernacles is also a harvest festival and a time for thanksgiving, and so it is a fitting festival at the end of the world, when the harvest of souls will be gathered in and thanks given to God for all His goodness.

In verses 20 and 21, everything in Jerusalem will be holy, even down to the bells of the horses (which legally are unclean animals). They will bear the inscription that the High Priest himself used to wear – "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD." The lowly, household, earthenware pots will be set aside for the Lord's use. No more will there be any Canaanite influence in the Lord's dwelling place. Sin will be banished for the duration of the millennial kingdom.

Of course, Satan will eventually be released, judged and cast into the lake of fire and then will come the new heavens and the new earth in which only righteousness dwells. But Zechariah does not proceed this far, for he is simply commissioned to reveal what God purposes for His earthly people here, and when the Gentile dominion finally will come to an end. Though, in human terms, the word of promise seems long in fulfilment, that word is sure and certain.