

In giving Israel so many bloody victories, God made good His promises to their fathers. (v. 9) The promises were made for the sake of the entire world (as we have seen).

## HYMN OF FAITH . . . Habakkuk 3:16-19

RV . . . I heard, and my body trembled, My lips quivered at the voice; Rottenness entereth into my bones, and I tremble in my place; Because I must wait quietly for the day of trouble. For the coming up of the people that invadeth us. For though the fig-tree shall not flourish, Neither shall fruit be in the vines; The labor of the olive shall fail, And the fields shall yield no food; The flock shall be cut off from the fold, And there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength; And he maketh my feet like hinds' feet, And will make me to walk upon my high places.

LXX . . . I watched, and my belly trembled at the sound of the prayer of my lips, and trembling entered into my bones, and my frame was troubled within me; I will rest in the day of affliction, from going up to the people of my sojourning. For though the fig-tree shall bear no fruit, and there shall be no produce on the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall produce no food: the sheep have failed from the pasture, and there are no oxen at the cribs; yet I will exult in the Lord, I will joy in God my Saviour. The Lord God is my strength, and he will perfectly strengthen my feet; he mounts me upon high places, that I may conquer by his song.

## COMMENTS

Within these few lines, we have the prophet in the highest degree of trembling and triumphing. In this world, God's people experience both. In heaven there is only triumph.

1. When we see a day of trouble approaching, it concerns us to lay up something in store for that day. The best way to so prepare is to tremble within ourselves at the Word of God.

Habakkuk's fear was that when the Chaldean came to lead off the people, he will break them up as Assyria broke up the northern kingdom. Should this happen, God's people would be no more and God's covenant would go unfulfilled. The fig-tree (v. 17) would not flourish, the vine would bear no fruit, the flock would be cut off and no herd would be in the stalls. Apart from His covenant people, God's purpose would not be realized.

Of course, the truth of this concern is seen historically in that God did not allow it to happen. The captives of Babylon were not scattered. Their children returned to rebuild God's temple.

2. The prophet had looked back on the experiences of the people in former ages, and had recalled great things God had done for them. From his trembling, he recovered himself. His fright gave way to faith and he was overwhelmed with holy joy. Despite the calamities he foresaw in the vision God granted him, he saw beyond it to the day of restoration.

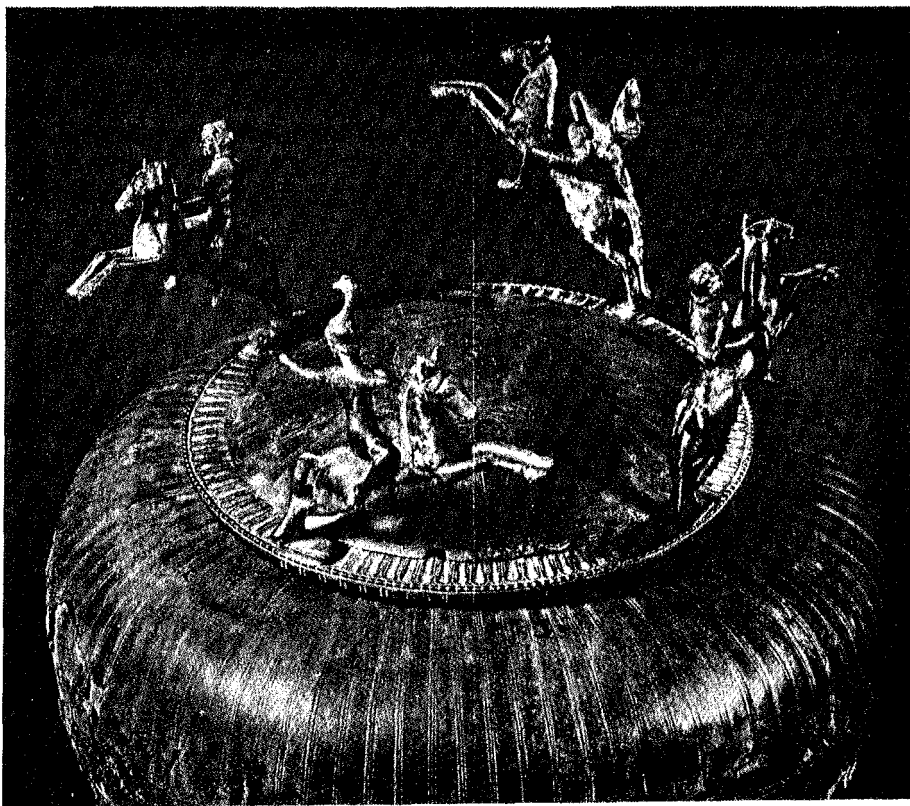
It was the joy of faith. A century of suffering lay between the vision and the return of the remnant. Other centuries lay beyond before the coming of Him Who is the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose in Israel.

Habakkuk closes on a note of optimism only possible to one who has finally learned to take God at His word despite outward appearances.

## Chapter XVIII—Questions

### The Prophet's Poetic Prayer

1. Habakkuk's final chapter is a poetic prayer. Its two sections are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. How does God's answer to his second question strike Habakkuk?
3. With what is the prophet primarily concerned in the first section of his prayer?
4. Why does the prophet recall the past events of God's people?
5. List the past events alluded to here.
6. How can a loving God do what Jehovah did to the Canaanites in their overthrow by Israel?
7. The second section of Habakkuk's prayer . . . the Hymn of Faith, shows the prophet progressing from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.
8. What is the best way to prepare for a day of adversity?
9. In remembering God's past dealing with Israel, Habakkuk's fright gave way to \_\_\_\_\_.
10. How do you account for the optimism with which Habakkuk closes?



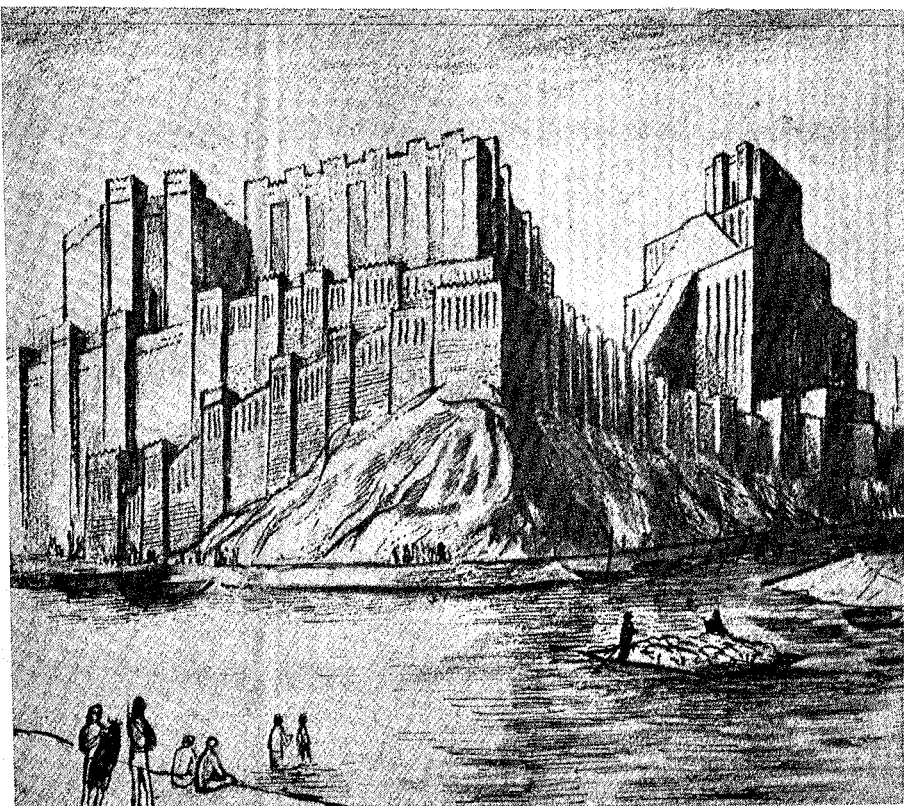
*"For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up . . . In the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening . . ."*  
 (Zephaniah 2:4,7).

It was about this time that wild hordes of mounted nomads, from the Caucasus swept into Mesopotamia, looting and ravaging. They forced their way through Palestine as far as the frontiers of Egypt. These were the Scythians.

The Prophet Zephaniah foresaw with horror the havoc they would wreak in Palestine.

Gallopig Scythian horsemen, practising their characteristic shooting over the shoulder, decorate the lid of this bronze Etruscan urn.

FROM: THE BIBLE AS HISTORY IN PICTURES  
 By Werner Keller - Wm. Morrow Co.



*"And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria"*  
 (Zephaniah 2:13).

This prophecy of Zephaniah was fulfilled only twelve years after the death of Ashurbanipal. The Chaldeans, one of whom had been Merodach-baladan, the ally of King Hezekiah of Judah, had succeeded at last after a long and fruitless struggle against their mortal enemies the Assyrians, in making themselves masters of Babylon, and had allied themselves with a people from Iran, the Medes. The first city to fall before their joint assault was Ashur, which was taken in 614 B. C. This reconstruction shows the north-west side of this impressive metropolis, the oldest of the great cities of the Assyrian empire, lying on the west side of the Tigris, with its massive Temple of the god Ashur, who was its patron deity.

PART V  
ZEPHANIAH

## OUTLINE OF ZEPHANIAH

## Introduction: Zephaniah's identity

A. Family

B. Date

## I. Doom of Judah

A. Removal

1. of things of value

2. of all life

3. of idolatry

a. Baal worshipers

b. animal worshipers

c. plant worshipers

d. backsliders

e. no defense for rebellion

B. Judgement is certain and soon

1. powerless strong

2. wrath

3. mounting troubles

4. day of alarm

5. no protection in position or riches

## II. Divine Judgement Universal

A. Assembly

B. Gentile cities judged

1. named

2. designated

3. land to change

4. new dwellers in land

5. God's blessing

C. Opposition judged

1. reproach to God's people

2. wasted land

3. prey of residue

4. punishment for pride

5. change in worship

D. Universal retribution

1. Ethiopia to Nineveh

2. Habitation for beasts and birds

3. Humbling the proud

4. By word instead of praise

## INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

### III. Comfort and Consolation

- A. Not too filthy
- B. A just and Holy God
- C. Endurance counts
- D. Song of Joy

## CHAPTER XIX

### INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

#### THE DATE

Zephaniah is a companion book to Nahum in two respects: (1) The two were contemporary and (2) the judgements against the nations surrounding Palestine are general in Zephaniah. Nahum singles out one of these objects of God's judgement and deals with it specifically and in detail. What Nahum described in Nineveh at the time of her downfall was in some measure true of all the cities and nations mentioned by Zephaniah.

Zephaniah probably wrote in the latter half of Josiah's reign. Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight, following the death of his father, Amon c. 639 B.C. His reform of Judah began c. 621 with the discovery of the book of the law which some scholars identify as Deuteronomy. (Cf. *II Kings* 22) It seems likely that Zephaniah's prophecy was meant to assist in Josiah's reform.

Some argue for an earlier date, *ie.* the first part of Josiah's reign, on the ground that such pronouncements were more needed prior to Josiah's reform. This seems a rather spurious argument, since it was precisely the pre-reform conditions at which the reform was aimed. Such a reform would be greatly enhanced by the appearance of a prophet of God on the scene after some seventy-five years of divine silence.

Not since Isaiah, Micah and Amos had an inspired spokesman for Jehovah stood in the midst of His people.

#### ZEPHANIAH THE PROPHET

We know little about Zephaniah aside from the first verse of his book. Three other Old Testament men wore the same name, which means "Jehovah hides," but there is no reason to identify the prophet with any of the three.

He was born some time, probably late, in the reign of the blood-thirsty Manassah c. 687-641 B.C. (*II Kings* 21:16)

Zephaniah's ancestry is stated in the first verse of his writing. He is a fourth generation descendant of Hezekiah (716-687 B.C.). He was, therefore, of royal blood and very familiar with the court of Judah (1:8, 3:3). No doubt he calls attention to Hezekiah rather than his most recent royal relatives because of their departure from the faith. The most recent, before Zephaniah's contemporary, Josiah, was Amon who was actually named for the pagan god of Egypt.

### ZEPHANIAH'S MESSAGE

Like the other writing prophets of the Old Testament, Zephaniah was acutely aware of the international circumstances of his day. It is impossible to understand him without some knowledge of the world situation in which he lived.

In the last quarter of the seventh century B.C. the world stood in terror of a federation of wild tribes from what is now southern Russia. The Sythians smashed Syria and poured over all of western Asia. They pressed to the Egyptian delta before being bought off by Pharaoh Psammitichus I.

They rode bareback on wild horses, drank their enemy's blood and used his scalp for a napkin. The women rode with their men as warriors until they married and marriage was forbidden until a woman had killed three enemies.

The Sythians finally became relatively civilized, inheriting the remnants of the earlier Hittite culture. Their second king was the legendary Midas of the golden touch.

Acutely aware of the Sythian threat, Zephaniah nevertheless seems to have seen it for what it was, *ie.* relatively minor and short-lived. He looks beyond this immediate danger and, without naming the empire, describes the Babylonian domination of the world. This, of course, is only reasonable, since it was the Babylonians (Chaldeans) whom God revealed to Habakkuk as those He was raising up for judgement.

Some have said Zephaniah foretold the Sythian invasion of Judah, but if he was inspired as we believe, he could make no such historical blunder. The Sythians did not invade Judah.

The time before Josiah's reform and, therefore, the conditions to which Zephaniah addressed himself, constitute what has been called the dark age of Judah. Following the death of the good king Hezekiah, his son Manasseh set about to throw the nation into complete idolatry. It became a crime to preach the God known to Isaiah and Micah. The high places of Baal, destroyed by Hezekiah, were rebuilt. Altars to the unholy trinity of the sun cult were erected everywhere in the



## INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

names of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom and the other local titles for Baal. (See introductory chapter on Baal Worship.)

The temple itself was desecrated by heathen altars, and to Baal worship was added the abominable Assyrian worship of the planets, the sun and the moon. Witchcraft ran rampant throughout Judah and sacred prostitution was the order of the day. Even the sacrificing of babies to Baal was revived. (Cf. *II Kings* 21)

Manasseh himself seems later to have repented but the damage was done. (*II Chronicles* 33:22)

Manasseh's son, whom he had named Amon for the Egyptian version of the sun god, succeeded his father to the throne of Judah, but his two year reign was so brief as to be unimportant. At the age of eight, Josiah the reformer ascended the throne.

Nothing changed during the years of Josiah's regency, but when he reached the age of twenty-six, he initiated a wide-ranging reform. (*II Kings* 22:3-ff) Zephaniah's prophetic ministry no doubt played a large role, both in bringing about the reform and in implementing it.

The idolatrous priests, the worship of strange deities, the adoration of heavenly bodies, all come in for their share of denunciation by Zephaniah. So also do those who forsake the true worship of Jehovah, the atheists who have altogether abandoned worship, those who give only lip service to God, and those who believe Jehovah will passively do neither good nor evil to anyone.

God's judgement against Judah Zephaniah sees as accompanied by universal judgement. Assyrian power was crumbling. The Sythians, fierce though they were, would not become a major power. The Chaldean empire of Babylon would be raised up by God to smite not only Judah but those nations north, south, east and west of her. Both those afar off and those who were near neighbors would feel the wrath of God.

The message addressed to the world of his time is summed up in Zephaniah's repeated use of the term "day of Jehovah." Two major ideas are included in this term: (1) the universal judgement of God and (2) the comfort and hope reserved for the remnant.

In addition there seem to be two minor ideas which are never clearly defined in Zephaniah: (1) The Messianic period and (2) the final judgement of all nations.

Special attention must be given the term "day of Jehovah" if we are to understand the prophecy of Zephaniah. He did not coin the phrase. It had been in popular usage for at least a century. Amos

had attempted to correct a popular misunderstanding of it. (*Amos* 5:18-20)

To the Jews of Amos' day, the day of Jehovah was a day when the Hebrews would finally overcome their enemies. God would utterly destroy all Gentile power, and the world would be ruled from Jerusalem. Such Jewish nationalism and racism are not unknown today. Dispensationalism, so wide-spread among today's Evangelical denominations also propagates this mistaken concept.

Throughout the Old Testament the term *yom YHWH* (day of Jehovah) denotes the time when God's kingdom will be finally consummated and free from attack from without or corruption within. (Cf. *Isaiah* 2:12, 13:6-9, 34:8, *Ezekiel* 13:5, 30:3, *Joel* 1:15, 2:11, *Amos* 5:18, *Zephaniah* 1:14 and *Zechariah* 14:1)

To bring this consummation to its fullness four characteristics are described in various contexts; both in the Old and New Testaments: (1) The judgement of Israel, Judah and the nations of the pre-Christian world; (2) The deliverance and preservation of the remnants during and after the captivity; (3) The first coming of the Messiah; and (4) The second coming of the Messiah and His final judgement of all men and nations.

Conceived of in terms of judgement, the day of the Lord is described as a "day of wrath" or "day of judgement." In its ultimate fulfillment it is "that great and notable day." In general reference it is "that day," "the day of the Lord," "day of God." In terms of Christ's second coming it is "the day of Jesus Christ" or "the day of Christ."

In keeping with the nature of His kingdom, which is "not of this world," the Scriptural teaching concerning the "day of Jehovah" is concerned more with the qualities of the day than with the time of its fulfillment. God is thought of as manifesting Himself in His fullness, punishing wrong, especially wrong worship and social injustice, then rewarding faithfulness and loving service. The final fulfillment of the "day of Jehovah" is the final triumph of righteousness and truth over sin and falsehood.

Any period of history in which God raised up a nation to punish wickedness or unfaithfulness answers to the first characteristic of "that day." Indeed, considering God's constant rule over the history of man, it could not be otherwise.

It is in this sense that Zephaniah places most of his emphasis on "the day of Jehovah." There is a fervor of wrath revealed in the overthrow of wicked Judah and her equally wicked neighbors. There is

an unrelenting certainty to Jehovah's judgements in the ebb and flow of international relationships. There is the over-riding warning that a nation which does not turn from sin to God is "living on borrowed time."

On the other hand, we cannot overlook the Messianic and eschatological overtones of Zephaniah's "day of Jehovah." Dr. G. A. Smith is quoted by T. Miles Bennett in this regard: "In short, with Zephaniah the Day of the Lord tends to become the Last Day. His book is the relation of prophecy with apocalypse. That is the moment which it supplies in the history of Israel's religion." Nebular and undefined though it seems, Zephaniah's eschatology marks a definite step forward in the nature of prophecy.

## Chapter XIX—Questions

### Introduction to Zephaniah

1. Zephaniah is a companion book to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Zephaniah probably wrote in the \_\_\_\_\_ half of Josiah's reign.
3. Discuss the relationship between Zephaniah's prophecy and Josiah's reform.
4. Why does Zephaniah mention Hezekiah particularly in listing his own ancestry?
5. Why does Zephaniah discuss the rise of Babylon rather than the Sythian threat?
6. In addition to the corruption of their worship by turning to Baal, the people of Judah also worshipped \_\_\_\_\_.
7. God's judgement against Judah, Zephaniah sees as accompanied by \_\_\_\_\_.
8. The two major ideas presented by Zephaniah are (1) \_\_\_\_\_ and (2) \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Two minor ideas never clearly defined by Zephaniah are (1) \_\_\_\_\_ and (2) \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Discuss the four characteristics of the fullness of the "day of Jehovah."

## CHAPTER XX

### JUDGEMENT OF GOD

SALUTATION . . . Zephaniah 1:1

RV . . . The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

LXX . . . The word of the Lord which came to Sophonias the son of Chusi, the son of Godolias, the son of Amorias, the son of Ezekias, in the days of Josias son of Amon, king of Juda.

## COMMENTS

As in other prophetic writings, Zephaniah's opening verse leaves no room for doubt as to the origin of his message. He does not describe his call, as does Isaiah, nor claim to have seen a vision, as, for example, Nahum. But the claim to inspiration is never in doubt.

It is not in the scope of this work to prove the validity of this claim. The reader is referred to the Moody Press (1963) publication, *Can I Trust The Bible*, edited by Howard F. Vos for an excellent series of treatises on the subject as it pertains to the entire Bible.

We shall simply proceed on the presupposition that Zephaniah was among those described by Peter as "men (who) spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." II Peter 1:21)

The prophet's opening words "the word of Jehovah" are calculated to establish the authority of what he is about to say. He claims royal lineage and has easy access to the courts of Judah, but these are not the authority to which he appeals. He will write down the word of Jehovah God.

Zephaniah identifies himself as son of Cushi . . . of Gedaliah . . . of Amariah . . . of Hezekiah. We know virtually nothing of either Cushi or Gedaliah or Amariah. The important name here is Hezekiah, the last God-fearing king of Judah prior to Josiah with whom Zephaniah is contemporary. (See introductory Chapter 19 for discussion of ancestry and date of Zephaniah.)

### UNIVERSAL JUDGEMENT PROCLAIMED . . . Zephaniah 1:2-3

RV . . . I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah.

LXX . . . Let there be an utter cutting off from the face of the land, saith the Lord, Let man and cattle be cut off; let the birds of the air

and the fishes of the sea be cut off; and the ungodly shall fail, and I will take away the transgressors from the face of the land, saith the Lord.

## COMMENTS

### I WILL UTTERLY CONSUME . . . v. 2

The apostle Paul reminds us that the " . . . whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. . . " (*Romans 8:22*) as a result of man's sin. Peter informs us " . . . the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (*II Peter 3:10*) John adds, " . . . I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more." (*Revelation 21:1*) Whatever the chronological relationship of Zephaniah's "Day of Jehovah" to the final summing up of all history by God, it certainly prefigures the ultimate destruction of all the sinful works of man in preparation for the establishment of the universal reign of God.

### THE STUMBLING BLOCK . . . v. 3

Along with the wicked, God will wipe out those things which have caused man to sin. This is, no doubt, an allusion to the idolatrous worship of the beasts, fishes and birds mentioned here: (cp. *Romans 1:18-ff*) Ezekiel uses similar language in condemning idol worship. (*Ezekiel 14:3-7*)

### SAITH JEHOVAH . . . v. 2-3

Zephaniah will allow none of the nonsense current in our time regarding his prophetic insight. Those who today would tell us that this insight came from an informed political prognosticator, do so only by ignoring the prophet's claim, "(thus) saith Jehovah." Here is the watchword of all Old Testament prophecy. The message is from God.

### JUDGEMENT OF JUDAH . . . Zephaniah 1:4-2:3)

RV . . . And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarim with the priests; and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that

worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam; and them that are turned back from following Jehovah; and those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him. Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord Jehovah; for the day of Jehovah is at hand; for Jehovah hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath consecrated his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of Jehovah's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the King's sons, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel. And in that day I will punish all those that leap over the threshold, that fill their master's house with violence and deceit. And in that day, saith Jehovah, there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and a wailing from the second quarter, and a great crashing from the hills, Wail, ye inhabitants of Maktesh; for all the people of Canaan are undone; all they that were laden with silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with lamps; and I will punish the men that are settled on their lees, that say in their heart, Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil. And their wealth shall become a spoil and their houses a desolation: yea, they shall build houses, but they shall not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine thereof. The great day of Jehovah is near, it is near and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of Jehovah; the mighty man crieth there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities, and against the high battlements. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Jehovah; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he will make an end, yea, a terrible end, of all them that dwell in the land. Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation that hath no shame; before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of Jehovah come upon you, before the day of Jehovah's anger come upon you. Seek ye Jehovah, all ye meek of the earth, that have kept his ordinances; seek ye righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye will be hid in the day of Jehovah's anger.

LXX . . . And I will stretch out mine hand upon Juda, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will remove the names of Baal out of this place, and the names of the priests; and them that worship the

host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and swear by the Lord, and them that swear by their king; and them that turn aside from the Lord, and them that seek not the Lord, and them that cleave not to the Lord. Fear ye before the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is near; for the Lord has prepared his sacrifice, and has sanctified his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will take vengeance on the princes, and on the king's house, and upon all that wear strange apparel. And I will openly take vengeance on the porches in that day, on the men that fill the house of the Lord their God with ungodliness and deceit. And there shall be in that day, saith the Lord, the sound of a cry from the gate of men slaying, and a howling from the second gate, and a great crashing from the hills. Lament, ye that inhabit the city that has been broken down, for all the people has become like Chanaan; and all that were exalted by silver have been utterly destroyed. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will search Jerusalem with a candle, and will take vengeance on the men that despise the things committed to them; but they say in their hearts, The Lord will not do any good, neither will he do any evil. And their power shall be for a spoil, and their houses for utter desolation; and they shall build houses, but shall not dwell in them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine of them. For the great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and very speedy; the sound of the day of the Lord is made bitter and harsh. A mighty day of wrath is that day, a day of affliction and distress, a day of desolation and destruction, a day of gloominess and darkness, a day of cloud and vapour, a day of the trumpet and cry against the strong cities, and against the high towers. And I will greatly afflict the men, and they shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; therefore he shall pour out their blood as dust, and their flesh as dung. And their silver and their gold shall in nowise be able to rescue them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he will bring a speedy destruction on all them that inhabit the land. Be ye gathered and closely joined together, O unchastened nation; before ye become as the flower that passes away, before the anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the wrath of the Lord come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth; do judgement, and seek justice, and answer accordingly; that ye may be hid in the day of the wrath of the Lord.

## MY HAND UPON JUDAH . . . v. 4

Unlike some others (Amos) whose pronouncements of judgement begin with Judah's neighbors and then focus on her, Zephaniah begins

at home. All the world is wicked. The sin of God's people is worst of all, precisely because they are God's people. As Peter has it, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." (*I Peter, 4:17*).

The prophet immediately turns to listing those specifics which have brought God's judgement against Judah. At the top of the list is Baal worship. (See introductory chapter on Baal worship.)

The last vestige, or remnant, of Baal worship is going to be obliterated from "this place" *ie.* Jerusalem.

If this prophecy is indeed related to Josiah's reform, the obliteration of Baalism proceeded a pace before the Babylonian scourge actually executed judgement against Judah. However, thorough though the reform was, it did not remove *all* the remnants of Baal worship. This was accomplished only by the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

### CHEMARIM WITH THE PRIESTS . . .

Chemarim in Aramaic means priests. Its literal meaning is "black." It applied to the priests because of their black robes.

Probably both the priests of Baal and the apostate priests of Jehovah are meant here. Just as Zephaniah begins his pronouncement of universal judgement by focusing on Judah, within Judah the focus is on Jerusalem, within Jerusalem "this place" or the temple, within the temple the priesthood. The prophet obviously believes in coming directly to the source of Baalism among God's people.

### THE HOSTS OF HEAVEN ON THE HOUSETOPS . . . v. 5

In addition to Baal, the perennial blight on Judah's faith, the Assyrian worship of the planets, has also infected the people of God. This despicable practice, enjoying an American revival in modern preoccupation with horoscopes, was imported from Nineveh in the days of the wicked Manasseh. (cf. *II Kings 21:3*) It continued to the last in Judah. (cf. *Jeremiah 32:29*)

The housetops mentioned here are the flat roofs of Palestinian homes which were the ideal vantage point from which to worship "the hosts of heaven."

### SWEAR TO JEHOVAH . . . SWEAR BY MALCOM . . .

Malcom (Milcom) here means literally "their king." It is etomologically related to Moloch, the Phoenician name for Baal. As sun god, Baal was king of all the heavenly hosts!



Those who swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcom are practicing a religious syncretism similar to that advocated in our day. In Zephaniah's day religious syncretism was a mixture of Jehovah worship and Baal worship. Both "Baal" and "Jehovah" mean "Lord." The worshippers, by appealing (swearing) to the authority of both, were attempting to serve two masters.

This same approach is advocated today as Christianity searches for some peaceful co-existence with Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. W. A. Visser-Hooft, in his book *No Other Name*, 1963, makes an heroic effort to call attention to this influence. His efforts seem to have been in vain, possibly because of his stance as a former general secretary of the World Council of Churches, which is itself a form of religious syncretism.

Colin W. Williams, dean of Yale Divinity School, is quoted as saying, "... I hold open that what is true for the Buddhist in his situation may be as valid for him as mine is for me."

Max Therian, speaking before the World Council in New Delhi, echoed this same approach to Islam on the ground that truth and charity were taught by both Mohammed and Jesus and that both are recognized as Master and Prophet.

In both Zephaniah's day and ours the problem of syncretism is a problem of authority. In Judah there was a willing compromise of Jehovah's authority with that of Baal. In our time the premise is situationalism in which the presupposition of absolute authority is summarily dismissed. In either case, the Biblical answer is "*thus saith the Lord!*"

### THEM THAT . . . TURN BACK . . . HAVE NOT SOUGHT . . . NOR INQUIRED . . . v. 6

Indifference to and unconcern for Jehovah are described here. Then as now, there were those who, surrounded by evil heinous enough to merit the judgement of God, were simply satisfied to live out their lives without considering God at all.

To inquire of God is to desire formal worship, particularly the hours of prayer. (cf. *Psalms* 10:4)

In pronouncing punishment against such indifference (v. 12) the prophet describes it as "men that are settled on their lees that say in their heart Jehovah will not do good, neither will He do evil." This amounts to spiritual stagnation just as fermented wine was left for a time on the "lees" to allow solid matter suspended in it to settle, so the unfeeling indifference of some in Judah has left them with a

congealing of the soul. Perhaps God's judgement will surprise none so much as these.

### HOLD THY PEACE . . . v. 7

As the indifferent have had nothing meaningful to say for, to, or about God, they are to be dumb in the presence of His judgement.

The Lord has prepared these evil backsliders as a sacrifice. (cp. *Isaiah* 34:6, *Jeremiah* 46:10, *Ezekiel* 39:17) The despised Chaldeans are called to be His guests. They will feast on the remains of Judah as the priests feasted on the remains of sacrifices on feast days. Nebuchadnezzar was invited to come to take vengeance on Jerusalem. (*Jeremiah* 25:9)

### SUCH AS ARE CLOTHED IN FOREIGN APPAREL . . . v. 8

Jehovah had regulated the attire of His people in a measure. (*Numbers* 15:38-f, *Deuteronomy* 22:11-f, cp. *Matthew* 23:5) Special dress was designed to remind them they were in a special relationship to God.

Beyond the mere copying of foreign dress is the implied aping of foreign customs which inevitably accompanies it. The adopting of foreign dress and customs led to the acceptance of foreign religions. There was a gradual blending of Judah with her neighbors until there was little to distinguish the one from the other.

### ALL THOSE THAT LEAP OVER THE THRESHOLD . . . v. 9

Several possible implications are suggested here. The priests of the Philistine god, Dagon, avoided stepping on the threshold of their temple because their god had fallen across it (*1 Samuel* 5:5). When the Judeans emulated this practice, they were yielding to idolatry.

Household deities may have entered into this leaping over the threshold. Sacrifices of food were left on the threshold for such gods so that the threshold constituted an altar. As such, it was not to be desecrated by stepping directly on it.

Perhaps Zephaniah intends rather to single out by this phrase those who in their haste to intrude on the privacy of their neighbors or to rob and ransack their houses, leaped across the threshold.

In any of these cases, the offense is worthy of punishment.

### THAT FILL . . . WITH DECEIT . . .

The house of the master refers to the household in which one was employed. Those who are disloyal to their employers, who enrich themselves at their employer's expense are to suffer God's judgment.

## THERE SHALL BE THE NOISE OF A CRY . . . v. 10-13

The fish gate was located in the north wall of Jerusalem. When the invading Babylonians came against Jerusalem they would come from the north. From that direction the alarm would sound throughout the city.

The second quarter was a northern suburb of Jerusalem, new in Josiah's day. It also would be in the line of Babylonian march.

"The hills" likely refers to the hills immediately north of Jerusalem. Scopus, northeast of the city has long been inhabited as a section of Jerusalem, but without the city walls. Invading armies captured this hill and, because of its commanding view of the city, made it their field headquarters.

## YE INHABITANTS OF MAKTESH . . . v. 11

Between the easter and western hills on the northern outskirts of Jerusalem is the valley of Maktesh. The name means "hollow place." (*Judges 15:19*) Those who dwelt there would be directly in the path of any invader from the north.

"People of Canaan" here probably means merchants. Not only those who lived in the northern outskirts of the city, but those who came there to trade would be caught in the judgemental onslaught.

Zephaniah describes the sudden anguished cry of all who stood in the path of the Babylonians.

## I WILL SEARCH . . . WITH LAMPS . . . v. 12

God's judgement will be exhaustive; none will escape. This searching is directed against those whose sin was indifference. (See above on v. 6) By their non-commitment they have sought to escape from responsibility for the sins against which God's wrath is directed. They have remained obscure . . . the "silent majority" will not be held unaccountable for the evil all about them. God will search them out for their own punishment.

## THEIR WEALTH SHALL BECOME . . . SPOIL . . . v. 13

Indifference not only is no assurance of lack of moral responsibility. It actually becomes a danger in itself. Non-commitment cannot protect property from an invading army.

Because these have remained indifferent to God and to conditions about them, they will not be allowed to reap what they produced by their labor. Others will lay waste their vineyards. (Cp. *Deuteronomy 28:30, Amos 5:11, Micah 6:15*)

The indifferent are self-content in their suburban homes. They have escaped the immediate consequence of the evil of the city. But in God's judgement against the city all they have secured by their indolence will be lost. Modern suburbia take heed!

### THE GREAT DAY OF JEHOVAH IS NEAR . . . v. 14

Here again is the prophetic "Day of the Lord," the day in which Jehovah would directly intervene in the affairs of man's history in such a way as to reveal His judgement and redemption. The Jews, smug in their racial identity, were prone to view the day as one of extreme gladness for themselves and of extreme discomfiture for the Gentiles.

Zephaniah's warning is that the day will be one of anguish for the unfaithful among God's people.

Perhaps the most important idea just here is the nearness of the day. This same urgency was evident in the first century church. Both in regard to the prophets and to the New Testament church, modern theologians have insinuated that those who felt such a nearness of the "Day of Jehovah" were mistaken. The passage of time, it is said, proves that mistake.

No so! In every age of history, God works in human affairs on the basis of the same principles. Hence there is evidence in every age of the impending judgements of God. One need only visit the lands of the Bible and walk among the ruins of twenty-two fallen civilizations to realize that urgency concerning God's judgement is well-founded. When the final curtain is about to fall on the history of humanity, and the last "Day of the Lord" is indeed imminent, the "signs of the times" will be the same.

We live in a time when these "signs" are all about us. Whether they portend the declining days of our culture and the beginning of another era, or the soon coming of the final "last Day" is irrelevant. In either case, we would be fools not to share with the prophets and the New Testament church the sense of urgent need for repentant preparation. We, as Zephaniah, need desperately to know the day is so near that the "voice" of it can already be heard.

### THAT DAY IS A DAY OF WRATH . . . v. 15-18

In his powerful book, *"Death In The City"* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1969). Francis Schaeffer says " . . . anyone who is unwilling to speak of the wrath of God does not understand the Christian faith." If we allow "the Christian faith" to include those covenant people who looked

forward to His coming as well as those who look to it as a *fait accompli*, Mr. Schaeffer's statement could have been directed to Zephaniah's readers. It is precisely because they, and we, are under God's wrath that the judgement must come. It is because we stand guilty and unfit for His presence that He must come to us. As Dr. Schaeffer points out " . . . there is a moral law of the universe and that basic law is the character of God Himself." So then, whether it is Zephaniah or Paul (eg. *Roman 1:18-f*) or a twentieth century preacher who speaks of judgement day and God's wrath, he is discussing the inevitable. Whether the syncretistic denial of this truth comes from a Baal worshipper or a modern existentialist, it is false prophecy and needs to be denounced as such.

Zephaniah's description of the day of wrath in these verses pictures the physical destruction occasioned by God's wrath implemented by Nebuchadnezzar. It may describe what lies in our own future. Figuratively, it certainly depicts the spiritual suffering in the last judgement day by those who know not God.

#### CALL TO REPENTANCE . . . 2:1-3

God's threatenings are always designed to call men back to Him. Even though He knows few will repent, He is "not willing that any should perish." (*II Peter 3:9*)

Probably these three verses belong to chapter one. They form the usual high note upon which the prophets close a section of threatenings. The purpose of such denunciations as we have just considered is always to bring about repentance and cleansing. Therefore the prophet concludes with a note of hope.

The meek, *ie.* the humble before God, those with the moral courage to see the truth of the prophet's preaching are called to act in concert, to gather together. Here is the remnant on the eve of judgement, drawn together in a common repentance which bespeaks the truth that even the faithful have not always acted according to their faith.

The word "gather" describes a stooping such as is done in the gleaning of fields. It is to be done "before the day pass as the chaff." The day of judgement is a time of harvest. Not only are the unfaithful punished but the faithful are rewarded.

The nation, *per se*, has no shame, Judah's submission to the wooing of Baal marks her as no different from other nations. However, the meek within her still may find hope in gleaning themselves from the whole.

Verse three is a bridge between the pronouncements against Judah in chapter one and the following declaration of judgement against Judah's neighbors. *All* the meek of the earth are called upon to seek Jehovah. Peter's discovery that "... in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to Him," (*Acts 10:35*) is the discovery of eternal truth.

The "meek of the earth" are presented by Zephaniah as they "that have kept His ordinances." This same concept is found in Paul's Roman letter. *Romans 2:14-15* states, "When Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, are a law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."

The Jews' own Bible was indeed the answer to the Jews' narrowness. *Micah 6:8 (b-c)* has been lived by others. In all the prophets, escape from God's wrath, and conversely the receiving of His mercy are matters of ethics and morality rather than nationality. The admonition is to seek meekness.

Meekness, we repeat, is the moral courage to be humble before God. Jesus' statement is that the meek shall inherit the earth. (*Matthew 5:5*) The achievements of those who are haughty before God are always temporary because they will not stand in the day of Jehovah.

## Chapter XX—Questions

### Judgement of God

1. Discuss Zephaniah's claim to inspiration.
2. Trace the idea of judgement by fire.
3. What are the stumbling blocks which cause man to sin? (1:3)
4. Who are "the hosts of heaven on the housetops?"
5. Discuss the religious syncretism of Zephaniah's day as seen in Judah's compromise with strange gods as it typifies modern religious syncretism.
6. Who will likely be most surprised by God's judgement? (1:6)
7. Discuss Zephaniah's pronouncement of judgement against Judah in light of the principle set down in *I Peter 4:17*.
8. Who are those "clothed in foreign apparel?" (v. 8)
9. Who are "those that leap over the threshold?" (v. 9)
10. When the invading Babylonians came against Jerusalem they came from the \_\_\_\_\_.

11. Discuss "I will search with lamps." (v. 12)
12. Were the apostles and the prophets mistaken as to the soon coming of the final Day of the Lord? Explain.
13. How do you reconcile the wrath of God and the love of God?
14. God's threatenings are always a call to \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Who are "the meek?"
16. Meekness is \_\_\_\_\_.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE JUDGMENT OF GOD IS UNIVERSAL

#### ZEPHANIAH 2:4-15

RV . . . For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation; they shall drive out Ashdod at noonday, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of Jehovah is against you, O Canaan, the land of the Philistines; I will destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea-coast shall be pastures, with cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks. And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed their flocks thereupon; in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for Jehovah their God will visit them, and bring back their captivity. I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, wherewith they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border. Therefore as I live, saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, a possession of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation; the residue of my people shall make a prey of them, and the remnant of my nation shall inherit them. This shall they have for their pride because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of Jehovah of hosts. Jehovah will be terrible unto them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the nations. Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword. And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the capitals thereof; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for he hath laid bare the cedar-work. This is the joyous

city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me; how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

LXX . . . For Gaza shall be utterly spoiled, and Ascalon shall be destroyed; and Azotus shall be cast forth at noon-day, and Accaron shall be rooted up. Woe to them that dwell on the border of the sea, neighbours of the Cretans! the word of the Lord is against you, O Chanaan, land of the Philistines, and I will destroy you out of your dwelling-place. And Crete shall be a pasture of flocks, and a fold of sheep. And the sea coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Juda; they shall pasture upon them in the houses of Ascalon; they shall rest in the evening because of the children of Juda; for the Lord their God has visited them, and he will turn away their captivity. I have heard the revilings of Moab, and the insults of the children of Ammon, wherewith they have reviled my people, and magnified themselves against my coasts. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Moab shall be as Sodoma, and the children of Ammon as Gormorha; and Damascus shall be left as a heap of the threshing-floor, and desolate for ever: and the remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the remnant of my nation shall inherit them. Thus is their punishment in return for their haughtiness, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the Lord Almighty. The Lord shall appear against them, and shall utterly destroy all the gods of the nations of the earth; and, they shall worship him every one from his place, even all the islands of the nations. Ye Ethiopians also are the slain of my sword. And he shall stretch forth his hand against the north and destroy the Assyrian, and make Nineveh a dry wilderness, even as a desert. And flocks, and all the wild beasts of the land, and chameleons shall feed in the midst thereof: and hedgehogs shall lodge in the ceilings thereof; and wild beasts shall cry in the breaches thereof, and ravens in her porches, whereas her loftiness was as a cedar. This is the scornful city that dwells securely, that says in her heart, I am, and there is no longer any to be after me: how is she become desolate, a habitation of wild beasts? every one that passes through her shall hiss, and shake his hands.

## COMMENTS

Just as God's mercies are universal, so is His wrath. Those who have not the law not only may keep the essential moral requirements of it and thus be excused by their consciences; they may likewise also



violate this moral reality to their own detriment. (*Romans 2:15*) In fact this is precisely what the Bible claims they have done. (*Romans 3:9-23*)

The often heard argument made by those who do not believe in missions; that the people who have not heard are excused somehow by their ignorance will not stand up in light of either the Old Testament or the New. They have violated the light of their own consciences and so stand as objects of God's wrath along with those who have access to His written Word. Surely the love of Christ in us ought to drive us to give them the same chance to repent as ourselves.

(Verses 4-7) In verses four through seven, Zephaniah names the areas to the south and west of Judah who are to feel God's wrath along with the Hebrews. The statements are general rather than descriptive as had been Nahum's rather delighted picture of Nineveh's downfall. Nevertheless, the names roll from the prophet's pen like the muffled drums of a funeral dirge. Gaza . . . forsaken, Ashkelon . . . desolation, Ashdod . . . driven out at noon, Ekron . . . rooted up, the Cherethites . . . woe, the Philistines . . . destroyed. The entire coast will be pasture land.

Those who are left behind of Judah will pasture their flocks in the lands and cities of the condemned peoples. The shepherds will sleep at night in their deserted homes. The remnant shall return from Babylon to inhabit their land.

Four of the cities mentioned here, Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron are chief cities of the Philistines. The fifth, Gath, was wiped out earlier by the Assyrians and so is not mentioned by Zephaniah in regard to the Babylonian invasion.

These sea people, whose entrance into Canaan had been contemporary with that of Abraham and who had been a constant thorn in the Hebrews' side, would now feel the devastating wrath of God as never before.

Verses eight through eleven pronounce judgement against the nations of trans-Jordan. For centuries they have spoken against God's people. Now Ammon and Moab will feel His wrath. (cp. *Jeremiah 48:27-29*, *Isaiah 16:6*, *Ezekiel 21:28*, *25:3*, 6, 8) They had long boasted they would annex land belonging to the Hebrews. Now, lest they carry out their boast during the captivity of Judah, they will share that captivity! The desolation described here is evident today.

The gods who once were worshipped in Ammon and Moab are no more. Jehovah worship, even when He is called Allah, as in Moab and Ammon today, is a far cry from the pagan abomination called Moloch.

Zephaniah's promise is that, when all the false gods are made desolate, famished by God, every man will worship Jehovah in his own place, even all the isles and nations.

There are Messianic overtones here. Jesus said concerning His coming as Messiah that ". . . neither in this mountain (Samaritan Gerazim) nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father . . . but the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth . . ." (*John 4:23-f*) The universal worship of Jehovah in every place rather than in a particular "holy land" was more than an after-thought on Jesus' part. It was the main thrust of the Old Testament.

Zephaniah, in verses twelve and following, broadens the scope of this pronouncement. Not only are Judah and her near neighbors to feel the sting of God's wrath, far way Ethiopia and Assyria and Nineveh shall feel it also.

The Hebrew *Kushim*, translated Ethiopians in verse twelve, included parts of Arabia and all of Nubia. It may possibly also include Egypt at this period when the Nile was ruled by Ethiopic dynasties.

Nineveh, five hundred miles to the northeast of Judah, is singled out by Nahum and her final judgement predicted in vivid detail. Here Zephaniah includes her among the other far flung Gentile peoples. Brief though it is, Zephaniah's picture of Nineveh's desolation is every bit as expressive as Nahum's.

All those included in this sweeping indictment shall feel the sword of the Lord, just as the Philistines, Moab, and Ammon. "My sword" is whatever instrument of judgement God uses. (cp. *Isaiah 34:5, Ezekiel*

Ethiopia was neither an enemy nor a neighbor of Israel or Judah. It is apparently named here to indicate the universality of God's judgement. It is in this sense that the entire passage is fraught with undefined but very definite Messianic and eschatological overtones.

## Chapter XXI—Questions

### The Judgement of God is Universal

1. Just as God's mercies are universal, so is His \_\_\_\_\_.
2. How do you answer the opinion that those who have never heard the Word of God will be saved in their ignorance?
3. Locate, on a map, the cities and areas mentioned in chapter 2:4-15.

4. Why does the prophet pronounce God's judgement against people who were neither neighbors nor enemies of Judah?
5. Discuss the Messianic overtones of this passage . . . eschatological overtones.

## CHAPTER XXII

## COMFORT AND CONSOLATION

## REAFFIRMATION OF JUDGEMENT . . . Zephaniah 3:1-8

RV . . . Woe to her that is rebellious and polluted! to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in Jehovah; she drew not near to her God. Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they leave nothing till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons; her priests have profaned the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. Jehovah in the midst of her is righteous; he will not do iniquity; every morning doth he bring his justice to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame. I have cut off nations; their battlements are desolate; I have made their streets waste, so that none passeth by; their cities are destroyed so that there is no man, so that there is no inhabitant. I said, Only fear thou me; receive correction; so her dwelling shall not be cut off, according to all that I have appointed concerning her: but they rose early and corrupted all their doings. Therefore wait ye for me, saith Jehovah, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

LXX . . . Alas the glorious and ransomed city. The dove hearkened not to the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord, and she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her were as roaring lions, her judges as the wolves of Arabia; they remained not till the morrow. Her prophets are light and scornful men: her priests profane the holy things, and sinfully transgress the law. But the just Lord is in the midst of her, and he will never do an unjust thing: morning by morning he will bring out his judgement to the light, and it is not hidden, and he knows not injustice by extortion, nor injustice in strife. I have brought down the proud with destruction; their corners are destroyed: I will make their ways completely waste, so that none shall go through: their cities are come to an end, by reason of

no man living or dwelling in them. I said, But do ye fear me, and receive instruction, and ye shall not be cut off from the face of the land for all the vengeance I have brought upon her; prepare thou, rise early: all their produce is spoilt. Therefore wait upon me, saith the Lord, until the day when I rise up for a witness: because my judgement shall be on the gatherings of the nations, to draw to me kings, to pour out upon them all my fierce anger: for the whole earth shall be consumed with the fire of my jealousy.

## COMMENTS

In chapters 1:2-2:3, social sin and injustice are hardly noted. In the section before us, Zephaniah briefly but emphatically indicates that it is social injustice, such as that spelled out by Micah, Amos and Isaiah, for which Israel will be led captive. This supreme sin, "man's inhumanity to man," is the inevitable consequence of the false religion dealt with in Zephaniah's first two chapters.

### HER THAT IS REBELLIOUS . . . v. 1

Jerusalem is not named, but is obviously intended. Her rebellion against Jehovah worship has caused her social pollution. The oppression of the "have nots" by the "haves" is the consequence of the religious syncretism of the "haves."

The twentieth century nonsense that "it doesn't make any difference what one believes so long as he is sincere" is proven erroneous in the history of Judah's punishment. The social evil in America today is in large measure the result of the same sort of religious non-commitment that brought about the downfall of Judah. No culture can remain just and equitable that does not have a certain moral and spiritual base. The social inequity resulting from a lack of religious certainty is the dry rot which destroys civilizations. Mere lip service to Jehovah is not enough.

### OBEYED NOT . . . RECEIVED NOT . . . TRUSTED NOT . . . DREW NOT . . . v. 2

The prophet's charge of rebellion against Jerusalem is spelled out in verse two. Four failures have brought her to the brink of destruction. *First*, she *obeyed not* the voice of God. *Hebrews 1:1* tells of God speaking to the fathers in the prophets. Their voice was His voice. His people did not obey.

Moreover, when God sent other prophets to correct her failure to hear, Jerusalem (the spiritual center of Judah) did not *recieve* the correction. This stiff-necked attitude compounded to sin and pushed the nation farther down the slopes toward disaster.

She *trusted* not Jehovah. This would seem, in light of the first two charges, to be self-evident. No one really trusts God who does not heed His spokesmen. The prophet, in this third indictment, calls attention to Judah's alliances with foreign powers. Rather than trust Jehovah's might for her national security, Jerusalem aligned herself with the Assyrian-Egyptian power block in the struggle with Babylon. She would find herself on the losing side. America, whose currency bears the inscription "in God we trust," seems unable to learn this lesson.

The final charge against Judah is that she *drew not* near to God. Instead, she sought Baal. The failure of Judah was not passive merely. She not only failed to hear and trust, she actively sought false gods.

#### HER PRINCES . . . HER JUDGES . . . HER PROPHETS . . . HER PRIESTS . . . v. 3-4

These verses are reminiscent of Micha's denunciation of the various influential classes in the culture of the people. Her *princes*, *ie.* those who held political authority over the people, are roaring lions. They, as Satan, go about "seeking whom they may devour." (cp. *Ezekiel* 25:27)

Her *judges* are as wolves in the evening. Wolves feed at night, beginning at dusk and by morning there is little left of their victims. So with the common people who are at the mercy of corrupt courts. A corrupt judicial is ever the companion of an evil executive.

Her *prophets* are light and treacherous persons. These, more than any other, must answer for Judah's corrupt religion. As Micah accused them, they preached what their wealthy listeners wanted to hear rather than thundering forth God's truth. They proclaimed the imaginings of their own minds rather than God's Word. A dangerous parallel could be drawn here by comparing the practice of these prophets to the modern preacher of topical sermons who neglects the expository treatment of God's Word.

Her *priests* have profaned the sanctuary. The present day American church-goer, with his *blase'* attitude toward things sacred cannot appreciate the seriousness of this offense. One of the functions of the priests of Levi was to guard the sanctity of the Holy Place. The priests to whom Zephaniah writes have become so worldly-minded, so tolerant of false religion, they are no longer concerned for the sacredness of the temple. (cp. *Ezekiel* 22:26) They perverted the law to suit their own

advantage while practicing a narrow legalism generally. They had forgotten the dramatic lesson of Uzzah who was struck dead for placing unclean hands on the sacred ark. (II Samuel 6:7)

### JEHOVAH IN THE MIDST . . . v. 5

God has not left His people. In the midst of rebellion and injustice, He is faithful to the covenant. He has not been turned aside from His purpose by the unfaithfulness of the people.

"Every morning He brings justice to light . . ." The worship of Baal began with greeting him at dawn in the rising sun. At this very hour when the people's unfaithfulness reached its daily pinnacle, Jehovah brings justice to light. His moral standards and His righteousness are as reliable, and more so than the rising of the sun. But the people refuse to see.

"The unjust knoweth no shame." Even the constancy of Jehovah in the midst of their unfaithfulness does not shame them. They are unmoved in their pursuit of unrighteousness and error.

### I HAVE CUT OFF THE NATIONS . . . v. 6

God's righteous judgements are not limited alone to Judah. The prophet has already listed the sentences of God against the surrounding Gentiles. It is God, not Zephaniah, who has cut off the nations. The desolation and ruin of those named in the previous chapter are not the result of Jewish nationalism but of God's universal judgement.

The archives of history are filled with the records of those nations cut down by God's righteous judgement because "knowing God, they glorified Him not as God . . ." (Romans 1:21) Judah had but to look north to Israel to remember how true this is and how certain are God's judgements.

### ONLY FEAR THOU ME . . . v. 7

God still speaks through Zephaniah. He calls the Hebrews back to the rudimentary beginning of wisdom. (cp. Proverbs 9:10)

Paul, quoting Psalm after Psalm, will prove that all social evil such as that against which the prophets spoke are the result of failure to fear God. He will list lack of righteousness, and understanding, failure to seek God, turning aside from His purpose, failure to do good, all spiritual uncleanness, deceitful speech, cursing and bitterness, war and destruction and misery and the futile search for peace as the consequences of not fearing Him. (cf. Roman 3:9-18)

One can only shudder today at the church member whose twisted misinformation about God's love has led him to a contemptuous familiarity which does not believe one should or must fear Jehovah.

God's plea through Zephaniah is *only fear me*. Only . . . just . . . please! A deep and genuine fear of God will bring about the correction of the evil against which judgement must otherwise come

### BUT THEY ROSE EARLY AND CORRUPTED . . .

Despite God's plea to fear Him, the people ignored His plea and rose up early to greet the sun god. In so doing, they paved the way for all other corruption.

### UNTIL THE DAY . . . v. 8

Here Zephaniah returns to the theme struck in 1:14. The great Day of Jehovah is again called to mind as the decisive day on which He will gather the nations before Him in wrath.

The meek . . . those who are humble before God (*Zephaniah 2:3*) . . . are called to wait for that day when He will prey upon His enemies. In that day when Jehovah's wrath is poured out to devour the earth with fire (cp. *II Peter 3:7*) the meek shall inherit the new earth.

The idea of destruction by fire in relations to God's judgement is fairly distributed throughout the Bible. Joel spoke of a time which would be revealed in blood and fire and vapor of smoke (*Joel 2:30*). *Psalms 50:3* depicts God's coming in company with a devouring fire. Isaiah wrote of similar phenomena. (*Isaiah 29:6, 30:30, 66:15-16*) We have heard Nahum speak of the hills burning and the earth burning in His presence. (*Nahum 1:5, 6*) Malachi will tell us of the day of the Lord burning as an oven.

We are something less than wise not to fear Him!

Those nations found guilty in Jehovah's court of justice will feel the fiery fierceness of fire that is to devour the adversary. (*Hebrews 10:27*)

This gathering need not be seen as taking place in Jerusalem. There is no Biblical proof for the tradition that the final judgement will take place in the Kidron valley. The idea is that all nations simultaneously and universally are judged by God. His righteousness will flow across the earth as the fiery lava of a volcano consuming all that stand in the way of His covenant purpose.

### THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION . . . Zephaniah 3:9-13

RV . . . For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve him with one consent.

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. In that day shalt thou not be put to shame for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me; for then I will take away out of the midst of thee thy proudly exalting ones, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall take refuge in the name of Jehovah. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their month; for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

LXX . . . For then will I turn to the peoples a tongue for her generation, that all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve him under one yoke. From the boundaries of the rivers of Ethiopia will I receive my dispersed ones; they shall offer sacrifices to me. In that day thou shalt not be ashamed of all thy practices, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then will I take away from thee thy disdainful pride, and thou shalt no more magnify thyself upon my holy mountain. And I will leave in thee a meek and lowly people; and the remnant of Israel shall fear the name of the Lord, and shall do no iniquity, neither shall they speak vanity; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed, and lie down, and there shall be none to terrify them.

## COMMENTS

The purpose for which God's wrath is poured out in human history is a redemptive purpose. Zephaniah sees, as do the other prophets, the promise of repentance and consequent redemption. He is just, not arbitrary! He does not punish out of vindictive petulance but out of love. (*Hebrews 12:6*) His judgements are therapeutic, not merely punitive. Ultimately He chastens to save.

The hope comes to Zephaniah like a calm after a hurricane.

## A PURE LANGUAGE . . . v. 9

"For then" *ie.* following the judgement just described, there is reason for hope.

I will "turn" *ie.* I will change the nature. The Psalmist cried, "Create within me a pure heart, O God." (*Psalms 51-10*) Paul wrote ". . . if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new." (*II Cor. 5:17*)



Evidence of this redemptive reconciliation is a "pure language" or more accurately, a *clean lip*. Isaiah, called by God to speak for Him, cried out "I am a man of unclean lips." (*Isaiah* 6:5) And after he had been purged with fire from the altar, God said to him, "Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is forgiven."

A purified heart, redeemed and reconciled to God always results in pure speech.

### ... SERVE HIM WITH ONE CONSENT ...

Those who are redeemed not only *may* but *will* serve Him. Jesus promised that the living water of redemption would, in him who drinks, become a fountain, bubbling over to eternal life. (cf. *John* 4:14)

And their service will be with "one consent" . . . more literally with *one shoulder*. As several oxen pushing against a single yoke, they will serve as one. Both the redeemed of Israel and the purged nations will "in that day" serve Him as one. Here is a glimpse of the unity which characterized the New Testament church which, from Antioch forward was a fellowship of those redeemed from Israel and those purified from among the nations.

### FROM BEYOND THE RIVERS . . . v. 10

From the long list of those to whom God's wrath would be revealed in judgement Zephaniah selects Ethiopia (see above on 2:12) to represent the redeemed from among the nations.

This company of the reconciled is also to include Jews from among the dispersion, *ie.* those who were scattered among the nations. It was to the synagogues of the diaspora that Paul first took the gospel in every city. The church, fifteen years after her birth in Judaism, had become a fellowship of redeemed from every kindred and nation.

This concept of universal salvation is not unknown to the Old Testament. In fact, Jesus saw in such prophetic passages the meaning of the entire Old Testament. (Cp. *Luke* 24:44-f)

The reader will do well here to review *Isaiah* 2:2-4, *Micah* 4:1-4, *Isaiah* 11:9, 19:23-25, 49:5-6. To pursue the idea of universal salvation in the Old Testament, an excellent reference work is Wm. O. Carver's, *Missions In The Plan of The Ages*, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn.

### IN THAT DAY THOU SHALT NOT BE PUT TO SHAME . . .

#### v. 11

In the day when the fires of divine judgement shall have purged men of all nations, promises the prophet, you will not be made ashamed

for those things in which you have transgressed. What a promise! Paul exalted in this truth, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus!" (*Romans 8:1*) When Jesus received in our behalf the judgement of God upon our sin (*II Corinthians 5:21*), He purged us of all those things for which we need be ashamed.

Zephaniah points out that the lack of any reason for shame on the part of the redeemed is due to God's removal from their midst the boastful and proud. Again we are reminded of Paul's letters. Again and again he reminds the redeemed that all reason for boasting is removed in the processes of redemption. (eg. *Romans 3:27*, *I Corinthians 3:21*, *4:7*, *Galatians 6:14*) Since Christ received for all of us the wrath of God for our sins, none among the redeemed has any reason to boast. Therefore, no one has any reason to be ashamed of the sin from which he was redeemed, since there are no exceptions. All have sinned and all, in Him, have been redeemed. No Christian has any right to a guilt complex or an inferiority complex.

I WILL LEAVE . . . AN AFFLICTED AND POOR PEOPLE . . .

v. 12

"Blessed" . . . said Jesus, "are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Matthew 5:3*) To be poor in spirit—"afflicted and poor" as Zephaniah has it—is to recognize that we are of ourselves unprofitable to God—fit subjects for His wrath. Having exacted our due punishment on Calvary, God leaves us poor—wholly dependant upon Him, but in this dependance we are rich beyond our fondest hopes. O, the depth of the riches of God's love!

THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL SHALL NOT DO INIQUITY . . . v. 13

The remnant is again, as in Isaiah and Micah *et al*, God's redeemed covenant people on the redemption side of God's wrath. They were those who passed through the captivity, God's punishment for former sin . . . they are now those who have passed through Calvary, by being united with Christ's death. In any context the remnant are God's covenant people.

The impure speech of an un-redeemed heart is not to be found among God's people. Those whom God has cleansed will remain after all others have been burned away in the consuming wrath of God's judgement. The redeemed are to become like their God. No untruth, *ie.* unreality, is to be found among them.

Here, as in many other Old Testament passages, God's people are pictured as a flock, lying down in the security of His fold. (cp. *Psalms*

23, *Isaiah* 17:2, *Ezekiel* 34:25,28) This security is only for those who have their refuge in Jehovah.

### PORTRAIT OF THE REDEEMED . . . Zephaniah 3:14-20

RV . . . Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. Jehovah hath taken away thy judgements, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not fear evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; O Zion, let not thy hands be slack. Jehovah thy God is in the midst of thee, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; over thee with singing. I will gather them that sorrow for the solemn assembly, who were of thee; to whom the burden upon her was a reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all them that afflict thee; and I will save that which is lame, and gather that which was driven away; and I will make them a praise and a name, whose shame hath been in all the earth. At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will make you a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I bring back your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah.

LXX . . . Rejoice, O daughter of Sion; cry aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; rejoice and delight thyself with all thine heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away thine iniquities; he has ransomed thee from the hand of thine enemies: the Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. At that time the Lord shall say to Jerusalem, Be of good courage, Sion; let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God is in thee; the Mighty One shall save thee; he shall bring joy upon thee, and shall refresh thee with his love; and he shall rejoice over thee with delight as in a day of feasting. And I will gather thine afflicted ones. Alas! who has taken up a reproach against her? Behold, I will work in thee for thy sake at that time, saith the Lord; and I will save her that was oppressed, and receive her that was rejected; and I will make them a praise, and honoured in all the earth. And their enemies shall be ashamed at that time, when I shall deal well with you: for I will make you honoured and a praise among all the nations of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before you, saith the Lord.

### COMMENTS

The closing verses of Zephaniah are in contrast to the bulk of

the book. To this point the judgements have been harsh. The closing paragraph is tender and gentle.

But there is no contradiction. As we have seen . . . God's judgements are redemptive. He does not rejoice in such suffering. He only does what must be done to call His people back to Himself and purge the Gentiles from their sin.

Here is the anticipation of the day when such affliction shall be over, when God's people shall be reconciled to Himself. There is ample reason for such rejoicing.

#### SING O DAUGHTER OF ZION . . . v. 14

Cities were, and are, frequently referred to as women poetically to express affection. (eg. *Isaiah* 47:1, *Psalms* 45:12). Daughter of Zion and daughter of Israel are synonymous terms. Daughter of Jerusalem also seems interchangeable with these terms. All are freighted with covenant significance.

#### THE KING OF ISRAEL IS IN THE MIDST . . . v. 15

An end shall be put to all their trouble and distresses. Though some grievances remain, they shall be only afflictions, not judgements, for sin shall be pardoned.

The term "*cast out*" here is literally "*swept out*." When they sweep out their sin by reformation, God will sweep out their enemies by destruction.

Our Lord is called "*King of Israel*" (*John* 1:49). There is no doubt of the Messianic significance of these verses. He is always in the midst of His people. (cf. *Matthew* 28:20) Because He is in our midst we need not fear evil. (cp. *Romans* 8:31-39)

Zephaniah sees Israel, purged from sin by the fires of judgement, now ready for God's presence which she has heretofore rejected.

#### LET NOT THY HANDS BE SLACK . . . v. 16

With the King, even Jehovah, in their midst, God's covenant people need not slump in despair. An awareness of His presence is cause for courage and strength even in adversity.

#### A MIGHTY ONE WHO WILL SAVE . . . WILL REJOICE OVER THEE . . . v. 17

God will delight in His people. After all, this is the reason He created man. When the purging of sin is accomplished and His people at last are His, He will have reason to rejoice! God not only loves

us . . . He loves to love us. If we love Him as we ought, we will have as our strongest desire His good pleasure, just as He has ours.

### I WILL GATHER THEM THAT SORROW . . . v. 18

The prophet here promises reprieve to those of Israel who are scattered abroad. Their absence from the sacred feasts is a reproach to Jerusalem. After the purging of their sins, He will bring the faithful into the assembly. In God's eternal Israel . . . the redeemed . . . there will be no reproach or burden.

### I WILL MAKE THEM A PRAISE AND A NAME . . . v. 19-20

In these closing verses the Messianic light of Zephaniah burns brightest. There has been a gradual turning from the contemporary and the mundane. In some of the verses we have just read it is difficult to know whether the prophet speaks of the circumstances in which he himself lived, of the captivity and return or of the future Messianic deliverance of the covenant people. Here there is no doubt. The enemies of the people have been destroyed, the gathering of the faithful has been accomplished. Jehovah is in their midst. A praise and a name are theirs among all the people of the earth.

The people, righteous and blessed by God, are known throughout the earth. Even the people of earth's nations praise them. (cp. *Acts* 2:47, 5:17, etc.)

Isaiah also spoke of a new name which God would give His own in the Messianic age. (*Isaiah* 62:1-2) The fulfillment of this promise is seen at Antioch when the covenant people are called Christian. (*Acts* 11:26)

In the intervening ages, before these promises are fulfilled, there would often be cause for sorrow. There would not be the liberty to meet together to keep the public ordinances. During the captivity, the Jews were denied what previously they had neglected. They were reproached and made the objects of derision.

But despite the darkness of judgement, Zephaniah at last sees an end of suffering and a day of universal praise to God and of His people. The faithful will come from distant nations and the remnant will live in the presence and security of Jehovah the King.

## Chapter XXII—Questions

### Comfort and Consolation

1. The sin for which Judah will be led captive is \_\_\_\_\_ sin.
2. Social sin is inevitably the result of \_\_\_\_\_.

## ZEPHANIAH

3. Though not specifically named in v. 1, \_\_\_\_\_ is obviously intended by "Her that is rebellious."
4. In light of Zephaniah's pronouncement of judgement against social evil which results from false religion, discuss the statement "it doesn't make any difference what one believes, so long as he is sincere."
5. According to Zephaniah 3:2, four failures have brought her to the brink of destruction. They are: (1) \_\_\_\_\_, (2) \_\_\_\_\_, (3) \_\_\_\_\_, and (4) \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Zephaniah condemns four classes of cultural leaders in Judah. They are: (1) \_\_\_\_\_, (2) \_\_\_\_\_, (3) \_\_\_\_\_, and (4) \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the beginning of wisdom.
8. Should a Christian fear God? Explain.
9. What is meant (v. 7) by "rose early and corrupted?"
10. Why is God's wrath poured out in human history?
11. What is meant by "turn?" (v. 9)
12. "Pure Language" is evidence of \_\_\_\_\_.
13. In v. 10 Ethiopia represents \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Is the idea of universal salvation found in the Old Testament? Discuss.
15. What is meant by "in that day?" (v. 11)
16. The closing verses of Zephaniah are in contrast to \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Who are the daughter of Zion . . . the daughter of Israel . . . the daughter of Jerusalem (v. 14)?
18. Discuss the Messianic significance of the closing verses of Zephaniah.
19. Discuss "God will delight in His people."
20. Discuss "a praise and a name." (v. 19-20)

# PART VI

## HAGGAI

## OUTLINE OF HAGGAI

The first message .....	1:1-15
The second message .....	2:1-9
The third message .....	2:10-19
The fourth message .....	2:20-23

### CHAPTER XXIII

### PREFACE TO HAGGAI

The purpose of this prophet was to motivate those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the temple. His problem was to overcome their discouragement and indifference.

The often foretold destruction of Jerusalem had finally come in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne of Babylon in 605 B.C. after the victorious battle of Carchemish. In 597 he captured Jerusalem. In 586 the city was demolished and the temple pulled down.

In 605, following his defeat of the Egyptians at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to Jerusalem. (*Daniel 1:1*) He carried off the royal treasures and a few select young men including Daniel to serve in his court. (*Daniel 1:3-7*)

In 597 Nebuchadnezzar again laid siege to Jerusalem. This time he carried away all the ruling class and leaders of Jewish society, among them the prophet Ezekiel. Remarkably, he did not destroy Jerusalem at that time. (Read *II Kings 24:10-20* and *II Chronicles 36:8-10* and *Ezekiel 33:21*)

In 586 B.C. all those who remained in Judah, with the exception of Jeremiah and a few of the very poorest people, were carried away to Babylon and Jerusalem, with the temple, was destroyed. (Read *II Kings 25:11-12*, *Jeremiah 40:6*)

The seventy years of captivity predicted by Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 29:10-14*) date from the first transport of prisoners to Babylon in 605 B.C. to the decree of Cyrus that the Jews be released in 538 B.C.

Isaiah had predicted the coming of Cyrus (*Isaiah 44:28*, *45:1*). Cyrus had become king of Persia, the vassal state of the Medes in 559 B.C. To gain freedom from and finally dominance over the Medes, Cyrus allied himself with Nabonidus, king of Babylon.

With this added strength, Cyrus rebelled against Media in 550 B.C. capturing the capital city of Ecbatona.



## PREFACE TO HAGGAI

Cyrus's lust for power brought an end to his alliance with Babylon and Babylon now turned to Egypt and Lydia for aid against the rising power of Persia. Lydia was defeated by Cyrus in 546 B.C. and Babylon surrendered without a struggle in 539 B.C.

A significant policy of Cyrus was the return of all images held captive by Babylon to their rightful owners. Since the Jews had no such images, they received rather the sacred vessels from the temple which had been part of the loot taken by Nebuchadnezzar.

In keeping with the practice of restoring fallen gods, Cyrus also returned captured people. The province of Syria, of which Palestine was part, came under the dominance of the Persian monarch in 539 B.C. with the fall of Babylon. The following year in 538 B.C., Cyrus issued the now famous first decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland.

In this Cyrus was not motivated entirely by humanitarian sentiments. Palestine is a natural buffer zone between Persia and Egypt. Having it populated by friendly, even grateful Jews is symptomatic of Cyrus' political finesse.

His treatment of the Jews was not unexpected. Jehovah's prophets had predicted it before the beginning of the captivity!

The captivity had been such that, when the decree of freedom finally came, not many Jews responded to it. In exile they had been allowed to enter business, marry, raise crops, and establish homes. The synagogue had come into being, replacing the temple as the center of worship. Their property, coupled with a widespread apathy toward spiritual things detained most of them in Babylon.

Those who did return were the spiritually concerned. Idolatry would never again rear its ugly head among God's people until the fourth century A.D. These were the remnant, a handful of faithful people returning to a strip of land no more than twenty-five miles in length . . . all that remained of the once proud kingdom of David and Solomon.

Before the captivity there were twenty-four orders of priests. Only a small number, representative of only four of the orders returned . . . a total of 4,289.

The first call to return to the homeland was totally unheeded by the Levites. (cf. *I Chronicles* 24:3, *Ezra* 2:40) Only seventy-four Levites finally returned.

In all, about 50,000 were the total remnant, and these were largely from the servant classes. The response was similar to the present day migration of Jews to Israel. A very small minority of world Jewery

is concerned enough, or willing to give up the material security in other lands, to help rebuild the Jewish homeland. It is much easier to send money to plant trees!

When this small remnant returned, their first act was to re-erect the altar and re-institute the ancient feasts. (*Ezra 3:23*) Workmen and materials were gathered for the reconstruction of the temple in the second year. (*Ezra 2:68, 69, 3:7-13*)

The surrounding nations, quite naturally, opposed the re-entry of the Jews into Judea. The Samaritans, who now inhabited the old northern kingdom territory, offered help at first, but when they were rebuffed, they mounted a strong opposition to the Jews. (*Ezra 4:1-5*) Thus began an enmity between Jew and Samaritan which carried over into New Testament times, and is still alive today, although few Samaritans remain.

The Samaritans intrigued against the Jews. Both were vassal to Cyrus and the Samaritans accused the Jews of planning revolt. The reconstruction of the temple, connected as it was to Messianic aspiration, supplied them with ample fuel for such rumors.

With this pressure against them, and spiritual indifference mounting, the Jews soon left off the reconstruction and the temple stood less than half-finished.

In 529 B.C., upon the death of Cyrus, Cambyses ascended the Persian throne. He conquered Egypt in 625 B.C., but was thwarted in attempting to conquer Carthage and Nubia. This military campaigning brought Persian armies through Judea with increasing frequency with demoralizing effects upon the Jews.

Cambyses died in 522 B.C. and his death was followed by a brief period of anarchy in the Persian Empire under his weakling successor Smerdis.

Smerdis was assassinated by Darius in 521 B.C. This triggered a number of revolts among Persia's vassal states. These left a mark on Palestine as Darius criss-crossed the land for two years before finally restoring order.

In Darius's second year, the Jews resumed construction of the temple in 520 B.C. Tattenai, the Persian governor of the province, objected that they had no official authority to do so. They appealed to Cyrus' decree which was thereupon discovered in the royal archives (*Ezra 5:1-17*) and Darius ordered Tattenai to allow the reconstruction.

Even with the encouragement of Darius, the Jews waited another year to resume the building. They did this only when God had sent Haggai and Zechariah to persuade them to do so.

## PREFACE TO HAGGAI

As a result of the prophecies of these two, the second temple was finally completed in 516 B.C.

### HAGGAI THE PROPHET

Haggai, as a person, remains obscure. No one else in the Old Testament shares the name, the literal meaning of which is "festival." He is mentioned in *Ezra* 5:1 and 6:4 and referred to in *Zechariah* 8:9. He is named two times in the apocraphal *I Esdras* and in *Sirach* 49:11.

Jewish tradition says that all three post-exilic prophets died in the same month. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi all passing in the same month the temple was completed.

In addition to the book which bears his name, Haggai is traditionally the author of several ceremonial regulations. The Vulgate credits him as author of Psalm 111. The Peshitta text credits him with Psalms 125 and 126. The Septuagint attributes Psalm 137 to his authorship, and all three credit him as author of Psalms 146, 147, 148, and 145.

### HAGGAI'S MESSAGE

Haggai's burden is the spiritual indifference of God's people. The discontinuation of the rebuilding of the temple gave an opportunity for the people to become pre-occupied with their own interests and the erection of their own homes. Some even argued that the seventy year captivity would not really end for two years, so the time had not yet come to re-build the temple. They had, after all, erected an altar and in so doing had recognized their allegiance to God. It was enough!

Harvest failures plagued them also and so added to their pre-occupation. (*Haggai* 1:6, 9-11, 2:15, 19) The repeated criss-crossing of their land by armies which, though not attacking them, interfered along with Samaritan interference too, gave them pause as did internal dissensions. (*Zechariah* 8:10)

It was a critical moment. The remnant must be revived or God's covenant would yet fail. The temple, "the shrine within which was kept inviolate the faith of the Old Testament," was symbolic of the remnant's continuation as the reason for the existence of the Jews. Without it, the prophetic symbolism of the sacrificial system could not be resumed.

With this covenant hope in mind, Haggai prods their consciences with Messianic promises. Finally, with Zechariah, he succeeded in persuading the returned exiles to set aside their private interests and get to work.

## Chapter XXIII—Questions

## Preface to Haggai

1. What was the purpose of Haggai's prophecy?
2. Trace the three incidents from 605 B.C. to 586 B.C. in which increasing numbers of Jews were led to Babylon.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ had predicted that the Babylonian captivity would last seventy years.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ had predicted the coming of Cyrus who issued the decreeing which ended the Babylonian captivity.
5. How do you account for Cyrus' return to the Jews of the sacred vessels from the temple?
6. What moved Cyrus to allow the Jews to return to their homeland?
7. Most of the Jews did or did not return to Palestine? Why?
8. What was the first act of the remnant upon returning?
9. What was Samaria's reaction to the return of the Jews? Trace the consequences of the Jew's response.
10. What three prophets encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple?
11. In addition to the Book of Haggai the prophet is credited with what other writing?
12. The burden of Haggai is \_\_\_\_\_.
13. How do you account for the Jews' indifference to the task of re-building the temple?
14. Why was this reconstruction critical?

## CHAPTER XXIV

## EXPOSITION OF HAGGAI

## THE FIRST MESSAGE . . . Haggai 1:1-15

RV . . . In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehoozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, This people say, It is not the time for us to come, the time for Jehovah's house to be built. Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste? Now

therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of my house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house. Therefore for your sake the heavens withhold the dew, and the earth withholdeth its fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Jehovah their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people did fear before Jehovah. Then spake Haggai Jehovah's messenger in Jehovah's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith Jehovah. And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work on the house of Jehovah of hosts, their God, in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

LXX . . . In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the hand of the prophet Aggaeus, saying, Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty, saying, This people say, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord. And the word of the Lord came by the hand of the prophet Aggaeus, saying, Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, whereas our house is desolate? And now thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways, I pray you. Ye have sown much, but brought in little; ye have eaten, and are not satisfied; ye have drunk, and are not satisfied with drink, ye have clothed yourselves, and have not become warm thereby; and he that earns wages has gathered them into a bag of holes. Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and cut timber;

build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and there came little; and it was brought into the house, and I blew it away. Therefore thus saith the Lord Almighty, Because my house is desolate, and ye run every one into his own house; therefore shall the sky withhold dew, and the earth shall keep back her produce. And I will bring a sword upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and all that the earth produces, and upon the men, and upon the cattle, and upon all the labours of their hands. And Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and all the remnant of the people hearkened to the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of the prophet Aggaeus, according as the Lord their God had sent him to them, and the people feared before the Lord. And Aggaeus the Lord's messenger spoke among the messengers of the Lord to the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zorobabel the son Salathiel, of the tribe of Judah, and the spirit of Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and the spirit of the remnant of all the people; and they went in, and wrought in the house of the Lord Almighty their God, on the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

## COMMENTS

The first message of Haggai to the indifferent and discouraged remnant merits special examination for the simple reason that it got results! Those whose concern is for the building of the spiritual temple of God, the church, will do well to learn from this prophet of action. (cp. *Ephesians* 2:19-22)

### THE WORD OF JEHOVAH CAME . . . v. 1

It was exactly twenty-three days from the time Jehovah delivered the message through Haggai until they began to work. That kind of response to a sermon today would leave most preachers speechless!

Darius had assumed the Persian throne by assassinating his predecessor in 521 B.C. Even with his approval, there was no movement to resume building the temple. So God spoke to Haggai (and to Zechariah and Malachi) with a message for the people, beginning with the civil and religious leaders, Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest.

The name Zerubbabel means "born in Babylon" . . . no special significance. He was the son of Shealtiel, according to Haggai.

This presents a problem. In Chronicles Zerubbabel is called the son of Pedaiah, brother of Shealtiel and grandson of Assir. (*I Chronicles* 3:17-19) In Luke's genealogy Zerubbabel is the son Shealtiel and the grandson of Neri. (*Luke* 3:27)

Zedekiah, son of King Jeconiah had no children. Assir, another son of Jeconiah (cf. *Jeremiah* 22:30) had a daughter, but no son. (*I Chronicles* 3:16) Legally, Assir's daughter was heir to the throne, and so must marry a man from her father's tribe. (*Numbers* 27:8, 36:8,9)

She married Neri, of the Davidic line through Nathan's branch. Luke makes no mention of Assir who descended from David through Solomon, but traces the lineage rather through Nathan of whom Zerubbabel was the grandson. This fulfills the prediction of *Jeremiah* 22:30.

Neri and Assir's daughter produced a son named Shealtiel and others as mentioned in *I Chronicles* 3:18. Shealtiel had no children, so, according to law, his brother, Pedaiah must marry his widow to produce an heir for Shealtiel. (cp. *Deuteronomy* 25:5-10)

Zerubbabel was the son of this Levirate marriage. Legally Shealtiel was Assir's son and Jeconiah's grandson. Actually he was the son of Neri. Zerubbabel was legally the son of Shealtiel, but actually was Pedaiah's son. See the diagram below.

*Jeconiah*

Assir

Zedekiah  
(no child)

Daughter & Neri

Shealtiel, Pedaiah  
(no child)

Legal      Actual

Zerubbabel

Since Joshua the high priest and his father, Jehozadek, are not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible excepting for Haggai's contemporary,

Zechariah, we do not know anything about them other than Joshua's influential responsibility as spiritual leader during the rebuilding of the temple.

### IS IT TIME . . . v. 2-4

The message is not Haggai's but God's. The claim to inspiration is unmistakeable.

It is addressed to those who are responsible for the attitudes and actions (or inaction) of the people. (v.1) The civil and spiritual leaders are responsible for the spiritual and moral fibre of any nation. As water rises no higher than its source, a nation is no stronger than its leaders.

### THIS PEOPLE . . . NOT "MY PEOPLE" . . .

The terminology seems designed to express dissatisfaction with the remnant God does not disclaim them, but He is stern. He will not tolerate the kind of attitudes which brought about the captivity from which they were so recently returned.

The message immediately attacks the excuses being made for not building the house of God. *"It is not time."* There has not been sufficient time since our return from exile. We have built an altar as our first act upon return. It is enough until we get "settled in." Seventy years have not lapsed, as Jeremiah predicted, since the destruction of the first temple. Two more years are needed, then we will build. With so much uncertainty in the international situation effecting the national economy, it is a poor time to build.

If you've ever been on a fund drive for a church building, you've heard all this! Our own needs are not met, we have a place of worship, the Bible doesn't allow for church buildings, there may be another war or an economic recession, etc.

What it all amounts to, whether in Haggai's day or our own is simply that God's people are more concerned with their own interests than with providing an adequate house of worship. Haggai tells his people this in no uncertain terms. *"Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled (paneled) houses while this house lieth waste?"* Then as now, those who object most to building an adequate house of worship are those who spend most on their own houses.

Actually, the message becomes even more pointed in our time if we read *Ephesians 2:19-22*. Whereas Haggai is concerned with building a building of wood and masonry, we are concerned with building the *real* temple of God, the church constructed not of materials but of men.



To make these excuses for not getting on with *this* task is to tamper with and neglect the most important work in the world. Jesus Himself has spoken to this neglect, "Seek ye first the Kingdom and take no thought saying What shall ye eat? or What shall we drink? or Where-withal shall we be clothed? After all these things do the Gentiles seek." (*Luke 12:29*)

### CONSIDER YOUR WAYS . . . WHY? . . . v. 5-11

Stop and think, God's word through Haggai challenges the people. "*You have sown much, and bring in little.*" You work hard in the fields, you plant and till and labor for the harvest, but the harvest is scant and meager.

"*You eat, but you have not enough.*" You are not starving but you are not satisfied, there is never enough of the right food on your tables.

"*You drink, but you are not filled.*" There is a drought. Drinking water is scarce and must be used sparingly. In such dry times the vineyards do not produce properly and the wine is in scant supply.

"*You clothe you, but there is none warm.*" No one is naked; you have clothes, but they are not adequate. You are not warm. Your clothes do not provide comfort.

"*He that earneth wages earneth wages to put into a bag with holes.*" There are jobs. Men are employed, but their wages are inadequate. No one is able to "make ends meet." There is too much month left, at the end of the paycheck.

Again "consider your ways," look how things are. *You looked for much.* Your expectations were high when you started home from Babylon. But "*it came to little.*"

You were able to bring home crops and wages, but "*I did blow upon it.*" instead of blessing and magnifying it.

### WHY? SAITH JEHOVAH OF HOSTS . . .

Have you not wondered why things are as they are? It is because you have not "put first things first." "*Go up into the mountain, and bring wood and build the house . . . my house lieth waste while ye run every man to his own house.*"

"*Therefore*" for your sake . . . to teach you a lesson . . . I withhold the moisture and the earth withholds its fruit.

### "I CALLED FOR A DROUGHT."

How many Christians do you know today who are living dull monotonous lives, who are not really rejoicing in the Lord, whose life

is seemingly blessed little more than their pagan neighbors? Such people are pre-occupied with their own affairs. They have not learned that God's temple, the church, must come first. They do not believe that Jesus spoke the truth for our time when He said if we seek His kingdom first these *things* will be added to us.

It is our own fault if we live a humdrum life of spiritual drought and dissatisfaction.

### AND JEHOVAH STIRRED UP THE SPIRIT OF ZERUBBABEL . . . v. 12-15

To the man who obeys the message of God in whose heart the Spirit of God has stirred there is no question of the right *time*. Such a one lives by eternal values. The only time he knows is *now*. The only thing that counts is God's work.

Zerubbabel got the message, and so did Joshua the high priest and so did God's remnant. They were still close enough to the captivity to know God was not playing games. Their fathers had refused to hear Isaiah and Amos and Micah and the rest and they had themselves grown up in exile as a consequence.

That was enough. They obeyed the voice of Jehovah as it had spoken through Haggai.

Then came the reassurance of God.

(Verse 12) Haggai is careful to record that not just the leaders but the people themselves heeded His admonition. The Word of God brought about obedience, from the greatest to the least. The lack of wisdom manifest in their failure to fear God is in contrast to the response of the remnant. The fathers had refused to hear the pre-exilic prophets because they did not fear God. Fearing God, their children obeyed the message of the Lord voiced by Haggai.

### I AM WITH YOU . . . v. 13

The very first sign of obedience was seized upon by God. He, at once, declares because of their fear and obedience that He is with them.

### GOD STIRRED UP THE SPIRIT . . . v. 14

The Spirit stirred in both Zerubbabel and Joshua and the people. Through the preaching of His word through Haggai, God's Spirit stirred in the hearts of His covenant nation.

It is ever so. When His Word is heeded and obeyed, His presence through the Spirit is with His people.

And the result is inevitable. The people in whom the Spirit stirred rose up and built the house of God.

And the God Who lived in Haggai's day is just the same today. When God's covenant people, both leaders and others, fear the Lord, heed and obey His Word, the Spirit *always* moves in their hearts and His house is built. We who are, as Christians, concerned with the building of the real temple, the church, will do well to learn this eternal lesson. We do not need to agonize and grovel and beg for His Spirit. We need rather to *fear* Him, even in this sophisticated age when a misunderstanding of His love often causes us to be overly familiar and without fear. We need to obey Him as He tells us through inspired writers what He would have us do. When this is done, His Spirit will move in us and His house will be built.

By the same token, we need to recognize it is His Spirit who must motivate us if what we do is to be *His* work. Our American over-emphasis on methods and techniques for church growth often seems to deny this. As Don Atkin put it recently, "We need to stop trying to get Him into our programs and become concerned for getting ourselves into His." It is one thing to know the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is quite another to know the Spirit Himself. It is not enough to know the Word of God. We must know the God of the Word!

#### IN THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH DAY . . . v. 15

It was just twenty three days from the beginning of Haggai's preaching to the beginning of building. Surely God must always be pleased when His people are so responsive to His Word.

#### THE SECOND MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:1-9

RV . . . In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing? Yet, now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith Jehovah, and work; for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and my Spirit abode among you: fear ye not. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry

land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts.

LXX . . . In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the Lord spoke by Aggaeus the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zorobabel the son Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, saying, Who is there of you that saw this house in her former glory? and how do ye now look upon it, as it were nothing before your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord; and strengthen thyself, I Jesus the high priest, the son of Josedec; and let all the people of the land strengthen themselves, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord Almighty; and my Spirit remains in the midst of you; be of good courage. For thus saith the Lord Almighty; Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the choice portions of all the nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty. Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty. For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty, even peace of soul for a possession to every one that builds, to raise up this temple.

## COMMENTS

### THE WORD OF JEHOVAH . . . v. 1-2

Claiming again the inspiration of God for his message, Haggai, a month after rebuilding was resumed, addressed himself again to the civil and spiritual leaders and the people.

### THE FORMER GLORY . . . v. 3

There were a few who had returned from captivity who longed for the "good old days." The modest dimensions and decor of the second temple could not compare with the splendor of the first. (*I Kings* 6:22, 28, 30, 32, & 7:48-50)

"How do you see it?" asks the prophet. The temple they were

building was nothing compared to their memory of the one erected by Solomon.

Traditionally, several things were absent from the second temple by which it could not compare to the first:

(1) The Ark of the Covenant was gone. Its fate still remains a mystery. The idea that it was taken directly into heaven has been held by some on the strength of *Revelation 11:19*. The apocalyptic nature of *Revelation*, however, makes a literal interpretation very unreliable.

(2) The Shekinah glory . . . the pillar of cloud and of fire was absent . . . proof that the full glory of God was not yet come.

(3) Following Malachi, the Spirit of prophecy was apparently silent and the inspired prophet was replaced by the professional scribe.

(4) The sacred fire, kindled by God upon the altar was extinguished, and God no longer smote the priests for replacing it with strange fire. (cf. *Leviticus 10:1-ff*)

(5) The Urim and Thummim were also gone. (cp. *Exodus 28:30*) The literal meanings of these words are *lights* and *perfections*, respectively. The exact nature of them is problematical. They may have been some divine manifestation or they may have been an appendage on the breastplate of the priests. (cp. *Deuteronomy 33:8* and *I Samuel 28:6*) It has been suggested that the Urim and Thummim were jewels set in the breast plate of the high priest. (cp. *Exodus 28:29*, *Exodus 39:8* and *Leviticus 8:8*)

No doubt much else was lacking. The first temple had been erected by a wise ruler of a wealthy nation in collaboration with building experts. The second was built by a vassal state, with no king and no real wealth.

This actual inferiority was exaggerated in the memory of those in whose minds sixty-six years had no doubt added even to the real glory of Solomon's temple.

The key to Haggai's message to those who were depressed and disappointed in the inferiority of their handiwork, is the question "*how do ye see it?*" They were overly concerned with material embellishments.

#### I AM WITH YOU . . . v. 4-5

The important thing in regard to the rebuilding of the temple, as God saw it, was that His people were back in their land, and He was with them. And His presence is according to the everlasting covenant.

Here is the heart of the prophetic message. This is the reason the remnant had been returned. This is the reason the temple must be rebuilt. His promise to bless all the nations of the earth in the seed of Abraham was the reason they became a nation in the beginning. (cf. *Exodus* 2:34, 19:5-6) It is equally the reason for the restoration of their national identity.

In their national pride and religious exclusiveness, they were about to forget again the reason for their existence. It was vital that, upon this restoration as in their beginnings as a people (*Genesis* 1:1-3) and as a nation (*Exodus* 19:5-6), that the people be once more made aware of their covenant purpose. Here is the real purpose of the preaching of Haggai, for in the reconstruction of the temple was the symbolic re-affirmation of the covenant.

### THE LATTER GLORY OF THIS HOUSE SHALL BE GREATER THAN THE FORMER . . . v. 6-9

Through the restored remnant the Christ would come. Never again would Baal be worshipped among His people. They would forget the covenant purpose as a nation. Their religion would become a hollow form, but with it all, the faithful few would remain true and the Messiah would come in fulfillment of the covenant promise. (cp. *Matthew* 1:1, *Luke* 1:33, 55, 72-73)

"*Thus saith the Lord*" in verse six is dependant upon the covenant mentioned in verse five.

The phrase "in a little while" has been rendered variously, "it is as yet a little while," and "one period more—a brief one it is." The Septuagint has "yet once." The sense is that of repetition.

Just as the power of the Lord had shaken Sinai (*Hebrews* 12:26) as God manifest His moral power to Israel, so again He will demonstrate His power in the shaking of "the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land and . . . all nations, and the precious things of all nations." (v. 7)

The Hebrew writer sees the fulfillment of this in the coming of the new covenant. (*Hebrews* 12:18-29) The coming of the church, the new temple (*Hebrews* 8:1-ff) and ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (*Galatians* 3:29) shook and put an end to the nations of the pre-Christian world.

The shaking began during the "silent years" between the Testaments. The Persian Empire crumbled before Alexander. Alexander's kingdom, divided after his youthful death, in turn gave way to Rome,

and the west began its current domination of the east which heretofore had set the culture of the world.

"*The desire of all nations*" (KJV) in verse seven is unmistakably Messianic. There could hardly be a more vivid expression of the covenant promise, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Even the rabbis saw in it the coming of the Messiah. The true riches of God, the "silver" and "gold" of verse eight will make the glory of the house of God outshine the glory of Solomon's temple.

And so the prophet comforts the people in such a way as to turn their minds from their ambitions of national grandeur to the glorious hope of covenant fulfillment.

The statement in verse nine, "*the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former,*" is deserving of special attention. The argument of the book of Hebrews for the superiority of the new covenant over the old is a glorious re-statement of this truth.

It is patently obvious that Haggai cannot be saying that when the second temple is complete it will be more splendid than the first. This simply could not be true in the nation's post-exilic circumstances. Historically it was not true, even with Herod's embellishments during the Roman era. Haggai is looking to something far more meaningful than stone and mortar.

Lump Solomon's temple, Zerubbabel's temple, and Herod's temple all together and their glory cannot surpass that of the real temple, the church. That the Jews identified the material temple with their ambitions for national glory was a grave error for them. Ultimately, it brought about their rejection of Jesus. But it did not alter the spiritual facts. (cp. *Daniel* 2:36-45, 4:19-27, *Ezekiel* 40-48, *Zechariah* 2:3-13, 6:9-15, 8:13, 18-23, 9:9-10, 14:16-21, *Psalms* 145:6, 9-13, 21)

The true tabernacle, or temple is superior to the old because it is based on a superior revelation by a superior Revelator (*Hebrews*, chapters 1-3) and because it is ministered by a superior priesthood. (*Hebrews* 4:14-10:18) It is more glorious than "the former" because it is related to God by a better covenant and accomplishes better services. The scene, conditions and results of its ministry are ideal whereas those of the old temple were symbolic, shadowy types of the real temple. The former temple was passing away, the latter temple is eternal. The sacrifices offered in the former were dead animals. Those in the new are living men. (*Romans* 12:1-2)

The promise of peace is also related to the new temple rather than the old. The peace which God gives to those who are the new temple,

the spiritual house (*1 Peter 2:5*), is beyond the comprehension of those who think of material glory. (*Philippians 4:7*)

The world seeks peace in terms of silent guns and rusted swords. The world seeks peace in terms of easy going tolerance in all human relationships. The world seeks peace through positive thinking, tranquilizers and electro-therapy.

But the peace which prevails in the true and more glorious temple of God is not "as the world gives." (*John 14:27*) Such peace comes only from complete surrender to and complete trust in Him Who is the meaning of the old temple and the High Priest of the new.

It is related to the reality of the Holy Spirit, not as a doctrine but as a present Person. (*John 14:26-27*) Haggai knew about this. In verse 5, he says "*My Spirit abideth among you, fear not.*"

### THE THIRD MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:10-19

RV . . . In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any food, shall it become holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by reason of a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and backward, before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of Jehovah. Through all that time, when one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the winevat to draw out fifty vessels, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the work of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith Jehovah. Consider, I pray you, from this day and backward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, since the day that the foundation of Jehovah's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yea, the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomgranate, and the olive-tree have not brought forth; from this day will I bless you.

LXX . . . On the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Aggaeus the prophet, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Inquire now of the



priests concerning the law, saying, If a man should take holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and the skirt of his garment should touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. And Aggaeus said, If a defiled person is unclean by reason of a dead body, touch any of these, shall it be defiled? And the priests answered and said, It shall be defiled. And Aggaeus answered and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so are all the works of their hands; and whosoever shall approach them, shall be defiled (because of their early burdens: they shall be pained because of their toils; and ye have hated him that reproved in the gates.) And now consider, I pray you, from this day and beforetime, before they laid a stone on a stone in the temple of the Lord, what manner of men ye were. When ye cast into the cornbin twenty measures of barley, and there were only ten measures of barley: and ye went to the vat to draw out fifty measures, and there were but twenty. I smote you with barrenness, and with blasting, and all the works of your hands with hail; yet ye returned not to me, saith the Lord. Set your hearts now to think from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day when the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid; consider in your hearts, whether this shall be known on the corn-floor, and whether yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-trees that bear no fruit are with you: from this day will I bless you.

## COMMENTS

### THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH DAY OF THE NINTH MONTH

... v. 10

The third message came from Jehovah to the prophet Haggai exactly three months after the favorable response of the people to the first message. As the first message cautions against false contentment and the second cautions against false discontentment, the third exhorts them not to build from false motives.

### THUS SAITH THE LORD ... v. 11

As in the previous messages, so here, Haggai is careful to let his hearers know the message is not his but the Lord's.

### ASK NOW THE PRIESTS CONCERNING THE LAW ...

This admonition is followed by two questions. The questions are, in essence, can the *holy* make the *unholy* *holy* and can the *unholy* make

the *holy unholy*? The priests' answers are accurate. To the first they answer no. To the second yes.

A basic principle is revealed here. The influence of holiness is not as far reaching as unholiness. A rotten apple will corrupt a barrel of good apples, but a good apple will not make a barrel of bad ones good.

*"So is this people."* The construction of a holy temple will not automatically sanctify the land or its inhabitants any more than the flesh of a sacrifice will make holy a garment in which it is carried.

When the first temple stood, the people could not believe God would allow evil to come upon them. They made a fetish of the building. It must not happen again by assuming the work of re-building can sanctify an unclean people.

Here is a warning to today's Christian who assumes he is "right with God" because he associates with an active church, regardless of his personal commitment to God or trust in Jesus.

#### CONSIDER . . . BACKWARD . . . v. 15-17

Haggai challenges his people to consider what has happened since they returned from captivity, prior to the beginning of the reconstruction. Conditions have not changed since they began to build. Prosperity did not immediately result from their work on the temple. The reason was the far-reaching result of past neglect. It could not be erased by three months of obedience.

In verse 17 Haggai indicates that, although the people have resumed building, they have not really returned to the Lord. If they have, it is only recently. Here, just following their return from Babylon, is the beginning of the strange malady confronted by Jesus. "This people honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me." (*Matthew 15:8*) Isaiah had confronted this same spiritual failure in the people prior to the captivity. (*Isaiah 29:13*)

A building program such as that in which Haggai's readers were engaged, or a full program of activity in the building, such as that in which Jesus' hearers participated, can neither one substitute for genuine commitment to God and concern for His covenant purpose.

#### CONSIDER . . . BACKWARD . . . v. 18-19

Again Haggai calls upon the people to remember. A new era is about to begin, as indicated in verse fifteen by the transitional phrase "and now." This seems to be the reason for Haggai's repeated emphasis on dates.

The term in Hebrew does not mean "backward" exactly, as our versions render it (v. 15 and 18). It is used rather to call attention from the past to the future. Past calamities are contrasted with the beginning of the new period of Jewish history.

The plea seems to be for patience. Since the laying of the first stones there has not been enough time for Jehovah to relieve the wants of the people short of a miracle. The fig and pomegranate and olive harvests are yet on the trees. Their present obedience will yet be rewarded.

#### THE FOURTH MESSAGE . . . Haggai 2:20-23

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah came the second time unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord came the second time to Aggaeus the prophet, on the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, saying, I shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and I will destroy the power of the kings of the nations; and I will overthrow chariots and riders; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword striving against his brother. In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, I will take thee, O Zorobabel, the son of Salathiel, my servant, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a seal: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord Almighty.

#### COMMENTS

Twice on the twenty-fourth day of the month the word of Jehovah came to Haggai. How it came we do not know. That the prophet considers his message as the Lord's rather than his own is unmistakable. The second time the word of Jehovah came it resulted in Haggai's fourth message.

Again the prophet addresses Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. This fourth message is concerned with the time of fulfillment of the promises recorded in 2:6-9. (See comment above on Haggai's second message.)

The shaking of the heavens and earth here (v. 21) and in 2:6 cannot mean the chaos which threatened the Persian empire during and just prior to the accession of Darius in 521 B.C. Haggai's message was delivered in 520 B.C. when this threat had been largely abated by the decisive action of Darius.

God's promise to Zerubbabel has to do with the reversal of human values rather than political agitation. It occurred, according to the understanding of the Hebrew writer, with the establishment of the church. (cp. *Hebrews* 12:25-29) Verse 22 finds a parallel in *Ezekiel* 38:19-21. We shall find Zechariah confirming this idea in *Zechariah* 4:13.

As Richard Wolfe says, "Self destructive and mutually destructive wars shall rage on the earth and the power of the heathen shall be overthrown . . . by God." The Prince of Peace shall rule at last. (cf. *Psalms* 20:7)

The ultimate fulfillment of this oft repeated predictive prophecy is to be seen in the final great struggle (*Revelation* 20:7-10) ushering in the new heaven and new earth.

There is no reason to assume that Haggai mistakenly identifies Zerubbabel as the Messiah. His crowning, albeit secretly according to tradition lest it bring down the wrath of Persia upon Judah, could easily be seen as prophetic of Messiah's coming. In his time the nations did not flock to the temple for instruction, the world's kingdoms were not overthrown, the age of Messiah did not begin, and Zerubbabel himself did not live to participate in it.

Nevertheless, with the restoration of the remnant and the rebuilding of the symbolic temple, Zerubbabel can easily be seen as a type of Christ, just as David himself is frequently referred to in the same light. (eg. *Psalms* 16:8-11, 110:1)

This typology of Christ in Zerubbabel is seen in that he led the people out of the Babylonian bondage as Christ would lead His people from the bondage of sin. Zerubbabel built a temple to God, as Jesus is building the church. (cp. *Ephesians* 2:19-22)

May we, as Haggai's readers, be encouraged in our faithfulness to God to the building of the real temple by our hope of the coming great "Day of Jehovah."

## EXPOSITION OF HAGGAI

### Chapter XXIV—Questions

#### Exposition of Haggai

1. Write an outline of Haggai.
2. Haggai's first message is concerned with?
3. What were the results of the first message?
4. Discuss the ancestry of Zerubbabel in light of *Haggai 1:1*, *I Chronicles 3:17-19*, and *Luke 3:27*.
5. The message Haggai was \_\_\_\_\_ message.
6. Haggai's first message attacks \_\_\_\_\_.
7. How does the message apply to us who would build the church?
8. How does Haggai account for the drought and austere conditions which had beset the people?
9. Discuss "Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel."
10. What is the gist of Haggai's second message? To whom is it addressed?
11. What was missing from the second temple?
12. What is meant by "the latter glory of the house?"
13. Discuss Haggai 2:7 in light of *Hebrews 8:1-ff* and *Galatians 3:29*.
14. What is meant by "desire of all nations?"
15. What is the gist of Haggai's third message?
16. What false motives might have been involved in rebuilding the temple?
17. What malady confronting Haggai was also addressed by Jesus?
18. Show evidence that Haggai considered his message to be God's rather than his own.
19. Discuss the shaking of the heavens and earth (*Haggai 2:21* cp. *Haggai 2:6*)
20. Why could not this shaking have referred to the chaotic conditions of Darius' early reign?
21. Where in the Bible do we find the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy?
22. Discuss Zerubbabel as a type of Christ. Show parallels between them.



# PART VII

## ZECHARIAH

## OUTLINE OF ZECHARIAH

### SECTION I . . . Chapters 1-8

- A. Introduction 1:1-6
- B. Symbolic visions 1:7—6:15
  - 1. Horses 1:7-17
  - 2. Horns and smiths 1:18-21
  - 3. Measuring line, chapter 2
  - 4. High priest, chapter 3
  - 5. Menorah and olive trees, chapter 4
  - 6. Flying scroll 5:1-4
  - 7. Flying basket 5:5-10
  - 8. War chariots 6:1-8
- C. Coronation of Joshua 6:9-15
- D. Teaching about worship, chapters 7-8
  - 1. Meaning of fasting
  - 2. Questions concerning worship
  - 3. Divine requirements for worship
  - 4. Response of Jews to requirements
  - 5. God's response to refusal
  - 6. God's love revealed in power
  - 7. God's pattern for living
  - 8. God's mission program

### SECTION II . . . Chapters 9-14

- A. Alexander, Ptolomies, Selucids
- B. God's protection; Greek and Maccabee
- C. Advent and reign of Messiah
- D. Destruction of Jerusalem by Rome
- E. Dissolution of Jewish polity
- F. Conversion and restoration
- G. Overthrow of the confederacy
- H. Gentiles join Jehovah worship

## CHAPTER XXV

### PREFACE TO ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was contemporary with Haggai. With him he shared the task of encouraging the returned remnant to rebuild the temple.



## PREFACE TO ZECHARIAH

(The reader is urged to re-read Chapter 23, "The Preface to Haggai," by way of reviewing the historic setting of both of these prophets.)

In contrast to Haggai, who was a "layman," Zechariah was a Levitical priest, and a member of one of the outstanding priestly families. His grandfather, Iddo, had been among the first to return from Babylon under Zerubbabel. The prophet himself may well have been born in Babylon. (2:4)

There is no difficulty in specifically dating the beginning of Zechariah's prophetic work. He places it in the second year of Darius and the eighth month. This would make it, on our calendar, November of 520 B.C. just two months after the beginning of the work of Haggai.

Zechariah's second messages, a series of visions, began three months later on February 24, 519 B.C. The final message, another series of visions, was delivered on December 4, 518 B.C.

As was Haggai's, so was Zechariah's purpose the motivation of the people to build the temple. His approach is strikingly different. Whereas Haggai's message was simple and plainly written, the younger prophet, Zechariah, writes poetically and with flights of fancy which sometimes make his writing almost indecipherable to the twentieth century reader. He goes even beyond Isaiah in the use of symbolic and figurative language, establishing his book as distinctly apocalyptic.

Zechariah thus takes his place with Daniel and Ezekiel among Old Testament apocalypse. Only four Biblical books, including Revelation are written in this way.

Perhaps a word should be said here concerning apocalyptic writing. While it is no less inspired, and so no less important than other Biblical literature, it is extremely difficult of exegesis and therefore does not lend itself to dogmatic certainty. Many, failing to recognize this limitation, attempt to prove their pet systems, particularly systems of eschatology, by quoting passages from these books out of both historical and grammatical context. These proof texts are usually organized into printed charts, thus forming a supposedly irrefutable proof of the chart-maker's peculiar position and prophetic views. This is, to say the very least, dangerous procedure if not downright dishonest.

The figures and symbols used in apocalyptic writings are figures common to the day in which the writer and his first readers lived. The difficulty of the modern student in understanding these symbols lies largely in the fact that centuries have passed, and with them, the common usage of the symbols.

Generally speaking, there are three keys to the understanding of apocalyptic figures and symbolism: (1) Often the figure or symbol sug-

gests its own meaning. With such there is little difficulty, if one will "do his homework" and place himself in the historic climate of the writer. (2) The context of the symbolic passage often contains the necessary key to the meaning of the symbol. This type of symbol is not so easily understood as the first, but it is less difficult than the third. (3) The third key is the historical allusion. Here one must be thoroughly conversant with the historic setting of the book in question. Often this requires years of disciplined study of ancient and Biblical history. Most dogmatic chart-makers are not inclined to this sort of discipline and so read into such symbols their own ideas which would be completely unrecognizable by the prophet.

Unfortunately, there are many passages of apocalypsis in which none of the three keys is apparent. Further, the symbols are not always used with the same meaning from book to book, or even within the same book. Many times a particular author, as for instance Zechariah, uses symbols that are found in no other Biblical work. These of course require special attention indeed.

The difficult nature of apocalyptic writing does not make these books any less the Word of God. In fact, such symbols frequently are used because God is attempting to communicate an idea for which human language has no literal terminology. Obviously any literal interpretation of such language cannot be accurate.

Whatever else may be said about the study of apocalyptic prophecy, one must never allow himself to become closed-minded in his understanding of it. It certainly ought never become the basis of division among God's people.

To come back specifically to Zechariah; his message may be summed up simply as God's appeal to Judah to "Return to me and I will return to you." (1:3)

This is a recurring theme of the prophets, particularly the minor prophets. It is stated repeatedly in terms of unfaithfulness, punishment, exile, restoration, remnant. Sometimes it applies to historic return from captivity. Other times it refers to a more long-ranged return.

Zechariah re-opens a series of prophecy which, in a sense, had been closed by Ezekiel. Ezekiel had been told to lie for 390 days on his left side and then lie 40 days on his right side. The 390 days represented the punishment of the northern kingdom and the 40 days represented the punishment of the southern kingdom. At the close of that time (390 plus 40 days) during which he was silent, Ezekiel forecast that there would be a period of prophetic silence. The vision would be removed from Judah.

## PREFACE TO ZECHARIAH

Zechariah re-opens the prophetic contact. This work is to bridge the silence gap, to bring the people back to the land from which they had been taken and to look ahead to the coming of the Messiah. They were within the borders, but they would not be completely returned until they re-built the temple of Jehovah.

Zechariah does not refer to the Messiah by inference or allusion. He's the most specific of all the minor prophets in his Messianic forecasts. Only Isaiah is more graphic and realistically recognizable in his pre picturing of the life of Christ. For this reason, Zechariah ranks with Isaiah, some have even said above Isaiah, in his influence on the Christology of the New Testament, particularly the Gospels.

An outline of Zechariah shows the book divided quite naturally into two sections. The first begins with a series of eight symbolic visions (1:6:15) which were designed to remove from the people, step by step, the obstacles which stood in the way of Messiah's coming. They are followed by the coronation of Joshua in a symbolic merger of the functions of priest and king.

Following the coronation, Zechariah presents a rather lengthy passage (chapters 7-8) in which he teaches concerning worship. This he also relates to the coming of Christ.

The second major section of the prophecy begins with chapter nine and concludes the book. Here Zechariah foretells the coming of the Messianic age and the glorious future of God's people. The present (520 B.C.) returnees are only a token of those who will return. A time will come when false shepherds will betray the people, but at least God's Israel will be vindicated. Then will come the universal reign of God over all men.

## Chapter XXV—Questions

### Preface to Zechariah

1. Zechariah was contemporary with\_\_\_\_\_.
2. These two prophets shared what common task?
3. Contrast Haggai with Zechariah.
4. What is the date of Zechariah?
5. Zechariah's writing is apocalyptic. What is apocalyptic writing?
6. Why is apocalyptic writing especially difficult to understand today?
7. What are three keys to understanding apocalyptic symbols and figures?

8. What verse in chapter one sums up Zechariah's message?
9. Zechariah re-opens a series of prophecy which in effect had been closed by\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Does Zechariah refer to the Messiah by allusion or directly?
11. How does the second section of Zechariah differ from the first?
12. Outline Zechariah.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### INTRODUCTION TO SECTION I

#### ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

RV . . . In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, Jehovah was sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers unto whom the former prophets cried, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Return ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings; but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith Jehovah. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? and they turned and said, Like as Jehovah of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

LXX . . . In the eighth month, in the second year of the reign of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, the son of Barachias, the son of Addo, the prophet, saying, The Lord has been very angry with your fathers. And thou shalt say to them, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Turn to me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts. And be ye not as your fathers, whom the prophets before charged, saying, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Turn ye from your evil ways, and from your evil practices: but they hearkened not, and attended not to hearken to me, saith the Lord. Where are your fathers, and the prophets? Will they live for ever? But do ye receive my words and mine ordinances, all that I command by my spirit to my servants the prophets, who lived in the days of your fathers; and they answered and said, As the Lord Almighty determined to do to us,

according to our ways, and according to our practices, so has he done to us.

## COMMENTS

(Verse 1) As was indicated in the previous chapter, Zechariah's date is easily determined. The first decree permitting the Jews to return to Judah from Babylon was issued by Cyrus in 538 B.C. Cyrus died in 529 B.C. whereupon Cambyses became ruler in Persia. Following his death in 522 B.C. a period of anarchy was finally brought to an end by the ascension to the throne of Darius in 521 B.C.

*Zechariah 1:1* states that the word of Jehovah came to the prophet in the second year of Darius, which of course is 520 B.C. The eighth month would be our month of November.

Zechariah identifies himself as the son of Barachiah, the son Iddo, the prophet. We know of one prophet of a former day named Iddo. (cf. *II Chronicles 12:15*) It is possible Zechariah is identifying himself as a progeny of that Iddo. The terminology certainly allows this conclusion, though it by no means demands it.

Some have thought that Zechariah, the son Barachiah, is the same individual to whom Jesus refers as having been slain between the sanctuary and the altar. (cf. *Matthew 23:35*) Possibly, since Jesus is reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, beginning with Abel, He ends with this last of the prophets to so die. This seems a rather unlikely argument, however, since no Jewish history or tradition, including Josephus, makes any mention of Zechariah as having been martyred. It seems more probable that the Zechariah mentioned by Jesus is another person altogether.

(Verse 2) Here the prophet reminds his readers of the pre-exilic sin of their ancestors and alludes to the punishment from which they have themselves only recently returned. Obviously, his intent is to warn them that such punishment is again possible unless those who have physically returned to the land shall also spiritually return to the Lord. (Modern Israel please take note!)

(Verse 3) This verse is the key-note of the entire book. Its tone is that of all the minor prophets, both before and after the captivity. "*Return unto me . . . and I will return to you.*" was the plea of Jehovah through all His Old Testament prophets. (eg. *Malachi 3:7*)

(Verse 4-6) Observe that Zechariah has now three times referred to God as "*Jehovah of hosts.*" The readers are thus reminded of His sovereign power and universal dominion. It is a subtle appeal to the

elementary fear of punishment; certainly not the loftiest, but nevertheless a very real motive for turning to God. It is very desirable to have the Lord of hosts as friend. It is a fearful thing to place ourselves in the position of an enemy to Him. (cp. *Hebrews 10:31*)

Their fathers had been similarly warned and had not heeded. Consequently, the punishment of Jehovah had fallen. Zechariah's plea is "*Be ye not as your fathers.*"

"*Where are your fathers?*" asks the prophet. It is a rhetorical question. A whole generation had been swept away. The prophets who warned them were also gone. These, their children, knew very well that the warnings of God were not hollow threats. The sentences of Jehovah are executed. Whoever runs is overtaken by them and there are none who escape.

The justice of God is so well defined that even those against whom it comes must agree that He deals with them according to their ways.

## Chapter XXVI—Questions

### Introduction to Section I

1. Identify Zechariah the prophet.
2. Why does Zechariah remind the returnees of the pre-exilic sin of their fathers?
3. Which verse is the key note of the entire book of Zechariah?
4. Discuss the term "Jehovah of hosts."
5. What does Zechariah mean by "Be not as your fathers?"

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A VISION OF HORSES

#### ZECHARIAH 1:7-17

RV . . . Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him there were horses, red, sorrel, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these are. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom

Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of Jehovah answered and said, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words, even comfortable words. So the angel that talked with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith Jehovah: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. Cry yet again, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity; and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

LXX . . . On the twenty-fourth day in the eleventh month, this is the month Sabat, in the second year of the reign of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, the son of Barachias, the son of Addo, the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man mounted on a red horse, and he stood between the shady mountains; and behind him were red horses, and grey, and piebald, and white. And I said, What are these, my lord? And the angel that spoke with me said to me, I will shew thee what these things are. And the man that stood between the mountains answered, and said to me, These are they whom the Lord has sent forth to go round the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood between the mountains, and said, We have gone round all the earth, and, behold, all the earth is inhabited, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord Almighty, how long wilt thou have no mercy on Jerusalem, and the cities of Juda, which thou hast disregarded these seventy years? And the Lord Almighty answered the angel that spoke with me good words and consolatory sayings. And the angel that spoke with me said to me, Cry out and say, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; I have been jealous for Jerusalem and Sion with great jealousy. And I am very angry with the heathen that combine to attack her: forasmuch as I indeed was a little angry, but they combined to attack her for evil. Therefore thus saith the Lord: I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; and my house shall be rebuilt in her, saith the Lord Almighty, and a measuring line shall yet be stretched out over Jerusalem. And the angel that spoke with me said to me, Cry yet, and say, Thus saith the Lord Almighty;

Yet shall cities be spread abroad through prosperity; and the Lord shall yet have mercy upon Sion, and shall choose Jerusalem.

## COMMENTS

In verse 7, Zechariah begins the first of the series of eight visions which are resigned to remove the obstacles to Messiah's coming. He first records the vision and then the angelic interpretation of it.

### WHAT THE PROPHET SAW . . . v. 8-11

In the night, the prophet saw a man riding on a red horse. He was riding among a grove of myrtle trees in a bottom, *ie.* a shady place. With him were other horsemen, some on red, some on sorrel, and some on white horses.

Seeing this dark and solitary scene, the prophet asked of the angel through whom the visions were given, what these things were and was immediately granted an answer.

These horsemen were they whom Jehovah had sent to walk to and fro in the earth. The angel who stood among the myrtle trees, probably the first horseman, reported that the horsemen have ridden to and fro through the earth, and that the entire earth was at rest.

### WHAT THE VISION MEANT . . . v. 12-17

To clarify to the prophet the meaning of his vision, the angel of whom he had asked the meaning (v. 9) addresses Jehovah directly. His question is "*how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah?*" It has been seventy years since God's mercy was removed from them.

Jehovah's answer was not harsh, so the angel addresses Zechariah with the answer to his question.

The prophet is to pass along, to cry aloud, to the people the answer of Jehovah. God is very much concerned for both Jerusalem, the city, and for Zion, the city as capital of the covenant people.

Not only so, but He is displeased with the nations of the earth who are at ease while Israel suffers the humiliation of a vassal state. Even while these nations had helped with God's chastizing of His people, He had been "a little displeased" with them.

Therefore, Jehovah is returned to Jerusalem with mercies. The temple is to be rebuilt and the city itself will know the measuring line of the builder.



Not only so, His cities shall flow with prosperity, and God will comfort His people. Jerusalem shall yet be His.

Jehovah's message here might well have been made in answer to the objections raised in *Haggai* 1:2-4. There the people were complaining that it was not yet time to rebuild the temple. They had not been home long enough, there was drought in the land and other concerns must take precedent over the construction of God's house.

In fact, Haggai and Zechariah spoke to the same audience. The answer was directed to the objections. God recognizes the length of the punishment they have endured and re-assures them that His mercies are now returned. It is indeed time to build. Both the temple and the city will prosper, as will the outlying cities of Judea.

Seeing this entire passage as a unit, as well as verse by verse, will help us comprehend its meaning. Some have identified the rider of the red horse (v. 7) as the Messiah Himself. Others have said he is the angel of *Joshua* 5:13-14 who in turn they see as the Messiah also. In each case, he is supposed to be standing ready to wreak swift bloodshed against the foes of Israel.

Neither of these seem to me to answer the historic context of Zechariah. Rather, it would seem the horsemen are symbolic of Darius and his hosts under whose iron rule the world languished "at ease" in a sort of *Pax Romana*.

The red color of the leader's horse does indeed represent bloodshed. The white implies death, as the pale horse of Revelation. The sorrel, (literally speckled) a combination of red and white, implies a condition in which some prosper and some do not.

This is a picture of the Persian empire under Darius. The enforcement of peace through military power and the inequity in which some prosper and some are in want has aroused to sore displeasure that which was formerly a "little displeasure." (v. 15)

The myrtle grove, among whom the horsemen are stationed is symbolic of the returned remnant who, far from being free are a humbled vassal state paying tribute to Darius.

It is the pointed reference to this historic situation which caused Zechariah's message to be couched in the hidden language of apocalypse. To have openly predicted the rising prosperity of the vassal state of Israel would have brought dire consequences indeed.

The first vision means simply that God is aware of the harsh occupation of the world and especially of Israel by Persian forces. Despite the apparent peace, the world was actually languishing under the stern discipline of military might.

In the midst of these circumstances, God wants His people to know that, if they will return with their hearts to Him, Jerusalem will once again be the city of His choice and the neighboring cities of Judea will also prosper. The enforced peace of Persia assures the opportunity to build without molestation. Just as God had raised up the Chaldeans to punish His people, so He has raised up Persia to protect them during the period of reconstruction. Thus the time is ripe for the rebuilding of the temple and the city.

## Chapter XXVII—Questions

### A Vision of Horses

1. The eight visions which begin with 1:7 are designed to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Describe the first vision.
3. What was Zechariah's immediate response to this vision?
4. Who were the horsemen of the first vision?
5. What was the question of the angel to Jehovah?
6. Was Jehovah's answer harsh?
7. What was Zechariah instructed to do?
8. Why was Jehovah displeased with the nations?
9. God had returned to Jerusalem with \_\_\_\_\_.
10. How does Jehovah's answer here relate to *Haggai* 1:2-4?
- 11.<sup>10v</sup> The horsemen are symbolic of \_\_\_\_\_.
12. What do the various colors of the horses represent?
13. What, in this first vision, is directly related to Zechariah's reason for writing in apocalyptic style?

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### A VISION OF FOUR HORNS AND SMITHS

ZECHARIAH 1:18-21

RV . . . And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And Jehovah showed me four smiths. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are

come to terrify them to cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.

LXX . . . And I lifted up mine eyes and looked, and behold four horns. And I said to the angel that spoke to me, What are these things, my lord? And he said to me, These are the horns that have scattered Judah, and Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord shewed me four artificers. And I said, What are these coming to do? And he said, These are the horns that scattered Judah, and they broke Israel in pieces, and none of them lifted up his head: and these are come forth to sharpen them for their hands, even the four horns, the nations that lifted up the horn against the land of the Lord to scatter it.

## COMMENTS

Zechariah's second vision is also a vision of restoration. What the four horns have scattered, the four smiths will re-unite.

The horn is a frequently used symbol for the military might of a nation or a ruler. To a pastoral people, the horn of the lead ram lends itself quite naturally to such symbolism. In this case, the four horns refer to the four powers who had had a hand in the scattering of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

Assyria, of course, as the destroyer of the northern kingdom, answers to the first of these horns. Babylon, who actually smote Judah, and Egypt, upon whom the Jews had depended for protection from Babylon, are easily seen as the second and third powers involved in their scattering.

It is a bit more difficult to account for the fourth horn. Traditionally the commentators have divided into three schools of thought on the matter. Some have said that the four horns are Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and the Medo-Persians. Assyria and Babylon are obvious. Egypt is understandable since their failure to provide the protection for which Judah had entered into an alliance with her contributed to the scattering of the people.

The difficulty lies with the Medo-Persians. It was this empire which overthrew the Babylonians and opened the way for the return from exile. It was first Cyrus and later Darius, rulers of the Medo-Persian kingdom, who issued the edicts permitting the return and allowing the rebuilding. It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that this power should be included among those who scattered Judah.

The second school of thought among the commentators indicates that the number four is figurative of the four points of the compass.

The powers therefore would be: to the north the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Samaritans; to the south Egypt and Arabia; to the east Ammon and Moab, and to the west Philistia. To see this interpretation of the four horns requires the ignoring of the historic relationships among the powers indicated.

The third hypothesis presented is that the first two horns were Babylon and the Medo-Persians. The third and fourth powers had at the time of Zechariah not yet risen. These would be the Graeco-Macedonians under Alexander and the Roman Empire. This interpretation results from an attempt to force Zechariah into the mold of Daniel, chapters two and seven, where four powers are predicted prior to the coming of the Messianic kingdom.

This view presents many difficulties, not the least of which is the previously mentioned fact that the Medo-Persians are historically cast in the role of deliverer and protector of the remnant rather than among the scatterers of Judah and Jerusalem.

If we will examine the pre-exilic history of Judah's neighbors, we will discover a fourth, almost forgotten power. Prior to the rather confusing shift of alliances which finally produced the Medo-Persian empire, the Medes had themselves been a power to be reckoned with in the middle east. It was they who warred against Assyria, finally destroying the capital city of Nineveh and swept across western Asia to the gates of Sardis.

Within a generation after having destroyed Nineveh, the Median empire came to an end. Its tenure was short, so short in fact that it contributed little to the rise of civilization as we know it. The exploits of Tiglath-Pileser and later of Sargon write a brief but bloody chapter in ancient history.

It was Sargon who placed several Israelites in the cities of Media (cf. *II Kings* 17:6,24), thus contributing to the scattering of God's people.

It was under Cyaxares that the Median confederation reached the zenith of its brief power. Nobopalassar, the satrap of Chaldea joined Cyaxares in an alliance against Assyria and his daughter was given as wife to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who "scattered Judah and Jerusalem."

The Medes later, under the corrupt influence of Cyaxares' successor son, became weakened to the point that they were easy prey for the rising power of Cyrus the Persian who annexed Media to form the Medo-Persian empire.

The horns of Zechariah are then, in my opinion, Assyria, Egypt, Media and Babylon. The four pre-exilic powers who contributed to the scattering of both Israel and Judah.

(Verses 20-21) The Septuagint has *artificers* where our text (the Revised Version) has smiths. The King James translators render the word "carpenters." The idea in the word itself seems to be those who are "skilled in demolition."

In Zechariah's second vision he is perplexed and asks "*what come these to do?*" The answer indicates that these four skillful workers are come to destroy the four powers who had scattered Judah and conquered the holy land.

In a figure the Lord promises the prophet that the world powers would be broken, indeed the Assyrians, Egyptians, Medes and Babylonians were already broken. The Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans each fell in turn. God is ruler over human history. The nations He raises up He has also the power to pull down.

One reason the returned Jews were so hesitant to begin rebuilding was that they feared their neighbors. Rehum and Shimshai and other Samaritans opposed the building of the temple (*Ezra 4:8*). Sanballat and Tobiah and the Ammonites and Arabians opposed the building of the wall (*Nehemiah 4:7*). The prophet must reassure the people that God will pull down any power "*which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.*" The time has come to build and Jehovah will brook no interferences.

## Chapter XXVIII—Questions

### A Vision of Four Horns and Smiths

1. Describe Zechariah's second vision.
2. The horn is frequently used to symbolize \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Who are the horns?
4. Why is the fourth horn harder to identify?
5. Why would the Medo-Persian empire not likely be included among those who scattered Judah?
6. To see the horns as representing the four points of the compass requires one to ignore \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Discuss the difficulties in the third hypothesis listed above, in which the commentators attempt to force the four horns into the mold of Daniel.

8. Who is the fourth, almost forgotten, power involved in the pre-exilic history of Judah?
9. Discuss the term smiths in 1:20-21.
10. Why did the returning Jews hesitate to attempt the building of the temple?

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A VISION OF A MEASURING LINE

#### ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 2:1-13

RV . . . And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said, I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, by reason of the multitude of men and cattle therein. For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her. Ho, ho, flee from the land of the north, saith Jehovah; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, saith Jehovah. Ho Zion, escape, thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: After glory hath he sent me unto the nations which plundered you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall be a spoil to those that served them; and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, o daughter of Zion; for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith Jehovah. And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And Jehovah shall inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Be silent, all flesh, before Jehovah; for he is waked up out of his holy habitation.

LXX . . . And I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a man, and in his hand a measuring line. And I said to him, Whither goest thou? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth of it, and what is the length of it. And, behold, the angel that spoke with me stood by, and another angel went forth to meet

him, and spoke to him, saying, Run and speak to that young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be fully inhabited by reason of the abundance of men and cattle in the midst of her. And I will be to her, saith the Lord, a wall of fire round about, and I will be for a glory in the midst of her. Ho, ho, flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I will gather you from the four winds of heaven, saith the Lord, even to Sion: deliver yourselves ye that dwell with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord Almighty; After the glory has he sent me to the nations that spoiled you: for he that touches you is as one that touches the apple of his eye. For, behold, I bring my hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to them that serve them: and ye shall know that the Lord Almighty has sent me. Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Sion: for, behold, I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall flee for refuge to the Lord in that day, and they shall be for a people to him, and they shall dwell in the midst of thee: and thou shalt know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to thee. And the Lord shall inherit Juda his portion in the holy land, and he will yet choose Jerusalem. Let all flesh fear before the Lord: for he has risen up from his holy clouds.

## COMMENTS

The first two of Zechariah's visions were intended to reassure the people that their security was guaranteed during the time they would be pre-occupied with building the temple and the city of Jerusalem. In the vision of the horses the prophet was reminded of the patrolling power of Persia which held the world in an enforced peace. In the vision of the horns and smiths he was assured that God's power was equal to any threat which might be directed upon them.

Now, to motivate them to apply themselves to the task, God shows Zechariah a vision of the future glories of Jerusalem.

(Verse 1-2) The prophet sees a man with a measuring line. This is a figure used elsewhere in prophetic Scripture. It first appears in *Ezekiel 40:3-4*.

There Ezekiel sees a vision of a man holding a line and a measuring rod standing at the gate. His purpose is to give specifications for the rebuilding of the city and particularly of the temple. Ezekiel's temple roughly follows the general design of the original built by Solomon, though with significant variations.

The measuring rod is twice mentioned again in the apocalypses of

John. (*Revelation 11:1, 21:15-17*) John is given a measuring rod and told to go measure the temple of God and the worshippers.

The final reference to such measurement is found in *Revelation 21:15-17*. This time the measuring rod is in the hand of the angel who uses it to measure the New Jerusalem.

In every reference using this figure, that which is to be measured is either the temple (*Ezekiel 40:3-4*), the city (*Revelation 21:15-17*) or both (*Zechariah 2:1-ff*). In each case the purpose of the measurement is to call attention to the special glory of that which is measured.

(Verses 3-5) The first angel who is interpreting the vision to Zechariah, and who holds the measuring line, is met by a second angel who instructs him to run and say to "that young man" (*ie.* Zechariah) that Jerusalem shall be a city without walls because of the multitude of people and animals that inhabit it.

The city is to spread out far beyond its previous location. Judea is hereafter to be marked by unwallled villages (*cp. Ezekiel 38:11*). The Lord Himself will be a "wall of fire" around His people.

The people had been more concerned for their security than for God's work. As the man in the vision, they had been ready to measure for the walls which would circumscribe the holy city. It was a normal approach to city building in that day. An unwallled city was unheard of and the walls must be built before it would be safe to build ought else.

The tragedy of a wall about a city is that it not only protects, it also confines and limits. God will have none of it. His ideal is inclusion rather than exclusion, expansion rather than restriction. His great designs for His people are not to be restricted by a tape line. He will Himself be their protecting wall.

Not only so, He would be the glory within her. Haggai saw the glory of the restored people in terms of tributary silver and gold (*Haggai 2:8-ff*). Zechariah sees their glory in the Divine Presence.

(Verses 6-9) The overwhelming vision of an unlimited, unwallled city with God's presence as its glory and protection gives rise to two lyrical epilogues in which Zechariah looks beyond the immediate restoration to the Messianic fulfillment of its purpose. (*v. 6-9 and 10-13*) God had not chastened His people and delivered them from the chastisement simply for their own sakes. What they would restrict with a measuring line He would make available to all men.

In verse 6, He calls to those of the northern kingdom who have been scattered to the four winds to return . . . flee back to Him.



In verse 7, He calls to those of Judah who have remained in Babylon to escape to Zion.

(Verse 8) God has not forgotten His covenant purpose, the people are still "the apple of His eye." (cp. *Deuteronomy* 32:10, *Psalms* 17:8, *Proverbs* 7:2)

(Verse 9) Having already assured those who have returned of His presence and protection, He follows His plea to the others with the same reassurances. A simple wave of God's hand can defeat any foe of His people and cause their enemies to be plunder to those who have been slaves.

(Verses 10-13) In the second epilogue the prophet moves from concern with the immediate task of rebuilding which confronted the returnees from Babylon to the future glory of the Messianic kingdom in which many races would come to the Lord.

In verse 8, the word "*After glory He hath sent me into the nations,*" and in verse 9, "*Ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me*" can only be Messianic in intent.

Now, in verse 10, the Lord promises to dwell personally in the midst of His people. Here is "the promise of the Father" which was fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit to live in the church. Elsewhere God had promised to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. (cp. *Acts* 1:4, *Joel* 2:28-ff, *Acts* 2:16-ff)

(Verse 11) Paul would write the Galatians and say the purpose of our redemption was "that upon the Gentiles might come the blessings of Abraham in Jesus Christ" that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (*Galatians* 3:13-14)

Peter would preach that "to you is the promise and to your children and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." (*Acts* 2:39)

In the first epilogue to the third vision, (*Zechariah* 2:6-9) the Lord calls the dispersed of Israel to return that He may live in and protect them. In the second epilogue (*Zechariah* 2:10-12) these are called to rejoice because of His indwelling. In verse eleven the promise reaches beyond the faithful remnant of Israel. "*Many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee.*"

It would be difficult to imagine a more vivid or graphic prediction of the universal outreach of God through the church. That which God had promised to Abraham is to become not alone the possession

of his physical descendants. Many from everywhere will come and He will also live in and protect them.

Even a cursory reading of the book of Acts will reveal the fulfillment of this promise in the church. Beginning on Pentecost when "devout men from every nation under heaven" heard the gospel and were baptized into Christ, the church in one short generation embraced men and women of every ethnic origin. It began with the receiving into fellowship of Hellenists (*Acts 6:1*). It grew with the conversion of the Samaritans (*Acts 8:4-ff*). The outreach broadened with the inclusion of the Ethiopian proselyte (*Acts 8:26-ff*). It passed the supreme milestone with the reception of the Roman centurion (*Acts 10*). And the all inclusive nature of the church, God living in men of every race, became the distinguishing mark of God's people in Antioch (*Acts 11:20-ff*). As a consequence they received a new name which, more than anything else, calls attention to God's love for all men. (*Acts 11:26*, cp. *Isaiah 62:1-3*)

Immediately following the establishment of universal outreach in the Acts record is the account of Peter's angelic release from prison and the awful death of Herod, both of which demonstrate the truth that the Lord is indeed a wall of fire around His people so long as they are faithful to His purposes.

In the second half of *Zechariah 2:11* is yet another affirmation that the proof of the divine mission of Messiah would be His people. The fulfillment of this "promise of the Father" is the main thrust of the book of Acts as Luke narrates the continuing work of the Christ in His people. That which He began in the days of His flesh, Luke records in the third gospel. In *Acts 1:1* he refers to this as the record of what "Jesus began." Acts is the record of what He continues as through the church, His new body, He fulfills the second half of what the Old Testament had ascribed as His work. In the days of His flesh, according to the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, the Messiah must "suffer, and rise again from the dead . . ." The same Old Covenant Scriptures taught that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (*Luke 24:45-47*)

Zechariah is one of those prophetic books in which this is stated. By this, wrote Zechariah, "*thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts sent me unto thee.*"

(Verses 12-13) The beginning of Messiah's dwelling in the midst of His people was Jerusalem (*Luke 24:47 (b)*). The heavenly Jerusalem (cp. *Hebrews 12:22*) had its beginning in the earthly city to be rebuilt

by Zechariah's people. The real temple (*Hebrews* 9:8-9), of which the rebuilt temple was a type, a fore-shadowing, was established in the shadow of its material counterpart. (*Acts* 2)

So in Messiah's people God would "yet choose Jerusalem" when men from every nation "are come to Mount Zion, and into the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven . . ." (*Hebrews* 12:22-23)

The waking of Jehovah out of His habitation is a statement of His fulfillment of His promised purpose.

## Chapter XXIX—Questions

### A Vision of a Measuring Line

1. What was the purpose of Zechariah's first two visions?
2. What is the purpose of the third vision?
3. Describe what Zechariah saw in the third vision.
4. Where else is the measuring rod mentioned in Biblical apocalypse?
5. What is the message of the second angel to Zechariah?
6. The people had been more concerned for \_\_\_\_\_ than for God's Word.
7. What is the tragedy of a wall about a city?
8. Without a wall, how is Jerusalem to be protected?
9. In response to the third vision Zechariah writes two "lyrical epilogues which look beyond the rebuilding to \_\_\_\_\_."
10. What is the significance of "the apple of His eye?"
11. What is the promise of Jehovah in 2:10?
12. Discuss 2:11 in connection with Galatians, chapter 3.
13. Discuss 2:11 in light of the spreading of the church as recorded in Acts.
14. What proof of the divine mission of the Messiah is given in 2:11?
15. The beginning of Messiah's dwelling in the midst of His people was in \_\_\_\_\_.

## CHAPTER XXX

## A VISION OF THE HIGH PRIEST

ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 3:1-10

RV . . . And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary. And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan; yea, Jehovah that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: as a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with rich apparel. And I said, Let them set a clean mitre upon his head. So they set a clean mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments; and the angel of Jehovah was standing by. And the angel of Jehovah protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou also shalt judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by. Hear now, I Joshua the high priest, thou and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men that are a sign: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch. For, behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, shall ye invite every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig-tree.

LXX . . . And the Lord shewed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and the Devil stood on his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said to the Devil, The Lord rebuke thee, O Devil, even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: behold! is not this as a brand plucked from the fire? Now Jesus was clothed in filthy raiment, and stood before the angel. And the Lord answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy raiment from him: and he said to him, Behold, I have taken away thine iniquities: and clothe ye him with a long robe, and place a pure mitre upon his head. So they placed a pure mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments: and the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord testified to Jesus, saying, Thus saith the Lord

Almighty; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and take heed to my charges, then shalt thou judge my house: and if thou wilt diligently keep my court, then will I give thee men to walk in the midst of these that stand here. Hear now, Jesus the high priest, thou, and thy neighbours that are sitting before thee; for they are diviners, for, behold, I bring forth my servant The Branch. For as for the stone which I have set before the face of Jesus, on the one stone are seven eyes: behold, I am digging a trench, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will search out all the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, ye shall call together every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.

## COMMENTS

Zechariah's fourth vision continues the growing Messianic crescendo of his prophecy. Here the attention shifts from the city and temple to the high priest. Both the high priest and his fellow priests are presented as a sign to be revealed in the coming of The Branch.

(Verses 1-3) Joshua the high priest (the Septuagint calls him Jesus) stands before the angel of the Lord as representative of his people. Satan stands in the position of accuser. This is the first time in the Bible that the Devil is mentioned by this name.

The filthy garments with which Joshua is clothed are symbolic of the sins of the people. They are still contaminated by the idolatry of their fathers to which is added their own present rebellion against rebuilding the temple. Satan may rightly charge that they are not fit to be God's people or to do God's work.

Jehovah's answer to Satan's accusation is that these are His people not by their merit but by His choice. He has brought them back from near extinction.

The ten northern tribes are gone. The generation which went into Babylon is dead. Those who have returned are but a handful compared to the numbers who elected to remain in Babylon. Unless God had plucked them as a brand from the fire they would no longer be a people.

(Verses 4-5) At this point in the vision the angel commands that the filthy garments be removed from Joshua and that they be replaced with rich apparel. A clean mitre, or turban, is to be placed on his head so that he will stand clean before both the angel and Satan.

The intent is to show that God is not going to hold the

guilt of past sins against His redeemed remnant. Their sin will be forgiven in order that they may get on with His work.

(Verses 6-7) Having cleansed the high priest, symbolic of the forgiveness of the people, the angel now addresses him directly. What he says to Joshua is intended to be heard and heeded by the people. He makes two emphatic points.

*First*, their forgiveness was conditional. *If* Joshua will walk in His ways and *if* he will keep His charge, *then* as high priest he will judge God's house and keep His courts.

The instrumental relationship which the Israelites held to God as His people was always conditional. (cf. *Exodus* 19:5-6)

(Verse 8) *Second*, Jehovah's angel makes it quite clear that His willingness to forgive His people is related to the fulfillment of a larger purpose and is therefore not arbitrary.

The entire priesthood, both the high priest and those who sit with him are a sign. The justification of the sins of the people and the ultimate meaning of the priesthood are to be found in the coming Branch.

The Branch is identified as the servant of Jehovah. This is a significant title given the Messiah by both Isaiah and Ezekiel. (cp. *Isaiah* 42:1, 49:3, 50:10, 52:13, 53:11 and *Ezekiel* 34:23, 24) It was primarily the failure of the Jews to see the Messiah in this light that caused their rejection of the Messiah when He came.

The term Branch also has prior establishment as a Messianic term. It refers to the Messiah as a tender shoot of the almost extinct royal Davidic line. (cf. *Isaiah* 4:2, 11:1 and *Jeremiah* 23:5, 33:15) Luke's term "day spring" refers to this term (*Luke* 9:78)

(Verses 9-10) To encourage the people toward the building of God's house, the vision now identifies the Messiah as the chief corner stone of the temple. Upon the stone in the prophet's vision are seven eyes. It is to be engraven by the Master Architect Himself.

The stone which is the chief corner stone of the true temple is not a lifeless, senseless stone. It has seven eyes. It is living and has intelligence illuminated by perfect vision. (The figure seven is the apocalyptic symbol for completeness or perfection.)

*I Peter* 2:4-5 speaks of Jesus much as Zechariah's vision describes Him. He is the living stone chosen of God upon which God's people are built as a spiritual house.

Peter also alludes to the ideal priesthood typified in Zechariah's vision by Joshua and his attendant priests. The living stone is also the

high priest of the real priesthood. The people of God are at once the temple of His dwelling and the priests of His service.

Is is in that day, *ie.* the day of the coming of the living stone and the true priest, that God will actually remove the sins of His people. In that day also the people of God will invite their neighbors to share in the bounties of the Messianic kingdom.

The language here is reminiscent of *Micah 4:4* in which the Messianic age is presented in terms of spiritual idealism.

Two characteristic of Messiah's day stand out in this passage. It is the day of cleansing from iniquity and it is the day of inviting others to share the blessings of God. Surely Jesus must have had this passage and others like it in mind when He said that the entire message of the Old Testament is summed up in His death and resurrection on the one hand and the preaching of repentance and remission of sins in every nation on the other. (*Luke 24:44-49*)

## Chapter XXX—Questions

### A Vision of the High Priest

1. In the fourth vision, the attention shifts to\_\_\_\_\_.
2. Describe the fourth vision.
3. The forgiveness of the Jews was conditional upon their\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Jehovah's willingness to forgive His people is related to what larger purpose?
5. Discuss the Biblical significance of the term "The Branch."
6. Who is identified as the chief corner stone in the temple?
7. Discuss Zechariah's fourth vision in relation to I Peter 2:4-5.
8. What two characteristics of Messiah's day stand out in Zechariah, chapter three?

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A VISION OF A MENORAH AND OLIVE TREES

#### ZECHARIAH, CHAPTER 4:1-14

RX . . . And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. And he said unto me,

What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and, behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps, which are upon the top thereof; and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. And I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of Jehovah unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the top stone with shouting of Grace unto it. Moreover the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; these are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered the second time, and said, unto him, What are these two olive-branches, which are beside the two golden spouts, that empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these are? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

LXX . . . And the angel that talked with me returned, and awakened me, as when a man is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, What seest thou? And I said, I have seen, and behold a candlestick all of gold, and its bowl upon it, and seven lamps upon it, and seven oil funnels to the lamps upon it: and two olive-trees above it, one on the right of the bowl, and one on the left. And I inquired, and spoke to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these things, my lord? And the angel that talked with me answered, and spoke to me, saying, Knowest thou not what these things are? And I said, no, my lord. And he answered and spoke to me, saying, This is the word of the Lord of Zorobabel, saying, Not by mighty power, nor by strength, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord Almighty. Who art thou, the great mountain before Zorobabel, that thou shouldest prosper? whereas I will bring out the stone of the inheritance, the grace of it the equal of my grace. And



the word of the Lord came to me, saying, The hands of Zorobabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands shall finish it: and thou shalt know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to thee. For who has despised the small days? surely they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet of tin in the hand of Zorobabel: these are the seven eyes that look upon all the earth. And I answered, and said to him, What are these two olive-trees, which are on the right and left hand of the candlestick? And I asked the second time, and said to him, What are the two branches of the olive-trees that are by the side of the two golden pipes that pour into and communicate with the golden oil funnels? And he said to me, Knowest thou not what these are? and I said, No, my lord. And he said, These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

## COMMENTS

Zechariah's fifth vision presents the rebuilding of the temple against the backdrop of two traditional symbols of Israel, the menorah, or seven branched candlestick, and the olive trees.

Again, as in the first vision especially, the record divides itself naturally along the lines of the prophet's questions and the angel's answers. In this case, the angel seems somewhat surprised that the prophet could not answer his own question.

(Verse 1) The angel rouses Zechariah from the ecstasy of the previous vision to show him the present one.

## WHAT THE PROPHET SAW . . . v. 2-3

The seven branched lampstand or menorah became the symbol of Israel at the time of the building of the tabernacle. Moses was instructed by God to place the menorah as the only source of light in the tent of worship. (*Exodus 25:31-40*) Made of fine gold, it consisted of a shaft five feet tall. At three points on the shaft, two branches at each point curved out and upward from the central shaft. The branches so formed, rose to the level of the central shaft, thus forming, with the shaft, a cluster of seven candlesticks. The cluster measured three feet six inches across at the top. Its seven wicks were fed from a bowl of oil which formed its base.

The menorah provided the sole source of light in the tabernacle, the fact which gave it its symbolic significance. As it stood in the south of the Holy Place, directly opposite the table of showbread, it illuminated both the table and the altar of incense which stood on the

west side of the Holy Place just outside the veil which separated this first sanctuary from the Holy of Holies.

The menorah had occupied a similar station in the original temple where ten such lights illuminated the sanctuary. Along with the other sacred implements these menorahs had been returned by Cyrus at the end of the Babylonian exile. The lampstand would take its place in the new temple when the re-construction was finally completed.

In Zechariah's vision the form of the Menorah is changed. Rather than a single shaft with its branches forming a single seven branched lampstand, the symbolic menorah of the vision is constructed in such a way that each branch of the main shaft forms the center shaft of a smaller menorah. The effect is seven smaller menorahs branching off from the main menorah. The intent is obviously seven times seven, which is an emphatic statement of absolute perfection, God's perfect word to Israel.

#### WHAT THE MENORAH IN THE VISION MEANT . . . v. 4-10

(Verses 4-5) These verses form the bridge between the vision and its meaning as interpreted by the angel. First the prophet asks the meaning of the vision. Then the angel asks him if he doesn't know the answer to his own question. The prophet answers in the negative. The next verse marks the beginning of the angel's answer.

(Verse 6) The multiple menorah of the vision represents the word of God to Zerubbabel and through him to the people. The multiplied perfection symbolized by the forty-nine lamps springing from a central shaft emphasize the correctness of that word.

In the vision attention is called to the bowl of the central shaft out of which the lamps originated. (v. 2-3) The bowl was a container for the oil which fueled the lamps. In the original menorah of the tabernacle, specific instructions were given concerning this oil container.

The oil contained in this bowl symbolized the Spirit of God which was in reality the source of divine illumination just as the oil was the ultimate source of the light of the menorah.

It is to this that the angel directs the prophet in verse six. "*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith Jehovah of hosts.*"

This message is addressed specifically to Zerubbabel as chief civil authority. He is to rebuild the temple not by the use of an army (might) or by (human) power but by the Spirit of God. *Haggai* has pointed out that the work was to be done by the Spirit (*Haggai* 2:5). Therefore Zerubbabel is not to be discouraged by the human weaknesses with which he must contend.

As we have seen, these weaknesses largely manifested themselves as fear. There was a desire on the part of the people to build a wall before the temple, lest they be attacked by their neighbors. There was a desire to tend first to business and farming lest their physical needs not be met during the building. God will have them know that military protection and the supplying of their own needs through their own efforts are not necessary. If they will apply themselves, His Spirit will supply every protection and need.

It is appropriate that this message be addressed to Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was governor of Judah, appointed by Darius. He is mentioned in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai, as well as Zechariah. From these books we know that it was he who, with Joshua the high priest, led the little band of released captives from Babylon and began rebuilding the temple in the second year of Darius.

According to Josephus and the apocraphal book of *I Ezdras*, he was a personal friend of Darius, having won the king's friendship by winning in his presence a contest to determine what was strongest in all the world . . . wine, kings, women, or truth. Zerubbabel demonstrated that truth was strongest of all and so won the king's admiration. With it he won permission to go up to Jerusalem and build the temple, the center for the spreading of truth.

Along with the permission to rebuild the temple, Zerubbabel was given the office of governor, with the stipulation that he also serve as *twshatha*, or tax collector, sending Judean tribute to the Medo-Persian king.

With all his "connections" in high places, along with his own dynamic personality and wisdom, there is no doubt the governor needed Zechariah's reminder that God's work does not depend upon such things but upon His Spirit.

Having made Joshua fit to serve as religious authority in the preceding vision, God now prepares Zerubbabel to serve as civil authority. In the eighth and final vision these two offices will be symbolically united as one to be filled ultimately by the Messiah.

(Verses 7-10) Trusting the divine power of the Spirit of God, Zerubbabel is to find the great mountain of difficulty in rebuilding suddenly become a level plain. He would have the honor of completing the temple which he had begun and of placing the final coping stones to the accompaniment of the cheers and praises of the people.

Recognizing that the work has been completed in the power of the Spirit rather than human might and power, the people will shout,

"grace, grace," when the chisled top stone is brought forth and put in place as the final act of building.

Those who have "despised small things" (v. 10), *ie.* who have looked with contempt on the beginning of reconstruction, will be silenced when the final stone is placed. "*Thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you.*" There can be no doubt of the divine origin of prophecy when it is fulfilled before their eyes. Isaiah, prior to the captivity, had predicted "... saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built." (*Isaiah 44:26*)

In the beginning of the reconstruction, some had despised the footers of the second temple because it seemed the end product would be inferior to that of Solomon (*Ezra 3:1-2*). These shall be won to optimism when they see the governor himself at work with the plummet in his hand. They will recognize in the plumbing of the work by Zerubbabel the all seeing eyes of Jehovah (v. 10(b)). He whose eyes "run to and fro through the whole earth," *ie.* who is in constant command of all things everywhere, will also be watching this work.

#### WHAT THE OLIVE TREES MEANT . . . v. 11-14

The explanation of the two olive trees (v. 3), as well as that of the menorah, begins with a question. This time the question is directed to the angel by Zechariah. The trees stood on either side of the menorah and the prophet did not grasp their significance.

(Verses 12-13) Before the angel answers, Zechariah repeats the question, *this* time noting that the two olive trees are pouring oil into the menorah.

Once more the angel indicates surprise, or at least concern, that the prophet cannot answer his own question. One is reminded of Jesus' response to Nicodemus, "Art thou a teacher of Israel and understandest not these things." (*John 3:10*)

In verse fourteen we come to the angel's answer. The two olive trees are "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." The two anointed ones are Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor. These have been set apart by God to the task of re-establishing His people in the holy land. Through them the power of God's Spirit will complete the task of reconstruction. This is apparent from the fact almost overlooked by Zechariah in asking for an explanation, namely that the oil which supplied the menorah was being poured out by the two olive trees.

A word must be said here in regard to the Spirit of God in this text. One of the objections of the Jews through the ages to the Chris-

tian faith has been their inability to accept the so-called doctrine of the trinity. They have the impression that Christians worship three gods.

If we are to take our understanding of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit from the traditional creeds of Romanism and Protestantism, the charge certainly seems a valid one. Such credal statements, however, are not Scripture.

In Zechariah are references to God from the view of three manifestations. These in effect amount not to three gods, but to one God in three relationships to His people. None would question that the frequent references to Jehovah in Zechariah answer to the manifestation of deity commonly called "the Father."

In *Zechariah 2:10(b)*, Jehovah speaks. The conclusion of His statement in *2:11(b)* is "*and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto thee.*" Jehovah presents Himself as both sent and sender! This is precisely the relationship expressed by Isaiah and repeated by Matthew, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name, Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

In Zechariah, the Spirit is added to these relationships of God to His people. Chapter four, verse six, indicates that the rebuilding of the temple is to be done by the Spirit of Jehovah. In the symbolism of Zechariah's vision this Spirit is poured into the work through His two anointed servants. There is no essential difference between the Spirit of God here and the Spirit of God promised to His people as a presence under the New Covenant.

The Spirit Who directed the re-building of the second temple through Joshua and Zerubbabel, today directs the building of the church through Jesus in Whom the civil and priestly offices are combined as the Anointed One. (cp. *Ephesians 3:14-ff*)

## Chapter XXXI—Questions

### A Vision of a Menorah and Olive Trees

1. What is the backdrop against which Zechariah's fifth vision is presented?
2. Describe Zechariah's fifth vision?
3. Describe the menorah used in the tabernacle.
4. Describe the menorah of Zechariah's vision.
5. What is symbolized by the multiple menorah of the vision?

6. The oil contained in the bowl of the menorah symbolized \_\_\_\_\_ as the source of God's light to His people.
7. The human weaknesses of those to whom Zechariah spoke were manifest largely as \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Show the appropriateness of this part of Zechariah's message being addressed to Zerubbabel.
9. What was Zerubbabel's relationship to Darius?
10. Along with permission to build the temple, Zerubbabel was charged by Darius to \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Who are "those who have despised small things?"
12. What is the meaning of the two olive trees in Zechariah's vision?
13. How does the vision of the Menorah and the olive trees relate to the Jewish objection to the doctrine of the trinity?
14. In the symbolism of this vision, the Spirit is poured into the work through \_\_\_\_\_.
15. The Spirit who directed the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel also directs us today in the building of \_\_\_\_\_.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A VISION OF A FLYING SCROLL

#### ZECHARIAH 5:1-4

RV . . . Then again I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off on the one side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off on the other side according to it. I will cause it to go forth, saith Jehovah of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall abide in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

LXX . . . And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked and behold a flying sickle. And he said to me. What seest thou? And I said, I see a flying sickle, of the length of twenty cubits, and of the breadth of ten cubits. And he said to me, This is the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole earth: for every thief shall be punished with death on this side, and every false swearer shall be punished

on that side. And I will bring it forth, saith the Lord Almighty, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that swears falsely by my name; and it shall rest in the midst of his house, and shall consume it, and the timber of it, and the stones of it.

## COMMENTS

### WHAT THE PROPHET SAW . . . v. 1-2

Zechariah lifted up his eyes. This is the phrase which introduces four of the prophet's eight visions. In the present vision what is seen is described as a flying scroll measuring thirty feet long by fifteen feet wide.

The angel again asks what the prophet sees to which the prophet answers very literally by describing the flying scroll. Unlike the previous visions, the angel makes no attempt to get Zechariah to interpret this one. Whether this be because of the prophet's inability to understand the others, or because of the extremely onerous nature of the meaning of the flying scroll we cannot be sure.

### WHAT THE VISION MEANT . . . v. 3-4

At least in this instance Zechariah seems justified in not being able to understand. Here, for the first time, the Law is depicted as a curse.

The overwhelming significance of this truth and of its appearance in the Old Testament Scriptures cannot be overstated. For centuries both Jews, in attempting to justify their rejection of the Christian faith, and liberal theologians in their attempt to discredit the New Testament, have held that the evaluation of the law as a curse is the peculiar theology of Paul. (cf. *Galatians* 3:13) That Paul is not the originator of this thought becomes apparent here!

The curse of the law is that it makes no allowance for human infirmity. By it comes the accurate knowledge of sin, but by it comes no remedy for sin. By it comes the just wrath of God upon the sinner, but by it comes no forgiveness of sin. (cf. *Romans* 7:7-24)

The curse of the law is not limited to the Jew alone. The scroll goes forth over the whole earth.

Paul will make this universal indictment of God against all men crystal clear. In *Romans* 2:14-15, the apostle shows that all men are in fact under the law, aside from Christ. The Jew because he has the written oracle of God. The Gentile because, while not having the

written law, he became a law unto himself. This is because every person has in his conscience the awareness of right and wrong. True, the Gentile without the revealed Law of God does not *know* what is, *in fact*, right or wrong. Nevertheless, he is aware that there is right and that there is wrong. He stands guilty because he does not live up to what he believes is right and wrong and in this failure violates the fundamental principle upon which the Law rests.

This is seen in the modern sociological fad called the New Morality. Based upon a philosophy called existentialism, the New Morality is the practical expression of situation ethics.

In simple terms, this amounts to the denial of *established* right and wrong as written in the Ten Commandments. It is at its root the denial of the authority if not the very existence of God. *But the New Morality does not deny the basic principles of right and wrong.* It simply says there is no *pre-determined* right and wrong. Right and wrong must be determined subjectively within the framework of the existing situation.

Paul would say that the situationist stands guilty of breaking the law in that, having become a law unto himself, he proceeds to violate even his own understanding of right and wrong.

No individual, whether he accepts the written law or becomes a law unto himself, consistently does in every situation of life what he believes is right. Thus the curse of the law covers the whole earth.

In Zechariah's vision, two particular commandment violations become the target of God's wrath expressed in the curse of the law symbolized by the flying scroll. They are the infraction of the eighth commandment, "*Thou shalt not steal*," and the ninth commandment, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*." (cf. *Exodus 20:15-16*)

The latter, swearing falsely in the name of God, is an affront to the majesty of God. The former, entering a neighbor's house to steal his personal property, is a violation of the dignity of the neighbor's humanity! Jesus will teach that the very foundation of the law is the recognition of these two sacred truths.

According to Him, the whole law hangs on the first and second commandments, *ie.* "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor ... as thyself*." (*Matthew 22:34-ff*) To swear falsely in God's name or to steal another's personal possessions is to strike at the very foundation of morality as it is revealed by God in the Law.



The effect of this curse is deadly. The sinner himself will be "cut off," and his household will be destroyed. The phrase "cut off" is a covenant term. (cp. *Exodus* 17:14, 12:15,19, *Leviticus* 7:20,21,27, 17:4,9,14, etc.)

To violate the commandments of God is to be cut off from the covenant relationship with Him. A Jew in this condition was no different from a Gentile who was completely ignorant of the covenant. (cf. *Ephesians* 2:11-12) Hence . . . "there is no distinction." (*Romans* 3:22)

Not only does the sinner suffer as a result of his own disregard for God's majesty and human dignity, his family suffers also. Zechariah pictures the curse of the law as entering and abiding in the sinner's home, even to the consuming of the wood and masonry.

The same principle is stated in *Exodus* 34:6-7. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."

If we consider this in terms of the family being held accountable for the father's sins, we shall miss the point altogether. What is intended is the self-evident truth that what effects a man effects his family also, and nothing effects a man more adversely than his own sin.

We deceive ourselves if we believe that the effects of our sinning are confined to ourselves. *Deuteronomy* 8:15-18 spells this out in great detail. "But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee; Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep."

Conversely, obedience to God brings blessings on others than ourselves. *Proverbs* 3:33 says, "The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just."

The man who deliberately, habitually blasphemes God's name and/or disregards the human dignity of his neighbor through the violation of his property rights brings the curse of God not only upon himself but those with whom he lives.

## Chapter XXXII—Questions

## A Vision of a Flying Scroll

1. Describe Zechariah's sixth vision.
2. How is Zechariah justified in not being able to understand this vision?
3. What is the significance of the depicting of the law as a curse in this particular passage?
4. Discuss this in relation to Romans 2:14-15.
5. How is the universal acknowledgement of the fact of right and wrong demonstrated in "the New Morality?"
6. How do such people "break the law" of God?
7. What two commandment violations are the target of God's wrath in the vision of the flying scroll?
8. What is the effect of the curse symbolized in this vision?
9. Compare Zechariah 5:1-4 and Exodus 34:6-7.
10. Are the effects of our sins confined to ourselves?

## CHAPTER XXXIII

A VISION OF A WOMAN IN A  
FLYING BASKET

## ZECHARIAH 5:5-11

RV . . . Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is the ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their appearance in all the land (and, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead); and this is a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is Wickedness: and he cast her down into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there came forth two women, and the wind was in their wings; now they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between earth and heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build her a house in the land of Shinar: and when it is prepared, she shall be set there in her own place.

LXX . . . And the angel that talked with me went forth, and said to me, Lift up thine eyes, and see this that goes forth. And he said, This is their iniquity in all the earth. And behold a talent of lead lifted up: and behold a woman sat in the midst of the measure. And he said, This is iniquity. And he cast it into the midst of the measure, and cast the weight of lead on the mouth of it. And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, two women coming forth, and the wind was in their wings; and they had stork's wings: and they lifted up the measure between the earth and the sky. And I said to the angel that spoke with me, Whither do these carry away the measure? And he said to me, To build it a house in the land of Babylon, and to prepare a place for it; and they shall set it there on its own base.

## COMMENTS

### WHAT THE PROPHET SAW

The angel commands Zechariah to lift his eyes to receive the seventh in the series of visions. It, like the one just previous, will be seen in the sky.

In preceding visions the prophet occasionally had difficulty grasping the meaning of what appeared. This time he cannot believe his eyes! "What is it . . . ?" is his exclamation. There in the sky is a flying basket and in it sits a woman! Pressing upon her is a talent of lead weight. (An ephah is a basket of approximately  $3\frac{1}{4}$  pecks. A talent weighs approximately 118 lbs. troy.)

The angel informs the prophet that this is the appearance of the ephah and the woman as they go forth over all the land.

So saying, he declares the woman to be Wickedness and, forcing her into the basket, he casts the lead weight in on top of her. Whereupon two winged women appear and lift the basket up into the sky.

In answer to the prophet's inquiry, the angel says that they are bearing her away to build her a house in Shinar where she will set up her own place.

### WHAT THE VISION MEANT!

Unlike the previous visions of Zechariah, the angel gives us very little explanation of the meaning of this vision, other than to say that the woman is wickedness (v. 8) and that the ephah bearing her is going forth over the whole land. We must therefore proceed with caution in our attempt to explain its meaning.

It has been suggested that we have here a picture of Judah sending her sin to Babylon (*Shinar* . . . cp. *Genesis 10:10, Daniel 1:2*) where the ephah will be worshipped. This latter is based upon the assumption that "house" in verse eleven means temple. The ephah, whose liquid capacity is about six gallons, is taken to mean the base of an image upon which the woman will stand as a goddess.

Another interpretation sees the ephah as a small barrel with a leaden disk as a lid. The woman is trying to escape, which is why the angel pushes her into the ephah and casts the lead on top of her. The two flying females are considered demonic. *Shinar*, or Babylon, becomes the site of a temple where the woman will be worshipped as personified evil.

Yet another interpretation has the ephah alluding to the previous vision of theft and falsification. "This is their appearance" (v. 6) is thus seen as representing what the Jews have done and what they shall suffer.

*Shinar* is here seen, not as Babylon, but as the total Gentile world into which the Jews are to be totally dispersed.

In all this is seen the total removal of sin from the holy land. The house is seen as the capital of the world of wickedness as opposed to the kingdom of God and the woman is somehow identified as "the man of sin." (*II Thessalonians 2:3*)

What such interpretations show, more than anything else, is the ludicrous extremes to which men's theological systems take them in the study of apocalyptic Scriptures.

The angel does give us some insight into this vision, and it is here we must begin to understand it. In verse six he said, "This is the ephah that goeth forth."

The ephah, as previously indicated, was a basket with the capacity of  $3\frac{1}{4}$  pecks, just less than our standard bushel. The law made strict provision for its use, giving interpretation regarding just measure in trade. (*Leviticus 19:36*) The "ephah that goeth forth" is the measure used in the trading or selling of such commodities as are sold at a certain price per ephah.

The angel indicates that the ephah is "their appearance in all the land." The word appearance in the original is literally "eye."

There was then lifted up a talent (literally a disc) of lead.

Concerning the woman, the angel said, "This is wickedness." So saying he put her in the basket and placed the lead upon it. Notice, the woman is wickedness as an abstract principle, not wicked people.

So we have a legal measure filled with wickedness and upon it a heavy (118 lb.) lid. Obviously, the reason for such a lid is to prevent the escape of the basket's content, which is evil. This much is plain.

The angel gives no explanation as to the identity of the two women with stork's wings. He does say they are bearing the full measure of evil to the land of Shinar where a house (or temple) is to be built in which the woman (evil) will be set in her own place (literally on her own base).

There is Scriptural evidence that Shinar is synonymous with Babylon. (cp. *Genesis 10:10*) The term Shinar is used for obvious reasons. Babylon was now in the hands of Darius, ruler of the Medo-Persian empire. To have used the common name would have been to incur, unnecessarily, the wrath of the emperor whose good offices had permitted the return of the exiles and who was encouraging the reconstruction of the temple. For our purposes, it is important only to know that Shinar is Babylon.

Babylon is used throughout the apocalyptic literature of the Bible to depict the false religion which is inevitably the source of evil and therefore the enemy of God and His people. She is associated with enforced evil and idolatry.

In *Revelation 17:5* she is called mother of harlots, dressed in haughty splendor and drunken with the blood of the martyrs. The evils which have come out of her idol worship and opposition to God's people are called the wine of her fornication. Her name there is "Mystery, Babylon, the Great, Mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the Earth."

*Mystery* alludes to the mystery religions which originated in Babylon. (See Chapter 4, *Baal Worship*) *Babylon the Great* to her temporal power (which in *Revelation* becomes symbolic of Rome), *Mother of Harlots* to the fact that she had spawned the false religions of the world, and *the abominations of the earth* to the overall offensiveness of Babylon before God.

So the full measure of the wickedness which spread across the land of Judah was to be sent back to its source where it would be set up on a pedestal and worshipped, as indeed it had always been, wickedness and immorality being the soul and expression of the idolatry throughout the ancient world.

Keeping in mind that the writing of the book of Zechariah was intended to move the people to the rebuilding of the temple, the force of this vision is obvious. The wickedness which the people have

brought with them from Babylon must be recognized for what it is. It must be sent on the wings of the wind back, full measure, where it came from. In Babylon, wickedness is the object of worship. In God's land among God's people it has no place at all. It must therefore be removed.

## Chapter XXXIII—Questions

### A Vision of a Woman in a Flying Basket

1. Describe Zechariah's seventh vision.
2. What is an ephah?
3. What is the weight of the talent?
4. Where did the woman in the flying ephah go?
5. The woman in the ephah is declared by the angel to be \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What is the significant difference between this and the other visions as recorded by Zechariah?
7. Discuss several possible interpretations of this vision as suggested above.
8. What is shown by such interpretations?
9. What is the significance of the fact that the ephah was a *legal* measure?
10. Shinar is Scripturally synonymous with \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Babylon, throughout the Bible, especially in apocalyptic literature, is used to depict \_\_\_\_\_.
12. *Mystery* alludes to \_\_\_\_\_.
13. The full measure of wickedness was to be sent \_\_\_\_\_.
14. What was the force of this vision to those who had the task of rebuilding the temple?

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A VISION OF WAR CHARIOTS

ZECHARIAH 6:1-8

RV . . . And again I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grizzled strong horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?

And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four winds of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The chariot wherein are the black horses goeth forth toward the north country; and the white went forth after them; and the grizzled went forth toward the south country. And the strong went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he to me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, they that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

LXX . . . And I turned and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, four chariots coming out from between two mountains; and the mountains were brazen mountains. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot piebald and ash-coloured horses. And I answered and said to the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel that talked with me answered and said, These are the four winds of heaven, and they are going forth to stand before the Lord of all the earth. As for the chariot in which were the black horses, they went out to the land of the north; and the white went out after them; and the piebald went out to the land of the south. And the ash-coloured went out, and looked to go and compass the earth: and he said, Go, and compass the earth. And they compassed the earth. And he cried out and spoke to me, saying, Behold, these go out to the land of the north, and they have quieted mine anger in the land of the north.

## COMMENTS

### WHAT THE PROPHET SAW . . . v. 1-4

This is the final in the series of eight visions. It comes full circle, back to the universal concerns expressed in the first two. Visions three through seven have focused our primary attention on the recently returned Jews in Judah. The truths revealed have had to do primarily with the moral and spiritual qualities which must characterize them in order that God's purpose in them may be accomplished.

On occasion we have seen that the same moral and spiritual obstacles which beset Judah are common to all mankind. The first two visions were concerned with their relationship to their neighbors as

these affected their security while rebuilding. In this final vision we again look outward from Judah.

From between two mountains come four chariots drawn by different colored horses. They are red, black, white and dappled (grizzled). The last are particularly noted for their strength.

Having presented themselves before the Lord, the chariots are commanded to go out through all the earth; north, south, east and west. All are impatient to start, but particular attention is drawn to the north.

### WHAT THE VISION MEANT . . . v. 5-8

Upon Zechariah's inquiry as to the meaning of the vision, particularly as to the identity of the four chariots, the angel explains that these are four winds or spirits which go forth from before the Lord of all the earth. The marginal reading "*spirit*" is preferred here rather than winds. They walk to and fro through the earth.

The end result is that the Lord's Spirit is quieted in the north. Verse 8 (b) thus becomes the key to understanding the final vision.

If we are correct in asserting that these visions represent God's dealing with the obstacles which stood in the way of Messiah's coming, particularly as they prevented the rebuilding of the temple in which the symbolic priestly-sacrificial system must foreshadow His advent, this final vision may well be intended to mark the beginning of the Messianic age. The details are unclear to us, largely because they have been blurred by time, but the next following paragraph depicts the coronation of the high priest which symbolizes the merging of the two offices of priest and king in the Messiah.

The two mountains of verse one are probably Mount Moriah on which sat the temple and Mount Zion to the south of Moriah. Since the temple is the symbolic dwelling place of God, it is fitting that, in the vision, the chariots representing His Spirit going out to all the earth should be sent from this place.

In Bible times the valley of the cheese merchants divided Moriah and Zion. It has since been filled and the two today appear as a single mountain.

In the vision these mountains are of brass, more accurately bronze. At the time of Zechariah the bronze age in Persia and Egypt had given way to iron in the making of weapons. Nevertheless, bronze remained one of the strongest, and possibly the single most enduring metal of the ancient world. No doubt the symbolism here is a statement of the enduring presence of God and His eternal concern for all men.



The colors of the horses are similar to those of the first vision. Red represents bloodshed as in the first. The second, the white horse, as in the first vision also, represents death. The black horse, a color not mentioned in the first vision, represents famine and sorrow (cp *Revelation* 6:5-6). The grizzled or dappled, as in the first vision, represents a mixture of prosperity and adversity. The "strong horses" is more accurately translated "swift."

Rather than become entangled in a vain attempt to find a specific in the colors of the horses as related to the direction each went, it is best to consider them as an overall representation of the universal judgement of God.

Special attention is called to the north, toward which the chariot with black horses is directed. Any invader which came upon Jerusalem must come from either the south or north. To the south lay Egypt, now subjected to Persian dominance in world affairs and unlikely to engage in any war of conquest. To the north lay the route along which Babylon must march if she is again to threaten the rebuilders of the temple. Along this northern route also the Medo-Persians must come if they are to harrass Judah. From the north the Assyrians had come to wipe out the northern kingdom.

To the north is directed the chariot pulled by black horses. The chariot drawn by white horses follows the first. This has been variously understood to be desolation visited on Babylon three after Zechariah's prophecy was written, and the subduing of Darius' kingdom itself by Alexander in the fourth century B.C. In any case, Judah was never again seriously threatened by Babylon or Persia.

The war chariots are similar in purpose to the wall of fire seen in the third vision. Judah will remain secure so long as she is dedicated to the accomplishment of God's purpose which at this time was primarily concerned for the rebuilding of the temple. It is a recurrence of the theme stated in 1:3, "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts."

## Chapter XXXIV—Questions

### A Vision of War Chariots

1. Describe the eighth vision of Zechariah.
2. The eighth vision comes full circle back to\_\_\_\_\_.
3. Who were the four chariots?

4. What verse is the key to the understanding of this vision?
5. What are the two mountains?
6. In Bible times \_\_\_\_\_ divided Moriah and Zion.
7. What is the significance of the colors of the horses?
8. Why does Zechariah's vision call special attention to the north?
9. How are the war chariots similar to the wall of fire in the third vision?
10. In this vision is a recurrence of \_\_\_\_\_ .

## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE PROCLAMATION OF THE MESSIAH

#### ZECHARIAH 6:9-15

RV . . . And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah; and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, whither they are come from Babylon; yea, take of them silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts, saying, Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and, he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of Jehovah. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of Jehovah; and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of Jehovah your God.

LXX . . . And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Take the things of the captivity from the chief men, and from the useful men of it, and from them that have understood it; and thou shalt enter in that day into the house of Josias the son Sophonias that came out of Babylon. And thou shalt take silver and gold, and make crowns, and thou shalt put them upon the head of Jesus the son of Josedec the high priest; and thou shalt say to him, Thus saith the Lord Almighty: Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall spring up

from his stem, and build the house of the Lord. And he shall receive power, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and there shall be a priest on his right hand, and a peaceable counsel shall be between them both. And the crown shall be to them that wait patiently, and to the useful men of the captivity, and to them that have known it, and for the favour of the son of Sophonias, and for a psalm in the house of the Lord. And they that are far from them shall come and build in the house of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you: and this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God.

## COMMENTS

Zechariah's first eight visions, as we have seen, have to do with removing the obstacles to the coming of the Messiah. The second and concluding section of the book, beginning with chapter nine, deals with His coming. The present passage describing the coronation of Joshua and the subsequent passages which teach about worship form a bridge between these two main divisions of the book.

There are some textual difficulties in the passage immediately before us. However, the scope and purpose of this book will not permit our dealing with them. We shall simply take the text as it presently stands and comment on it.

(Verses 9-11) Rather than a vision, Zechariah receives "the word of Jehovah" instructing him to take from three recent returnees from Babylon, Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who are residing with one Josiah, the gold and silver necessary to make crowns. The marginal reading here is "a crown" and is probably the preferred reading.

We do not know anything of these men beyond Zechariah's identification of them as having recently returned from the captivity. Possibly they were successful merchants, as many Jews had become in Babylon. If so, they may have volunteered the gift to mark their arrival in the holy land.

It has been suggested that the gold and silver were sent by Darius and that Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah were simply delivering it for the king. The former seems more likely in view of verse fourteen. There the name of Hen is added to the threesome mentioned in verse ten and the crown (or crowns) is to be left in the temple as a memorial to them.

(Verses 12-15) These verses, the first two of which are the message of Jehovah through Zechariah to Joshua the high priest, form

a very definite Messianic prophecy. In the coronation Joshua became symbolically the Messiah.

The term Branch was previously applied to Joshua in 3:8-9 during the prophet's third vision. (See comments) In 3:8, it is stated that Joshua in particular and the accompanying priests in general were together a sign or symbol of "*my servant The Branch.*"

*Isaiah 11:1*-ff establishes The Branch as a term referring to the Messiah as the promised Seed of David. *Isaiah 4:2*-ff, where the term is used with Messianic meaning for the first time by Isaiah, connects the Branch with the return of the remnant from the captivity.

*Jeremiah 23:5* predicts the coming of Branch in these words, "*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper and execute Judgement and Justice in the earth.*" (KJV) A similar passage is found in *Jeremiah 33:15*.

The Branch is thus seen as a term long established as referring to the kingly Messiah. In the symbolism of Joshua's coronation, His kingly office is merged with that of high priest. *Zechariah 4:6-9* had alluded to this when the prophet saw the two olive trees pouring their oil simultaneously into the bowl at the base of the multiple menorah.

The menorah was the established symbol of Israel. Zechariah's multiple menorah was the seven branched lampstand multiplied by seven. The meaning is apparent: Israel perfected. Israel perfected is Messianic Israel. Her Spirit, symbolized by the oil in the menorah comes to her from the Messiah who is both priest and king.

In Zechariah, chapter nine, we shall find a detailed prophetic presentation of the Messianic king. For an expose of the high priestly function of the Messiah we have only to read the New Testament book of Hebrews. In *Hebrews 5:1-10* the writer establishes that Jesus fulfills the qualifications of this office. He must offer gifts and sacrifices for sins (v.1). He must have compassion on the ignorant and the wayward (v. 2). He must be called of God. (v. 4).

Jesus fulfilled these qualifications. He offered prayers and supplications (v. 7). He was called of God (v. 10). His priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood which was only a symbol of His (7:1-28). The high priestly office of the Christ manifests a new covenant, and the true tabernacle of which the former tabernacle was only a shadow (9:15-28). His high priestly sacrifice is final, as opposed to the symbolic sacrifices of the Law (10:1-10). This finality is established by the comparison of it to the oft-repeated sacrifices of the Levitical priest-