



HAG GAI **ZECHARIAH** MAL ACHI

*Return to Me, and  
I will Return to You*

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## LESSON 1: THE CHARGE TO REBUILD (HAGGAI 1-2)

*“The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former”*

Israel and Judah broke their covenant with Yahweh, so he scattered them among the nations. Jerusalem was an embarrassing pile of rubble. But the prophets had promised that one day the people would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city. The shame of Jerusalem would be gone. The city would dwell secure forever. In 539 BC, Cyrus King of Persia declared that the Hebrews could return to rebuild their temple. Led in part by Zerubbabel (governor of Judah, descendent of David) and Jeshua (high priest, descendent of Zadok), over 42,000 people returned to rebuild. But external forces caused work on the temple to cease. It is important for modern readers to grasp how discouraging these years were. Just when they thought they were on the brink of a glorious future, all earthly powers turned against them. Sustained hope had not existed in Jerusalem for many years.

Ezra 5:1-2 sheds light on what happened next in 520 BC. After fifteen years of nothing, God’s Spirit roused the remnant to work through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah. What did these prophets see and say that encouraged this remnant so much?

**1. (1:1-11)** *Haggai’s first message came on August 29th in 520 BC. The people don’t think they have the time or resources to rebuild, but they don’t realize they have so little because they haven’t taken the time to rebuild. Do you ever have the mindset Haggai points out here? How and in what ways?*

**2. (1:12-2:9)** *The people started work on September 21st, 520 BC. A month later, Haggai came with another message on October 17th. The former temple was destroyed in 586 BC and some were still alive who had seen it. They thought this latter temple was turning out to be nothing in comparison to the former one. Paul tells us that the Holy Spirit is now building us together as God’s temple. Hebrews 12:25ff tells us that once more God will shake not just the earth, but the heavens also. Then, the latter glory of God’s temple will be greater than the former. Considering this promise, do you ever find it easy to slip into the mindset of the people here? How and in what ways? Based Haggai’s encouragement, what all do we need to remind ourselves and others of in times like these?*

**3. (2:10-19)** *Three months into the work, Haggai came with another message on December 18th. The land had yielded nothing, so the people were probably quite nervous. The purpose of his message is to help them understand why their fortunes were about to change. Explain the logic of Haggai’s example and argument. What modern significance does Haggai’s argument have for us today?*

**Reflections on 2:20-23.** The Lord promises to soon shake up heaven and earth. Kingdoms would be overthrown and Zerubbabel would become God’s signet ring. The image of a signet ring represents divine authority. God had said Jeconiah (Zerubbabel’s grandfather) could have been his signet ring, but God ripped him off his finger (Jeremiah 22:24-30). Hopes for an eternal Davidic king were bleak. Though Zerubbabel didn’t usher in the triumph of this text, he is a representative figure that points to the restoration of the Davidic promise in Jesus (similar to David in Ezek. 34:23-24). It is no surprise that Zerubbabel is mentioned in Christ’s genealogy in Matthew 1:12-13. God uses “soon” language and representative figures like Zerubbabel and Jeshua to keep eschatological hopes alive in each generation. *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised”* (Heb. 11:39). As people of Jesus, we work alongside this remnant - hoping in King Jesus’ swift coming to bring judgment and complete our work.

## LESSON 2: A PLEA TO RETURN (ZECHARIAH 1:1-6)

*“Return to me and I will return to you,” says the Lord*

In the year 520 B.C., during the month of November, the prophet Zechariah stepped into his role of speaking to the remnants of Israel on behalf of the Lord. Addressing the Jews who had just returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile in Babylon, Zechariah, along with Haggai (Ezra 5:1), encouraged the people to rebuild what had been lost—namely the temple—from when God had brought judgment against their prior generations through the Babylonians. Two months earlier Haggai had urged the Jews who had returned to rebuild the temple. Now, Zechariah explored the reasons how the rebuilt temple would be important in a Jewish nation that was still under foreign control.

Since the book of Zechariah is known more for the eight bizarre night visions of the first half, and for the inscrutable apocalyptic scenes of the last half, one pervading question that the book asks can often be missed: Will God’s children return to Him, and if they do not, then what next? The book begins with this at the very start as God pleads with his people to “return to me and I will return to you” (Zech 1:3-4). Though the Jews may have physically returned to Jerusalem, God will not fully be with them and work His promises through them until they return to Him in heart and mind as well (chapter 7 will revisit this theme two years later to see if they have, and chapters 9-14 will address what happens next). For us, as the church, 2500 years after Zechariah, the question is still the same: if we are expecting God to be with us in what we do, have we fully committed ourselves to him?

**1.** *What is the mark of someone who has returned to the Lord? How would a return to the Lord be visible in your life (in your family, at work, school, or play, as a neighbor, to strangers, with those of a different faith, or a different political party, etc.)?*

**2.** *In what way did God’s words and statutes “overtake” (Zech 1:6 ESV, NASB) the fathers of the Jews Zechariah is addressing? In what ways will God’s words and statutes overtake us—in the present age as well as in the age to come—if we do not give heed to them?*

**3.** *There are a few big questions that the prophet Zechariah asks in his book. One pervasive question throughout the book of Zechariah is: How long before the Lord returns to His people? What is the answer to that question in these verses?*

**4.** *In the Bible, the majority of the prophets begin their prophecies by dating them to the reign of a king (Isa 1:1, Jer 1:1-2, Hos 1:1, Amos 1:1, etc.). What is significant about Haggai and Zechariah being unique among the prophets in that they date their prophecies in the first verse to the reign of King Darius of Persia instead of dating them to an Israelite or Judean king?*

## LESSON 3: HOW LONG O LORD? (ZECHARIAH 1:7–2:13)

*“O Lord of Hosts, how long will you have no mercy?” (Visions 1, 2 and 3)*

On the heels of the prophet’s brief opening, Zechariah wastes little time introducing the bizarreness that makes his book unique within the Bible. Throughout the first six chapters, Zechariah experiences a series of eight dreamlike visions in the night. The first of these visions occurs precisely on the night of February 15, 519 B.C., and as to whether the following visions are experiences during the same night, or in subsequent nights, we are left to wonder.

Prophetic visions are nothing unique within the Bible—Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Amos (among others) all have their fair share—but outside of Daniel and John in his Revelation, no other prophet matches the consistent slideshow of Zechariah’s. Thankfully for Zechariah (as well as for the reader), an interpreting angel accompanies him throughout his night visions, and yet, unfortunately, often the angel’s interpretations of Zechariah’s visions open up even more questions as to the meaning.

Because God could have chosen to communicate with Zechariah in other less puzzling ways, one question we have to ponder is why did God choose the method he did? What is it about these visions promising God’s return and a rebuilt Jerusalem that would have comforted the Jews, even though they have a certain vagueness and offer no timetable for completion? Moreover, as readers searching for meaning in these texts (a hard task, when even Zechariah has difficulty, see Zech 4:13), unless we hope to get embroiled in endless controversies over the meaning of this and that, we have to ask bigger questions about the content of the visions. In particular, details aside, what do each of these visions promise for the Jewish returnees, and what do they promise for the surrounding nations? One good tool to help is a chart:

	<b>God’s promise(s) for Jerusalem and the Jews</b>	<b>God’s promise(s) for the surrounding nations</b>
<b>Vision 1: Angelic Horseman</b>		
<b>Vision 2: Four Horns and Four Craftsmen</b>		
<b>Vision 3: The Measuring of Jerusalem</b>		

**1.** *In Zechariah’s first vision (1:7-17), why would God be angry at the nations for being “at ease”? In our modern world, are there “nations at rest” while God’s people suffer? How could we be in danger of being at ease, or at rest, when it is not the time and place to rest and be easy?*

**2.** *In what ways would these visions be a comfort to the Jews? What are the similarities and differences in how each vision accomplishes this comforting?*

**3.** *Boil the message of each vision down into five words or less.*

**4.** *Why do you think God communicated these messages in three visions instead of just coming out and saying it in plain words?*

## LESSON 4: TWO WITNESSES (ZECHARIAH 3–4)

*“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.” (Visions 4 and 5)*

Every movement needs a leader, and the contingent of Jews who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC had two of them. While Haggai and Zechariah are the two better-known names associated with the temple's rebuilding in 515 B.C. (mostly by virtue of their eponymously named books), the two men who actually led the people were Zerubbabel and Joshua. Haggai and Zechariah were God's spokesmen, but Zerubbabel and Joshua were his shepherds.

In Zechariah's fourth and fifth visions, the leadership of both Joshua and Zerubbabel are upheld by God. There are several reasons why the Lord's encouragement and validation of these leaders was necessary. Joshua, for his part, played a precarious role that needed validation. Not only was Joshua a high priest without a temple to serve in, but he was the representative of a rebellious nation. Because of this, Israel's adversaries begrudged Joshua's leadership and Satan sought to hang Israel's past sins over them perpetually. In the face of these objections, God promised to forgive the nation and allow Joshua to administer for them as high priest. Like Joshua, Zerubbabel had his own problems. For his part as the political leader and governor, it was likely that Zerubbabel was most involved in the difficulties with the “enemies of Judah and Benjamin” who attempted to sabotage Jewish work on the temple (Ezra 4:1-5). Zerubbabel was a descendent of royal line of David, but he bore no crown and commanded no army. Without the support and strength that God promised him, Zerubbabel may have had neither the confidence or authority to accomplish the rebuilding of the temple.

**1.** *What is the significance of God replacing Joshua's soiled clothes with clothes that are clean in Zechariah 3? Where else in the Bible are new clothes significant?*

**2.** *The common image we have of Satan is that he is a tempter, but what is different about his role in Zechariah 3? What does it mean that Satan is an “accuser”—not only here, but also in Job 1:6-12 and Revelation 12:7-12—and why is his role as an accuser significant? In our own lives, do we act more like the God who forgives, or the Satan who accuses?*

**3.** *In God's encouragement to Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:6, what does God mean when He says Zerubbabel will overcome “not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit?” (See note on following page)*

**4.** *In what ways would these two visions be comforting to Joshua and Zerubbabel? What parallels can you draw between these visions and our own lives?*

## NOTE ON VISION 5 (ZECHARIAH 4)

*By Scott Kercheville*

Zechariah's fifth vision is somewhat challenging to interpret. There is a lampstand of solid gold (which normally rested in the temple) and two olive trees that supply oil to the lampstand. The vision depicts the lamp remaining lit because of the constant supply of oil provided by the two olive trees. What these meant was a mystery to Zechariah (vs. 4-5, 11-13).

Most agree that the continual burning of the lampstand represents something like God's temple-like presence with his people. The temple was meant to be a place where the nations could come to learn of, worship, and call upon the Lord. The lampstand was to be kept burning continually to signify God's presence there. Baldwin suggests that the lampstand may represent not simply the Lord, but "the witness of the temple and the Jewish community to him." We will consider the burning of the lampstand as the display of God's presence from the temple to the world.

Zechariah asked about the meaning of these olive trees supplying oil to the lampstand three times, heightening our curiosity. Finally, the angel gives an answer in verse 14. "*These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth,*" (ESV). The only times people are anointed in the Bible is when they are taking on divinely conferred priestly, royal, or prophetic roles. It seems reasonable to see these two anointed ones as Zerubbabel (royal) and Joshua (priestly).

The angel gives the message of the vision in verses 6-10: the temple will be completed and all obstacles overcome, but human might and power won't get the job done, only God's Spirit.

This vision is meant to encourage these anointed humans (Zerubbabel and Joshua) and in turn the whole community. Laying the foundation of the temple and putting stones on top of each other seemed like a puny thing - a small day in a never-ending project. But through their work they are providing oil to keep the light and witness of God's presence burning in Jerusalem. However, they won't complete their work by human strength. The temple (and God's eschatological kingdom) will be completed by the power of God's Spirit. The picture is of trees and a lampstand, but it may boil down to Spirit-anointed-and-empowered humans doing God's work.

The New Testament writers offer pictures of God's temple which expand on these themes. Jesus says his body is a temple that will be torn down and rebuilt (John 2:19). He is the ultimate Spirit-anointed witness of God. The children after him also become temples of the Lord through the Holy Spirit. This is true in both individual (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and collective (Ephesians 2:19-22) senses. Christians are miniature temples which are being built into a grand temple for the Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit.

As it seemed in the past, it may appear as if God's people are the only means by which the new temple and the New Jerusalem are being built. It may seem that weak humans are the only ones keeping the lamp of God's presence still lit in the world. Sometimes we get down on ourselves because we feel every day of our life is a day of small things. Nothing real or permanent seems to be accomplished. But the assurance of this vision is that, while we are a means, we aren't the strength that will bring God's work to completion. God uses human agents, but God's Spirit is the power that will cause the "capstone" to be placed. God will bring all these small days and small works to a great completion. At times we feel like we are laboring against a mountain with only human means, we are encouraged to have faith that God will level the mountain. As this vision would have built up the faith of Zerubbabel and Joshua, it can do the same for us: trust the unseen Spirit of God as we labor alongside the Lord of the whole earth to build his new temple and keep the light of his presence in the world. We are the light of the world, but God's Spirit is the flame.

Do you normally work for God like human strength is the only resource? How can we work alongside God in a way that better appreciates the message, "*not by might... but by my Spirit*"?

## LESSON 5: JUDGEMENT (ZECHARIAH 5–6)

*“This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land.”* (Visions 6, 7 and 8)

Zechariah’s last three night visions conclude the series of eight nocturnal experiences that began on the night of February 15, 519 B.C. While it’s easy to get lost in the strange details of each vision, reading Zechariah’s first six chapters in one sitting should clue the reader in to the fact that the visions have a structure and order to them.

The reader is first clued in to the order of the visions by the similarities between the fourth and fifth visions. The fourth and fifth visions are the two central visions of the eight and each focuses on one of the two leaders who is to help rebuild and reestablish Jerusalem and the community. Likewise, the sixth, seventh, and eighth visions thematically parallel the third, second, and first visions. To better illustrate this, the following outline traces the themes of the visions:

- A: Angelic horsemen patrol the earth (Zech 1:7-17)
  - B: God punishes Judah’s enemies. (Zech 1:18-21)
    - C: Jerusalem and Judah reestablished. (Zech 2:1-5)
      - D: Exhortation to Judah’s leader, Joshua. (Zech 3)
      - D’: Exhortation to Judah’s leader, Zerubbabel. (Zech 4)
    - C’: Jerusalem and Judah purified from evil. (Zech 5:1-4)
  - B’: God returns wickedness to Judah’s enemies. (Zech 5:5-11)
- A’: Angelic horse-led chariots judge the earth. (Zech 6:1-8)

At first glance, these visions seem to answer the question that is asked earlier of God: *“How long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah?”* (Zech 1:12). While the visions answer *how* God will show mercy on his people, they never specifically answer the *when*. God gives no definite timetable. Furthermore, while God stresses to Zechariah that Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and that Joshua and Zerubbabel are important to this project, there are hints throughout that Zechariah is envisioning something much bigger than what will happen over the next few decades. In other words, in places like Zechariah 2:1-13, 3:6-10, and 6:9-15, Zechariah peeks behind the curtain and catches glimpses of acts that are still half a millennium or more away—namely the coming of the Christ and his return to bring the fullness of God’s kingdom.

**1.** *In Zechariah sixth vision (5:1-4), the prophet sees judgment falling upon those in Jerusalem who do evil—specifically those who steal or swear falsely. Would this vision have been comforting or terrifying to the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem? Explain.*

**2.** *In Zechariah’s seventh vision (5:5-11), the “land of Shinar” is referenced. What is Shinar’s significance in the Bible? Why does it matter that Wickedness is being sent there?*

**3.** *Zechariah’s first and eighth visions (1:7-17 and 6:1-8) indisputably parallel each other. But, how are they different? Even if the messages are similar, how does the message subtly change between the two visions, and why is this important?*



## LESSON 6: TO FEAST OR TO FAST? (ZECHARIAH 7–8)

*“Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”*

On December 7, 518 B.C.—nearly two years after the night of Zechariah’s visions—several messengers journeyed from Bethel to Jerusalem in order to seek a word of the Lord from Zechariah. Their question to Zechariah concerned whether they should continue to regularly fast and mourn over the destruction of the temple that had been brought on by the Babylonians seven decades prior. As of yet, the temple was still unfinished (and would remain so until 515 B.C.), and the question implied that the Jews were still waiting for the Lord to return to and bless Jerusalem as he had promised in Zechariah 1:3.

However these messengers expected God to answer, the answer he gave was probably not it. In response to their question, God never actually tells them to stop or continue fasting. Instead, he first questions their sincerity in fasting, asking them if they were fasting for Him, or if they were fasting because of their own pitiable state (in other words, “are you sad because you sinned, or sad because you got caught”). God, through Zechariah, then recounts to the people how sin brought them to the position they are in, and in chapter 8, how He plans to rescue them from it. As Zechariah brings this account of Israel’s death and resurrection to a close, he ends with another (indirect) answer to their question: one day, their days of fasting shall be turned into days of feasting—but whether that applies to the present or to some future time is unanswered.

Throughout the passage, the inkling of one thing remains. God is still waiting for the people to fully return to Him as he asked in Zechariah 1, and he continues to tell them the “things that [they] shall do” if they are to follow His ways. It would seem as if God’s promises to bless were still contingent on the Jew’s devotion to Him, but as the book of Zechariah proceeds into the undated prophecies of chapters 9 to 14, the question remains: What becomes of God’s promises if His people continue to spurn their King?

*1. For the Hebrews, fasting was an important part of their relationship with God—both as a sign of mourning and a discipline to occasionally accompany prayer. It put them in a humble disposition to trust God (cf. Ezra 8:21-23). In the New Testament, Jesus assumed his followers would fast when he left (Matthew 6:16). We also have examples of Christians fasting to accompany prayer when making important decisions (Acts 13:2). As Americans who live in abundant prosperity, we stand to gain a lot from occasional fasting. Why is it that historically, as a people, we rarely mention or practice fasting?*

*2. Though God never tells the messengers whether or not to continue their fast, he does give them instructions in 7:8-10, 8:9, 13, and 16-17. What instructions does he give them? How can this further inform how we think about disciplines like prayer, fasting, worship, and meditation on Scripture?*

*3. How did this hope of a restored Zion (8:1-13) contrast with the current state of Zion? How do you believe God fulfills promises like these?*

*4. Look over Zechariah 7-8. Compare Jerusalem’s past sins with the punishment for these actions. Compare the instructions God gives the city with the city’s future hope. What connections are there between our actions today and our future? (Stated another way: what did sin do in the past and what should righteousness accomplish now/in the future?) In light of the hope seen here, what should we do?*

## LESSON 7: THE RETURN OF THE KING (ZECHARIAH 9-10)

*“Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he...”*

The first half of Zechariah ended with God’s people still waiting for their Lord to return and dwell in their midst in Jerusalem. Though the first half of the book leaves the question of timing unanswered—the closest we get is when God says, “return to Me... and I will return to you”—the second half of Zechariah affirms that God’s return *will* happen, and it portends *how* it will happen.

Zechariah 9-14 is concerned with the day of the Lord and how his return promises to bring judgment on the evil and salvation for the righteous. Chapters nine and twelve begin with “The burden [or oracle] of the word of the Lord,” — marking a turning point in Zechariah. These oracles should be read as a collage of pictures, not as a precise chronology of what will happen; yet, on this side of history we can see that many of Zechariah’s words have come to pass in the life of Jesus.

Chapter nine introduces the second half of Zechariah on a hopeful note. Judah’s enemies are dealt with in turn. Beginning with the northernmost enemies and marching south like an invading conqueror, God promises judgment on Syria (Damascus), on Tyre, and on the Philistine cities that hadn’t been fully extinguished. As part of his conquering march to Judah, the Lord would arrive in Jerusalem “humble and mounted on a donkey,” to reclaim his place as King over his people.

Zechariah proclaimed this hope in a dark time when people were seeking out various sources of direction and consolation to get them through the darkness. But the shepherds didn’t point Zion to their true hope, so the flock wandered helplessly. Chapter ten urges Zion to cast aside these false helps and ask Yahweh for sustenance and rescue. God promises to punish the shepherds and be a new source of stability in Zion. He will whistle for his children to come home and rouse them to conquer their enemies. Chapters 9-10 show how Yahweh’s kingship and presence would finally restore protection and joy to Zion. Enemies would no longer lay hands on his prized possession.

**1.** *Amidst the verses of judgment in Zechariah 9:1-8, the prophet offers a glimmer of hope in verse 7 (this is also related to similar glimmers of hope for the nations in 2:11, 3:10, 6:15, and 8:22-23). What is the hope that God promises for the Philistines? How is this message a comfort today?*

**2.** *Zechariah 9:9-13 is a clear reference to the coming Messiah/Christ (this is clear to us today from Matthew 21:1-11). Aside from the method of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, what else can we learn in these verses about the rule of the Messiah (i.e. what will he do? how will he rule? how far is his reach?)?*

**3.** *In Zechariah 9:14-17, the prophet promises that God’s return will bring protection and joy to His people. What does it mean that God will protect his people? For now, does it mean the elimination of all harm and suffering, or does it mean something else? In what ways does God protect Christians?*

**4.** *If diviners are simply liars in another form, why does God specify them as a particular type of evil? Passages like Deuteronomy 18:10-12 call out this sin in particular, showing there is more going on than just lying. Why is God especially angry with the diviners and fortune-tellers (Zech 10:2)?*

## NOTE ON THEMES IN ZECHARIAH 9-10

*By Scott Kercheville*

Because of the influence of end-times timetables, it can be hard for modern readers of prophetic language to appreciate the beautiful realities the prophets describe. With respect to timing, it is probably best to see God's promises regarding his kingdom as beginning to be fulfilled in Jesus' first coming and completed at Jesus second coming (cf. Acts 3:21). God's kingdom is now, but not yet. Regardless, too much obsession over timing can lead to trying to detail exactly how God's kingdom will play out (or has already played out) so that we ultimately miss the picture we are supposed to work toward and hope in. These notes on themes in Zechariah 9-10 are simply meant to be an example and a help as we all strive to properly read and hope in prophetic passages.

**God will come as a warrior and Zion will fight.** The enemy nations had oppressed Yahweh's children long enough. The land had been deserted too long. Zechariah declares in these chapters that the time was coming when these arrogant nations would perish. The language regarding Zion trampling their enemies can be challenging to interpret. Jesus has roused us up to fight for his kingdom, but his kingdom does not operate by the standards of worldly kingdoms. Followers of Jesus are not to pick up swords. Paul further clarifies in **2 Corinthians 10:3-6** that we do not wage war according to the flesh. We destroy arguments against the knowledge of God, take thoughts captive to obey Christ, and punish disobedience. We want to bring all under Christ's captivity, but we use the power of God's message to do this. But many evildoers will continue plotting against God's king and kingdom. This text gives us the hope that God will come to avenge all wrongs and set everything right. In that day, we will rejoice in our victory over oppressive evildoers who have not been obedient to the good news.

**God will come as a humble king speaking peace.** Many will perish by the arrow of Israel and the judgment of God, but from these arrogant nations there will be a remnant for God that will become like clans in Judah. Yahweh may come into Zion with a donkey under him, but his dominion will be to the ends of the earth. Though he will use the force of a warrior (and division will be caused), his ultimate goal is peace and unity. In words reminiscent of Isaiah 57:19, Zechariah says he will "*speak peace to the nations.*" Paul says in Ephesians that Jesus "*came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near... So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*" (**Ephesians 2:15-19** ESV).

**God will bring his children back to Zion and restore their joy.** The children had sought poor direction and consolation, but God promised to shepherd his children in the future. He would bring them back to Zion from the nations to restore their strength and joy. But with Israel wandering so aimlessly towards false helps, why would God treat his people with such kindness? Because of the blood of God's covenant with them (9:11). Though his people have not been faithful, he will show an unparalleled faithfulness by loving them while they are still enemies. As we will see in chapter 12, he will even allow himself to be the one pierced to provide the blood.

## **LESSON 8: GOOD SHEPHERD, BAD SHEPHERD (ZECHARIAH 11)**

*“But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. So I said, ‘I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed.’ ”*

The second half of Zechariah (ch. 9-14) is split into two oracles, with Zechariah 11 situated in the middle. Throughout the Bible, prophets deliver God’s word in various ways, but occasionally they deliver prophecies through real world actions. Zechariah 11 is notable for the prophet taking on the mantle of a shepherd to let his actions do the talking. Zechariah first becomes a good shepherd to a flock that has been led astray by bad shepherds. But Zechariah’s goodwill toward his sheep is not reciprocated. Although he eliminates the evil shepherds, the sheep resent Zechariah, and the prophet gives up on them, ultimately accepting thirty pieces of silver to remove himself from the situation. Subsequently, God commands Zechariah to resume his shepherding—but this time he is to become a foolish shepherd for a flock that deserves no better.

While there are several connections between Zechariah 11 and the New Testament, this chapter tells a broad story that cannot be solely limited to the night of Christ’s crucifixion. In playing the role of the good shepherd, Zechariah acts out God’s historical relationship with Israel. Though Israel was saved and nurtured by a loving God, the nation constantly turned away from Him to follow foolish gods of their own choosing. This is why, when the gospel of Matthew (see 27:3-10, especially) connects Judas’s betrayal of Jesus to Zechariah 11, Matthew is clueing the reader in to something larger than thirty pieces of silver. In fact, Matthew is showing us that what was true in Zechariah’s day, and what was true throughout Israel’s history, is even more obvious in the life of Jesus—Israel is relapsing into the old pattern of rejecting the Good Shepherd to follow after those who are bad.

**1.** *Within the New Testament church, elders and overseers are called to shepherd the flock (1 Peter 5:1-5). What effect will foolish shepherds have on the flock? Moreover, if the church finds itself being led by foolish shepherds, what can the church do?*

**2.** *In Zechariah 11, the sheep would rather follow foolish shepherds to their destruction than follow a good shepherd to their salvation. Does this ring true in the real world? Are foolish shepherds easier to follow (or more preferable) to good shepherds? Why might someone prefer following one over the other, practically speaking?*

**3.** *What lessons can the church learn from Zechariah 11? What lessons can elders learn?*

## LESSON 9: THE GOD WHO WAS PIERCED (ZECHARIAH 12:1–13:6)

*“When they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him...”*

Zechariah's second “burden of the word of the Lord” brings us into a final whirlwind of images and moments, some of which seem familiar in how they relate to Christ's story, and some of which seem distant in their cataclysmic vision. The uniqueness of these last three chapters within the book of Zechariah is demonstrated by the prophet's incessant reference to the day of the Lord. Eighteen times in the span of forty-four verses Zechariah mentions the day of the Lord, and sixteen of those times he uses the specific phrase “on that day” to reference what is to unfold. In other words, the day of the Lord is mentioned in 40% of the verses in the last three chapters of Zechariah, guiding us to the realization that Zechariah's last oracle concerns God's visitation on humanity, as well as the subsequent salvation and judgment that will fall on good and evil.

The first section of the oracle runs from Zechariah 12:1-13:6 and begins with the description of a siege on Jerusalem that prompts God to act in defense of his people. This is followed by one of the greatest and most touching scenes in the book—Zechariah 12:10-13:1. In this section, God's people reflect on the God who has protected them and saved them from danger, recognizing that by their evil ways, this God is the “one whom they have pierced.” This realization results in mourning throughout the land, but this event also results in a fountain that is opened to “cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.” The closing verses of this section, 13:2-6, continue to describe the removal of sin and uncleanness from the land by describing the removal of false prophets. What began as a battle, in which God empowers and protects Jerusalem, ends in a moment of salvation as God forgives his people and clears the land of evil.

**1.** *What is the significance of Zechariah's constant use of the phrase “on that day?” Is he referring to one day, many days, or is Zechariah making a reference that is deeper than that?*

**2.** *Zechariah 12:1-9 describes the clans of Judah being under siege in Jerusalem, and it goes on to tell how God will strengthen his people in the face of their enemies. In what similar ways does God protect and strengthen us in our lives as Christians?*

**3.** *How does Zechariah 12:10-13:1 relate to Jesus Christ? How can we personally relate to this picture?*

**4.** *Following the cleansing of sin and uncleanness promised in 13:1, what is the significance of the removal of idols and false prophets in 13:2-13:6? How can we see this play out?*

## LESSON 10: THE RETURN OF THE KING (ZECHARIAH 13:7–14:21)

*“And the Lord will be king over all the earth.”*

The book of Zechariah closes out with a repetition of earlier themes, but the prophet does so in such an elaborate and climactic way that it reads as if Zechariah is painting a brand-new picture. Similar to Zechariah 11-12, Zechariah 13:7-14:21 begins with laments of a defeated shepherd and his doomed sheep before transitioning to a besieged Jerusalem. But there are big differences—this time, the situation is direr. On this occasion, the shepherd of the sheep is not merely resented or maimed (11:8, 17), but he is seemingly struck a deathblow which will in turn lead to the majority of his flock perishing. The siege is also explored in more dire detail. In chapter twelve Zechariah simply talks of “the siege of Jerusalem also [being] against Judah” (12:2), but here, Zechariah describes the siege being successful, Judah being plundered, their women raped, and half the city going into exile (14:1-2).

And yet, as Jerusalem’s predicament draws to the brink of destruction, God’s response is conveyed in equally climactic terms. The Lord himself will go out and fight against the nations like a warrior (14:3); mountains will be split and light will shine when it should be dark (14:4-7); and the Lord will once and for all reign over all the earth with none to deny his authority (14:9). Zechariah concludes by promising a peace for Jerusalem that will never be disturbed, and instead of besieging the city as they had in the past, foreign nations will flock to Jerusalem as a place to worship (in fact, the nations who do not worship in Jerusalem will themselves be punished).

In the book of Zechariah, the prophet is speaking words of encouragement and exhortation to a people only seventy years removed from the destruction of their holy city. Though many of God’s people have returned to Jerusalem, it is still a city that needs rebuilding, as it pales in comparison to its former and future glory. Throughout the book, Zechariah never says that the worst is over, but he does promise a new day in which all the evil that *has* come and *will* come upon God’s people will be set aright. If only God’s people can endure the light, momentary (though seemingly intense) affliction, they’ll live to enjoy an eternal weight of glory beyond comparison.

**1.** *What is the meaning of these horrible afflictions God promises to bring against his people before he ultimately rescues them? How could this help God’s people in the coming troubles - then and today? Read 1 Corinthians 3:12-16, 1 Peter 1:6-13, 4:12-19 as you consider these things.*

**2.** *Without trying to over-interpret or over-explain, what all do you see happening in this final section (13:7-14:21)? How can each of these snapshots help God’s people in their day until the final day?*

**3.** *Two of the big questions that hang over Zechariah are “when will God act?” and “how do stay hopeful until then?” Does the conclusion of Zechariah give any answers to these questions? How?*

# THE ENCOURAGING APOCALYPSE OF ZECHARIAH 13:7-14:21

*By Scott Kercheville*

When we open up the mailbox and see a popular level magazine, we know how to read it. There are certain things we do and don't expect. We expect ads to take up 75% of the space. We expect a few articles generally related to target audience. There may be a couple recipes. There will be anywhere from five to twelve tips to better your romantic relationships. There will be an address-ready postcard promising deeply discounted rates if we renew our subscription now. We don't expect magazines targeted toward young women to contain sports updates, or magazines targeting young men to contain sewing advice. We are familiar with the genre.

In the same way, the Jewish readers of apocalyptic language like Zechariah 14 had mental shelves for language like this. A great deal of literature similar to - and even wilder than Zechariah 14 - has been uncovered from the post-exilic time period. Since we aren't in the same situation, it can take time to develop a mindset that is ready to read and interpret language like this. At times, we may tend to over-interpret and over-explain language like this. And when we cannot specifically understand or explain what is going on, we can tend to become frustrated. In our minds, many of us may wonder why God would breathe out texts like these.

To help with some of this frustration, I'd like to offer a few ways the concluding apocalypse of Zechariah can help God's people endure tremendous difficulties until the final day of which Zechariah speaks comes to pass.

**First**, we see here that Jerusalem isn't out of the woods yet. They've endured a lot of struggles as they've returned to their land and begun to rebuild, but their troubles are far from over. The same is true for us. Horrifying punishments and trials still await God's people. It encourages faithfulness for God's people to know in advance that - no matter how horrible it gets - these things are not wild accidents: God is in control of history. "I will turn my hand against the little ones." "I will put this third in the fire." "I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem..." The nations may appear to be in control, but God assures his people of his sovereign control over history.

**Second**, knowing that the fire to come was meant to be a refining process encourages God's people to remain faithful. There is no ignoring the truth: the burning to come will be horrible at times. To remain firm will be tougher than most imagine. Most will fall away. But God is testing and refining his people like gold to see who is worthy of his kingdom. These pictures encourage us to be part of the few while the many grow faint.

**Third**, God assures that there will be a way out when it seems that all hope is lost. According to Zechariah, all the nations will be gathered against Jerusalem and half the city will fall. But, just as God split the Red Sea when the armies of Egypt were almost upon them, God will come down on the Mount of Olives and split it in two. Just as God parted the waters to make a way in the past, he will part the Mount of Olives and make a valley by which his people can escape. The enemies will be struck with a rotting disease right where they stand. Images like these of cataclysmic last-minute salvation encourage God's people to hold on just a little longer. It will get tough, but God's salvation will be marvelous, terrible, and sudden.

**Fourth**, Zechariah speaks of a future that seems insane to imagine and hope in. The whole land is laid waste, but Jerusalem is strong. Waters flow from it to the world. The world is a big place with only a few who respect Yahweh, but the future Zechariah speaks of has Yahweh as the king of all. The name of other gods have fallen out. Everyone who lives acknowledges his kingship and comes to Jerusalem to worship him. If they don't, they perish. Jerusalem is in complete security. It is never again destroyed. For the remnant who trust the God of Israel, the future world is perfect.

## **LESSON 11: GIVE HONOR TO MY NAME (MALACHI 1:1-2:9)**

*“From the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations”*

Malachi means “my messenger.” It is clear that Malachi spoke to the returnees sometime after the temple was rebuilt. Though nailing down a specific date for his messages is challenging, many place his prophesying somewhere between 445 BC to 425 BC. With a number of stylistic and thematic similarities to Haggai and Zechariah, it is important to keep the messages of these prophets in mind while reading Malachi. The temple had been rebuilt, but the same discouragement about the fulfillment of God’s promises hung over the land. Where is the Lord? Where is his justice? Where is the glorious future he promised? As Malachi addresses questions like these, it is apparent that God’s people, not God, are the ones holding up God’s promises.

**1. (1:1-5)** *This section properly represents the sentiment of the remnant at this time. Israel seemed to not feel as though God was showing his faithful love to them. But God assured them that he has displayed his love for them by promising to wreck their enemies forever. Could we ever have this disconnect today? How and in what ways? Based on Malachi’s answer, how can we deal with this?*

**2. (1:6-14)** *God accused the priests and people of not honoring him as their father and master because of their polluted offerings. He wished the temple doors would be shut. But the priests and the people didn’t see what God was talking about. This same disconnect can be true today, but how? What is it about us and our perceptions of God that can cause us to offer ourselves in such abhorrent ways to God? What does God promise to motivate his people to greater respect in worship?*

**3. (2:1-9)** *God had already declared a curse on the priesthood and promised further cursing if they would not give honor to God’s name. Previously, God’s covenant with Levi was characterized by the Levites’ fear of God and resulting instruction of the people. We are now called priests of the Lord. Do you feel like as a whole we respect this calling, or do we tend to turn “aside from the way”? How? Why may we tend to lower the bar on this aspect of our identity?*



## LESSON 12: PREPARING THE WAY FOR GOD (MALACHI 2:10-4:6)

*“Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts”*

**1. (2:10-16)** *Here, Malachi laments how sad it is that they all have one Father, yet they were being faithless toward one another. Because of this, God had stopped accepting the people’s offerings. The people didn’t understand why, so God points to their marriages. It seems that the men were divorcing their wives and going after idolatrous women of the land. Why is God so angry about this? Explain why this is such a “violence” and a destruction of God’s plan for marriage.*

**Reflections on (2:17-3:5).** The people have wearied God with their words. They keep saying that the God of justice isn’t around. “If God is around, he’s a God who delights in evildoers.” God is exhausted by this because he really is coming, but he knows that few will be able to endure the preparations for his coming. A messenger is coming who will refine the people like gold. Then the Lord will suddenly come to his temple and the wicked will be accused. We can see how this plays out John the Baptist and Jesus Christ. But the problematic thinking in Malachi’s day can still be a reality today. We may ask, “where is God’s justice?”; yet, are we ready for God’s justice to come upon us? Have we been refined? We should count the patience of the Lord as salvation. *“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance,” (2 Peter 3:9).*

**2. (3:6-12; cf. Nehemiah 13:10-14)** *The people have been discouraged about the state of God’s promises for many years. Back in Zechariah 1:3 God urged the people, “Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.” Now, up to a century later, the same discouragement exists and Malachi offers the same words, “Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.” But they don’t understand how they need to return. God’s response seems to be a major facepalm. They want God to return [to his temple?], but **the very temple God promised would become the center of the future world and the source of future blessings had been neglected** by their lackluster tithing. God promised that if they’d right this, he’d show up magnificently. But it makes us wonder, what was going on in their heads? How might we be in danger of the same mistakes today in our labor for God’s kingdom?*

**3. (3:13-4:3)** *The people felt as though it was vain to serve God - they saw no distinction between those who serve God and those who don’t. In response, Malachi tells of a book that was made up of those who “feared the Lord and spoke with one another.” God declares that these will be spared when God makes up his treasured possession. Finally, in the future, people will be able to distinguish: those who don’t serve God will be the ash that the servants of God - the living - walk on after the day of the Lord. Why do you think it is such a big deal to us to see a distinction between servants of God and others? Based on Malachi and this text, what should we do now to ensure we survive the day that is coming?*

## RELEVANT WORKS ON ZECHARIAH

*By Travis Wise*

Zechariah is overlooked, not just by ordinary Christians, but by scholars and commentators as well. As with any other book of the Bible, you can still find numerous commentaries on the book of Zechariah, but a writer has yet to put out a work that has become a universally loved standard in the field (the two-volume work by Meyers comes the closest in this regard, and Baldwin follows behind). This may not be all the fault of commentators, however, and Zechariah's elusive content may contribute to this as well. Though there is no work on Zechariah that stands head and shoulders above others, there are a diverse collection, each which contributes in their own way. These are just a few that I can vouch for.

Baldwin, Joyce G. *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 28. 1972. Reprint, Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

Though the Tyndale series of commentaries is never exhaustive, they tend to be good in their brevity. Baldwin's fits this bill. Conservative in her approach to Scripture and insightful in her comments, Baldwin gives you the best bang for your buck.

Billingsley, Rick. "The Book of Zechariah." In *Minor Prophets II*, edited by Mike Willis, 289-461. Truth Commentaries. Bowling Green: Guardian of Truth Foundation, 2007.

This commentary is part of a single volume that covers five other minor prophets. Partly because of this want of space, even though Zechariah is covered in verse-by-verse commentary, some of the real issues of the book that you'd like to see addressed are not. For those who find this note helpful, the Truth Commentary series is written exclusively by members within the churches of Christ.

Boda, Mark J. *The Book of Zechariah*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.

At 900+ pages, Boda's volume is about as exhaustive as you can get. However, it's often so exhaustive that it is exhausting. Extremely insightful at points, but sometimes you have to pore through a lot of text to find those insights. This commentary series, while very scholarly, tends toward conservatism in their handling of Scripture.

Hailey, Homer. *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1972.

Hailey is a big name in the churches of Christ, and he got that name, in part, because of his book writing, which was both prolific and good. This commentary on the Minor Prophets—a volume which was good enough to receive recognition in broader Christian circles when it was published—is very good, and it's treatment of Zechariah is helpful and insightful. Along with Baldwin, Hailey is a good choice for anyone doing a casual study of Zechariah.

## RELEVANT WORKS (CONTINUED...)

Kline, Meredith G. *Glory In Our Midst: A Biblical-Theological Reading of Zechariah's Night Visions*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001.

A “biblical theology” is a very different book than your traditional verse-by-verse commentary. Instead of magnifying the individual trees, biblical theologies explore the forest. They pick events or themes within a book (such as Zechariah), and show how those themes are developed in the rest of the Bible and how they interrelate. When done well, they help to show why a book matters within the Biblical cannon. Kline’s volume succeeds at this. Sometimes he’s a bit unreadable, and sometimes his conclusions feel like a reach. But this book is packed with insight, and no commentary on Zechariah comes close to adding the unique value that Kline does to our understanding of this book (even though Kline is only dealing with the night visions in the first half of Zechariah).

Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers. *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 25B. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1987.

The Anchor Bible commentaries are very scholarly and tend to fall on the liberal side of the spectrum in their approach to Scripture. That said, where these commentaries (and this one in particular) excel at is their grasp of the historical and cultural context that their subject matter was written in. As a two volume commentary, this set is as exhaustive as Boda’s. They contain a great introduction to Zechariah and are very readable, and along with Baldwin’s work, they are the closest thing to a standard that Zechariah has. Because of its length, cost, and approach to Scripture, it’s not for everyone.

Meyers, Carol L. and Eric M. Meyers. *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible 25C. New York: Doubleday, 1987.

See above note.

Phillips, Richard D. *Zechariah*. Reformed Expository Commentary. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2007.

A decent, readable commentary that focuses more on the big picture than it does on providing verse-by-verse feedback. A good selection for someone wanting a more devotional minded commentary—or one suited more for expositor preaching. The author is from a Reformed background and it comes through in a few of his points, for whatever it is worth.

## APPENDIX: NOTES FROM GEORGE KLEIN'S ZECHARIAH COMMENTARY

Klein, George. New American Commentary Vol. 21B: Zechariah (The New American Commentary). B&H Publishing, 2008. Kindle file.

### A Brief List of Important Dates in the Ancient Near East and Judah

Year (BC)	Event
587	Fall of Judah
550	Cyrus defeats Midians
539	Cyrus conquers Babylon
538	Edict of Cyrus, encouraging exiles to return to the Promised Land and rebuild the temple
530–522	Reign of Cambyses II, Darius's son, conqueror of Egypt
522–486	Reign of Darius I (“the Great”)
520	Darius confirms Cyrus's decree to rebuild the temple; Haggai's sermons, Zechariah's eight night visions (1:7–6:8)
518	Zechariah's response to the delegation from Bethel (chaps. 7–8)
516	Completion and dedication of the temple
490	Defeat of Darius I at Marathon by Greeks
486–465	Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) reigns
480	Persians defeated at Thermopylae and Salamis by Greeks
332	Alexander the Great defeats Persians, ending the Persian hegemony and inaugurating the Hellenistic era.” (Klein, pg. 40)

### The Theological Emphasis of Zechariah's Night Visions (Klein, pg. 65)

Vision	Image	Theological Message
1:7-17	Man on a Red Horse	The Lord's Dominion over Israel's Rebuilding
1:18-21	Four Horns and Four Craftsmen	The Lord's Judgment on the Nations Persecuting Israel
2:1-13	Surveyor	The Lord's Bright Future for Jerusalem
3:1-10	Cleansing of the High Priest	The Lord Requires Holy Worship
4:1-14	Gold Lampstand and Two Olive Trees	The Lord's Provision Safeguards Israel's Future
5:1-4	Flying Scroll	The Lord Judges Israel for Breaking the Covenant
5:5-11	Woman in the Basket	The Lord Removes Sin from Israel's Midst
6:1-8	Four Chariots	The Lord's Sovereignty over All Creation

### The Connections between Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14

*SK — Since Zechariah 1-8 and 9-14 seem so different, this has led many scholars to conclude that Zechariah did not write chapters 9-14. There are many problems with this conclusion that we won't get into. Looking at the connections between the two sections can help us appreciate not only the unity of the letter, but also the key themes. Note these excerpts from Klein's comments.*

“For example, LaSor (et al.) states, There are connections, such as the covenant formula (8:8; 13:9), the divine protection of Jerusalem (2:5,8–10; 14:11), and the return of the exiles (8:7; 10:9–12). Most importantly, the climax of the second part of Zechariah is similar to that of the first: the inclusion of gentiles in the Jerusalem worship of the Lord (8:20–22; 14:16–19).” (Klein, pg. 32)

“In addition to the shared themes observed by LaSor above, Childs adds numerous others. The theological points found in both sections of Zechariah follow. The notion of restored fertility occurs both in 8:12 and 14:6,8. A curse spreads over the entire land in 5:3 and is removed in 14:11. God pronounces judgment on the nations in 1:18–20 and 14:3–5. The nations turn to the Lord in 2:11; 8:20–22; and 14:6–9,16. Cultic rites are transformed in the future in 8:18–23 and 14:20–21. Both 4:6 and 12:10 describe an outpouring of the Spirit/spirit that would transform the people of God. God judges all who swear falsely by his name in 5:4 and 13:3. The coming Messiah triumphs not by might, but in humility, as described in 3:8; 4:6; and 9:9–11. Perhaps the most encompassing similarity, according to Childs, is the uniform testimony of both “halves” of Zechariah that a new era will come for God's people, linked to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Zechariah's eschatology did not concern the future exclusively, however, for it sought to give hope to the community's immediate needs.” (Klein, pg. 32)

### **Interpreting the Fulfillment of Zechariah's Message**

“For many of Zechariah's passages, the interpreter must struggle with the question of how and when the prophecies in the book will be fulfilled. For instance, it is difficult to determine whether God's word in chap. 8 has found its complete historical fulfillment. Even Cohen, the Jewish commentator, tacitly acknowledges that only a partial fulfillment occurs in the Maccabean period. One cannot conclude that these oracles find their culmination in the restoration era, although the divine messages do provide hope for the postexilic community by reassuring them that the Lord has guaranteed their success and safety. Regarding the fulfillment of this prophecy, the interpreter has three options.

First, the oracles may refer only to the restoration era using hyperbolic language. According to this viewpoint, one cannot read the prophecies “closely” for the prophet never intended for them to be accepted point by point. However, this method should be rejected since it takes interpretative liberties that the text itself does not permit.

Second, the modern interpreter may treat the oracles in Zechariah as though they had a contemporary significance for Zechariah's day, as well as a future spiritual significance. According to this particular understanding, the ultimate fulfillment will occur in God's spiritual kingdom. Furthermore, this perspective limits the coming kingdom to a spiritual realm, precluding any physical character in the kingdom and reassigning every divine assurance that was extended to Israel in the Old Testament to the Church. This view often suggests that the Church functions as the “replacement” of Israel.

Third, another attempt to understand the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecies suggests that the prophecies speak meaningfully, but incompletely, to the restoration period. Thus, Zechariah's oracles spoke directly to the spiritual needs of his audience, but the historical epoch of the prophet's day did not see the mature fruition of what God had decreed. The account of the Good Shepherd in chap. 11 serves as an example. While Zechariah personally embodied the symbolic action of shepherding the flock, receiving the people's scorn as thanks for his labors, and was paid the patronizing sum of thirty pieces of silver for his work, the depth of the passage saw its final scope fulfilled in the life of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

This final interpretative understanding concludes that the ultimate fulfillment of the Lord's promises in the book of Zechariah will occur in God's eschatological kingdom, a kingdom that will reflect both physical and spiritual dimensions. Thus, this interpretative understanding contends that the promises of God to Zechariah far exceed in scope any historical “fulfillment” during Zechariah's era.” (Klein, pg. 64)

### **Interpreting Israel/Judah/Jerusalem/Zion in Zechariah and the Prophets**

*SK — How should we interpret and apply the language and promises surrounding what God will do with Israel? Though I disagree with Klein's conclusion, I agree with his overall thinking.*

“For the Christian interpreter, studying the references to “Israel” in the book of Zechariah in light of the broader use of the ethnic designation in both Testaments raises important hermeneutical and theological questions about the significance of the biblical prophecies regarding the term. In doing so, one must remain careful not to confuse the biblical entity of

“Israel” in the Old Testament with either the modern day state of Israel or with any form of Judaism.

Blaising offers an excellent historical, hermeneutical, and theological survey of the role of Israel in God’s eschatological kingdom. Over the centuries, two predominant views regarding this issue have emerged. McComiskey, for example, epitomizes the first approach, which asserts a future hope for Israel. However, he redefines what is meant by “Israel” when he maintains that all of the Old Testament promises of God, including those found in Zechariah, would be fulfilled by the Church, a view known as “supersessionism.” According to this view, Israel as a national entity no longer holds a place in the kingdom of God. This perspective has enjoyed widespread adoption throughout the history of interpretation in the church, at least since the second century AD.

However, despite the prevalence of supersessionism, it remains preferable to view biblical references to “Israel” as applying to national Israel, not the Church. According to this perspective, the Church and Israel both participate in God’s eschatological promises, but neither will disappear in the end times. This interpretation rejects the figurative interpretation of Israel that applies biblical prophecies regarding Israel in the Old Testament to the Church. But this view of Israel does not embrace a two-covenant approach, which claims that national Israel enjoys a relationship with the Lord outside of Christ. Israel as a national entity, like the Church, will be united to God the Father through the work of Christ.

There are several reasons for embracing the national Israel interpretation. The importance of national Israel to the teachings of both Jesus and Paul serves as one important rationale for retaining a distinction between Israel and the Church. Moreover, the absence of compelling literary, theological, or historical reasons for treating “Israel” as a metaphor argues for hermeneutical consistency in the reading of the title.” (Klein, pg. 67)

*SK — Klein’s approach is far better than obsessions over what will happen with the modern political entity of Israel. I do tend to disagree with Klein’s embracing of the national Israel interpretation over “supersessionism” (though, a better term would be nice). To me, it seems the authors of the New Testament spill a lot of ink trying to emphasize that Jews and Gentiles are part of the same body and so they receive the same promises (esp. Ephesians 2, Philippians 3, Galatians, and Romans). Per my understanding, it does seem fair to count believers from the nations as part of the Israel of God (cf. Galatians 6:16) and thus to reinterpret many references to Israel in the prophets. After all, believing Gentiles are declaring allegiance to a Jewish King. In doing this, we are lessening the importance of our own national heritage. Peter assures us that we all are part of the holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). Paul states that people of faith are children of Abraham and heirs according to the promise. I am sure Klein would have his own responses to my thoughts. Fortunately, we seem to be on the same general page: the Church and [believing] Israel both participate in God’s eschatological promises.*

**Examples of Intertextuality in Zechariah**

“Zechariah seems primarily concerned to collect and reapply the messages from the prophets who preceded him in order to show his own audience how these oracles would see their fulfillment. Meyers and Meyers add, They [the postexilic prophets] transformed existing authoritative predictive prophecies, without negating their sanctity or validity, into equally valid formulations that could erase the prevailing sense of hopelessness and powerlessness while simultaneously sustaining traditional community values and beliefs.” (Klein, pg. 50)

<b>EXAMPLES OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN ZECHARIAH (From Klein, pg. 50-57)</b>		
<b>ZECHARIAH</b>	<b>OTHER TEXTS</b>	<b>THEME</b>
	<b>Genesis</b>	
9:9	49:10-11	Arrive on a donkey
9:11	37:24	Waterless pit
12:1	chaps. 1-2	Creation
13:4	25:25	Hairy cloak
14:6-7	1:3-5	New creation
14:8	2:6, 10-14	Abundant, living waters

<b>EXAMPLES OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN ZECHARIAH (From Klein, pg. 50-57)</b>		
<b>ZECHARIAH</b>	<b>OTHER TEXTS</b>	<b>THEME</b>
	<b>Exodus</b>	
9:1-8	34:24	I will cast out nations before you
9:11	24:3	Blood of the covenant
10:12; 13:3,9; 14:9	3:15; 6:3	Name of God
12:8	13:21; 14:19	Angel going before
14:14	12:31-36	Wealth of the nation(s) plundered
14:20	28:36; 39:30	"HOLY TO THE LORD"
	<b>Leviticus</b>	
13:9	26:12	God's people, Israel's God
	<b>Numbers</b>	
13:1	8:7; 19:9-31	Fountain, cleansing sin
13:9	31:23	Purification by fire
	<b>Deuteronomy</b>	
9:1-8	1:7-8; 11:24	I will cast out nations before you
10:2	18:10-11	Deception of false prophets
10:6	passim ( <i>various - SK</i> )	House of Joseph
10:12; 13:3,9; 14:9	12:5,11	Name of God
11:9,16	passim	Curse describing devouring flesh
11:10	passim	Covenant breaking
12:4	28:28	Smite with madness, panic, blindness
13:2	12:2-3	Banish idols
13:3	18:20-22	Lying in the Lord's name
13:3	13:6-10; 21:18-21	Judgment by parents
13:9	26:17-18	God's people, Israel's God
13:9	passim	Covenantal relationship with God
14:2	13:12-16	Plunder
14:4	5:4	Theophany on mountain
14:9	6:4	The Lord is one
14:11	passim	Security of God's people
14:13	7:23	Panic of the Lord
14:16	16:13-15; 31:9-13	Booths
	<b>Joshua</b>	
10:10	17:16	No room
	<b>2 Samuel</b>	
14:9	7:13	The Lord's kingdom extends over the whole earth
	<b>1 Kings</b>	
11:17	13:4	Withered arm
13:4	19:13,19	Hairy cloak
	<b>2 Kings</b>	
9:9	19:21	Daughter of Jerusalem
10:2	17:17	Deception of false prophets
13:4	2:8, 13, 14 ( <i>1:8 — SK</i> )	Hairy cloak
14:14	7:8	Wealth of the nation(s) plundered
	<b>Job</b>	
10:3	39:19-25	Mighty horse
	<b>Psalms</b>	

<b>EXAMPLES OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN ZECHARIAH (From Klein, pg. 50-57)</b>		
<b>ZECHARIAH</b>	<b>OTHER TEXTS</b>	<b>THEME</b>
9:10	72:8	Reign over all the earth
9:17	133:1	How attractive and beautiful
10:2-3; 11:4	23:1; 80:1	Shepherd motif
10:4	118:22	Cornerstone
10:6	3:4; 4:1; 20:2; <i>passim</i>	The Lord answers
10:11	74:13-17	Sea of trouble
10:12	75:2	Name of God
11:1	24:7	Open (imperative) doors
12:1	18:9; 104:2; <i>passim</i>	Creation
12:2	75:8	Cup motif
14:4	29:6-8	Earthquake, mountains move
14:16	24:10; 98:6	The Lord is king
	<b>Ecclesiastes</b>	
10:2-3; 11:4	12:11	Shepherd motif
	<b>Song of Solomon</b>	
9:17	4:10; 7:1,6	How attractive and beautiful
	<b>Isaiah</b>	
1:17	51:3	The Lord comforts Zion
7:9-10	1:16-17,23	Judge faithfully
7:11-12	6:9-10	Stubborn hearts
7:13	1:15	Judah called, God would not listen
8:20-22	2:2-4 (Mic 4:2-3)	Nations come to the Lord's mountain and city
9:9	37:22	Daughter of Jerusalem
9:9	11:4	Reign with righteousness
9:10	43:17	Cutting off chariots and horses
9:11	42:7; 49:9; 61:1	I will set captives free
9:12	61:7 (see 40:2)	Restoration of double blessing
9:13	49:2	Judah and Ephraim are bows and arrows
9:16	40:11; 62:3	Flock of his people shine like jewels
9:16	53:6	People are like sheep
9:17	62:2-3	How attractive and beautiful
10:4	22:23	Peg
10:6	41:17; 49:8	The Lord answers
12:1	40:22; 42:5; 43:1; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13,16	Creation
12:2	51:17,22	Cup motif
14:1-2	13:9,15-16	Day of judgment coming
14:2-3	30:32	The Lord battles nations
14:2	13:15-16	Homes plundered, women ravished
14:2	4:2-3	Survivors in Jerusalem
14:4-5	13:13-14	Earthquake, upheaval, and flight of people
14:4	3:13	The Lord stands in judgment
14:5	6:4	Earthquake, mountains move
14:6-7	2:5	Light of the Lord
14:8	2:3; 30:25	Blessing flows from Zion
14:10-21	2:2-22	The Lord's house raised above mountains
14:13	22:5	Panic of the Lord



<b>EXAMPLES OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN ZECHARIAH (From Klein, pg. 50-57)</b>		
<b>ZECHARIAH</b>	<b>OTHER TEXTS</b>	<b>THEME</b>
14:16-17	30:29	Going up to worship the Lord on the mountain
14:20	chap. 4	Holiness of Jerusalem restored
	<b>Jeremiah</b>	
1:4	25:5	Return from evil ways
1:12	25:11	Seventy years
8:14	4:28	I determined to bring disaster on you
9:5-6	25:20	Wealth and sinfulness of Philistine cities
9:9	23:5	Reign with righteousness
9:11	38:6	Waterless pit
10:2	14:14; 27:8-9	Deception of false prophets
10:2-3; 11:4; 12:6; 13:7	17:16; 23:2	Shepherd motif
10:6	33:3	The Lord answers
10:7-8	23:3	Israel multiplies
10:12; 13:3,9; 14:9	33:2	Name of God
11:3	25:36	Wail of shepherds
11:9	15:2	Let the dying die
12:1	10:12; 51:15	Creation
12:2	25:15-31; 49:12	Cup motif
12:10	6:26	Mourning for only child
13:9	7:23; 31:33	God's people, Israel's God
14:2	4:5-8; 25:1-21	Nations against Jerusalem
14:8	8:13	Abundant, living waters
	<b>Lamentations</b>	
1:6	2:17	The Lord does as he purposes
9:9	2:15	Daughter of Jerusalem
12:2	4:21	Cup motif
	<b>Ezekiel</b>	
8:8	11:20; 36:28; 37:23	They are my people; I am their God
8:12	34:27	The earth will yield its produce
9:2-3	chaps. 26-27	Wealth and sinfulness of Philistine cities
9:4; 11:1	23:25	Consumed by fire
10:2-3; 11:4; 12:6; 13:7	34:8-9,23; 37:24	Shepherd motif
10:9	5:10,12	Israel scattered
11:7	37:15-23	Two staffs
13:2	14:1-8	Banish idols
13:3	14:9-10	Lying in the Lord's name
13:8	5:12	Punishment by thirds
13:9	37:23	God's people, Israel's God
14:1	38:12-13	Spoil
14:5	38:19-23	Earthquake, mountains move
14:8	17:5-8; 31:5,7; 47:1-12	Abundant, living waters
14:13	38:21	Enemies kill one another
	<b>Hosea</b>	
9:7	2:17	Removal of Baals and other evidence of idolatry
9:8; 10:6	2:20	Safe dwelling of the people
9:9-13	1:11	Coming eschatological Davidic king

<b>EXAMPLES OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN ZECHARIAH (From Klein, pg. 50-57)</b>		
<b>ZECHARIAH</b>	<b>OTHER TEXTS</b>	<b>THEME</b>
9:10	1:7:2:18	The Lord's destruction of armies
9:10	1:7	Deliverance from the Lord despite human action
9:12	2:7	Return of the people to the Lord
9:15	2:21-23	The Lord provides deliverance and abundance
9:17	2:22	The Lord gives grain and grape
9:17	1:11	Agricultural abundance makes Israel thrive
10:6	2:21;14:8	The Lord answers
10:6	9:6	God's compassion or non-compassion on his people
10:7	2:14	Heart is seat of devotion to the Lord
10:8	1:11	Eschatological gathering of God's people
10:9	2:23	Israel scattered
10:9	2:23	The Lord sows Israel in the Land
10:10	2:15	The exodus, a surety of future deliverance
13:9	1:9; 2:20-23	God's people, Israel's God
	<b>Joel</b>	
14:1	1:15; 2:1	Day of the Lord coming
14:2,12-17	4:11-16	Nations gathered at Jerusalem
14:4-7	2:10; 3:3-4; 4:15-16	Cosmic reversals
14:8	2:20; 3:18	Abundant, living waters
14:11,20-21	3:17,20-21	Holiness of Jerusalem
14:14	3:11-12	Nations gathered
14:19	3:19	Desolation of Egypt
	<b>Amos</b>	
3:2	4:11	A burning stick snatched from fire
9:4; 11:1; 12:6	1:4,7,10	Consumed by fire
9:5-6	1:7-8	Wealth and sinfulness of Philistine cities
10:12; 13:3,9; 14:9	5;8; 9:6	Name of God
12:10	8:10	Mourning for only child
13:5	7:14	Denying being prophet
14:5	1:1	Earthquake, mountains move
	<b>Micah</b>	
3:10	4:4	Under a vine and a fig tree
8:20-22	4:2-3	Nations come to the Lord's mountain and city
9:9	4:8	Daughter of Jerusalem
10:2-3; 11:4	5:4	Shepherd motif
10:6	3:4	The Lord answers
13:4	3:5-8	Shame of prophetic vision
	<b>Zephaniah</b>	
2:14	3:14	Coming of a king
9:4; 11:1; 12:6	1:18; 3:8	Consumed by fire
9:5-6	2:4	Wealth and sinfulness of Philistine cities
9:9	3:14	Daughter of Jerusalem
14:2	1:2-6,13	The Lord's power directed toward Jerusalem
14:21	1:11	Merchants eliminated

### The Use of Zechariah in the New Testament

“Dodd isolates New Testament citations from Zechariah as follows: Zech 9:9 Matt 21:5; John 12:15 Zech 11:13 Matt 27:9 Zech 12:3 Luke 21:24 Zech 12:10 John 19:37; Rev 1:7 Zech 13:7 Mark 14:27 Zech 14:5 1 Thess 3:13 Zech 14:8 John 7:38 Zech 14:21 John 2:16. A new study by Ham outlines the important role the book of Zechariah played in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew relied quite heavily on Zechariah, alluding to the prophet at least eight times. Only Isaiah exerted a greater influence on the Gospel of Matthew than Zechariah. Two of the formula citations in Matthew (21:5; 27:9–10) owe their source to Zechariah. Another one of Matthew's explicit quotations comes from Zechariah as well (26:31). Evans outlines numerous additional examples of Zechariah's influence on the Gospels. He outlines the following illustrations:

<b>Zechariah</b>	<b>Gospel</b>	<b>Content</b>
11:11; 13:7	Luke 12:32	"Sheep that have no shepherd"
14:4	Matt 17:20	Faith that can move mountains
11:6	Mark 9:31	Jesus' anticipation of his arrest and martyrdom
14:5	Matt 25:31	Coming of the Son of Man with angels.

Outside of the Gospels, the book of Zechariah exercised a significant influence on the book of Revelation. Rogers identifies the following passages and themes from Zechariah that Revelation employed:

<b>Zechariah</b>	<b>Revelation</b>	<b>Content</b>
1:16; 2:5–9	11:1–2	Measuring Jerusalem
Chaps. 1, 6	Chaps. 6, 19	Horses
1:7–14; 6:1–8	6:1–8	Four horsemen
2:10–17	7:3–8:1	Gathering nations
Chap. 3	3:4–5; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13–14; 14:14; 16:15; 19:13–15; 22:14	Garments of the righteous
Chap. 4	Chap. 11	Lamp or Menorah
Chap. 4	11:3–4	Two witnesses
Chap. 6	2:10; 3:11; 4:4; 6:2; 14:14; 19:12	Crown
12:10,12 (Dan 7:13)	1:7	Son of Man, pierced Shepherd
14:4	11:13,15; 16:19	Earthquake in Jerusalem
14:6–22	21:23–22:5	New Jerusalem.” (Klein, pg. 62)

### Matthew 27 - Why Reference Jeremiah, Not Zechariah?

“Predictably, a legion of interpretations of Matt 27:9 have emerged over the years. One of the most helpful suggests that the Matthean emphasis lies not with the payment of 30 silver coins, but with the field, a topic that Zech 11:12–13 does not mention at all. This understanding maintains that Matthew intentionally alluded to Jeremiah, probably to chap. 19. Jeremiah 19 speaks of “the blood of the innocent” (v. 4), “the potter” (vv. 1,11), the renaming of the valley (v. 6), the violence associated with the site (v. 11), as well as the judgment and burial of leaders (v. 11). Thus, one may reasonably conclude that Matthew's “quote” alludes to texts from both Jeremiah and Zechariah. Apparently, Matthew gave precedence to the themes derived from Jeremiah because of the Gospel's explicit reference to the preexilic prophet.” (Klein, pg. 26)