

# *Zechariah*

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## **Background**

Zechariah's prophetic ministry took place during the time of Israel's restoration from the Babylonian captivity, otherwise called the postexilic period. About 75 years had gone by since the prophecies of Habakkuk and Jeremiah and about 20 years since the laying of the foundation of the second temple. Haggai had started his ministry about two months prior to Zechariah's.

## **The Book**

It is generally agreed that Zechariah wrote the first eight chapters of the book but there is disagreement on whether or not he wrote the last six. Because of the way it is written and the time period it covers some feel Zechariah could not have written the last six chapters.

Early scholars believed these chapters were written by Jeremiah and therefore prior to the captivity. This was in the eighteenth century. Later influential writers argued against this view believing the book was written just after the reign of Josiah (609-587 B.C.). This view was held in the late 1700's and early 1800's.

During the 1800's another opinion was that these chapters were written after Alexander the Great conquered the area and continued to be written through the Maccabean wars (134 B.C.) Not until the 1930's was this opinion challenged with the view they were written in the late Persian period or the beginning of the Greek. This view is now the consensus of leading scholars.

***v.1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,***

The first word of the Lord comes to Zechariah in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, king of Persia. This is about two months after the first prophecy of Haggai and right between Haggai's second and third prophecies.

Zechariah is identified as being the son of Berechiah. Berechiah is in turn the son of Iddo making Iddo Zechariah's grandfather. In Ezra, Zechariah is identified as being the son of Iddo therefore speculation is that Zechariah's father may have died at an early age. (Ezra 5:1; 6:14)

Iddo was a priest who returned to Judah with Zerubbabel. (Neh. 12:1,4) This would imply that Zechariah was of the tribe of Levi and therefore a priest of the temple himself. He therefore would have a working knowledge of the law and would have been educated in the history of the Jewish nation including the kings and prophets who had gone before him.

***v.1:2 The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.***

Zechariah seems to state the obvious since it was their forefathers who displeased the Lord so much he had the temple and Jerusalem destroyed and had the people put into captivity. This statement seems to be a lead-in as a warning to the people to listen to what the prophet is about to say to them in regard to their past and current obedience to the Lord.

***v.1:3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.***

The people had made the decision to move on with the building of the temple a couple of months earlier. (Hag. 1:12-15) Zechariah now is giving them reassurance of God's interest in them and that once they turned to him he would not leave them. They could be assured of God's protection and blessing. To hear Haggai's message being approved and backed by a Levite priest would give the people confidence.

***v.1:4 Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord.***

If these Jews had an inclination to fall back on their ancestors actions for examples or for direction Zechariah issues them a warning not to do so. Prior to the captivity prophets such as Isaiah, Habakkuk and Jeremiah gave the people warnings of their impending doom unless they changed their ways. For the most part they did not listen and captivity and destruction resulted. By looking back lessons could be learned and punishment avoided.

***v.1:5 Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?***

A contrast is about to be setup between man and God and why the people should hold God's word true and lasting rather than man's. In referring to their fathers, who were evil and disobeyed God, he asks if they are still around. Obviously they are gone and with them any promises they had made. Even God's chosen prophets were gone. They themselves

could not live forever and many of the prophecies they gave they would not see come true. With God however it is a different matter.

***v.1:6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.***

God's words are lasting and were fulfilled long after the men who delivered them had died. The proof of this is the witness of those who saw the fulfillment. If the people read the prophecies and looked back at the lives of their fathers they would have to acknowledge the events did affect their ancestors. The consequences of the people's actions were exactly as God had stated in his statutes.

These first six verses are sort of an introduction so the people would know the truth of all the things Zechariah would now tell them. Again, by looking back into the past, at all the dealings God had with their people, the truth of God's word can be established and there can be confidence in the fulfillment of God's word in the future.

***v.1:7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,***

On the night of Sebat 24th (twenty fourth day of the eleventh month) Zechariah sees a series of eight (some say nine) visions. This is two months after Haggai's final prophecy. The computed date is February 15, 519 B.C.

The eight visions taken as a whole reveal the future of Israel in God's plan. An angel is present during each of the visions and will serve as an interpreter.

***v.1:8 I saw by 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 were there red horses, speckled, and white.***

Vision #1

In this vision Zechariah sees a man sitting on a red horse in a valley of myrtle trees. Behind him are other horses of which there are three kinds; red, speckled and white.

The *man riding upon a red horse* is identified as being "an angel of the Lord". (v.11)

Most commentators attempt to identify this angel as either Michael, because he was identified in other situations, or as Christ. (Josh. 5:13-15; Dan. 10:13, 12:1; Gen. 22:11-12; Ex. 3:2,4) In this vision however there is actually no specific identification given. The man on the horse appears to be the leader of the others because there are horses behind him and a report is made to him. (v.11)

The *myrtle trees that were in the bottom* symbolize the Jewish people who had left Babylon and now live in Judah. They are in the bottom (valley or low place) to show their low stature among the other peoples of the earth. They weren't rich, weren't popular, and didn't have

grand titles. They were captives released by their oppressors.

There were *red horses, speckled, and white*. The color of the horses is felt to be significant. Red usually means war or bloodshed. Many feel the lead horse being red signifies God's anger and wrath which he will unleash on Israel's enemies. The red horses following symbolize war. (Rev. 6:4) The white horses are symbolic of victory or conquest. (Rev. 6:2) The speckled horses are a mixture of both. Some put this horse as being pale signifying death and pestilence. (Rev. 6:8) This however does not seem to fit. There is more uncertainty than anything about what it symbolizes.

***v.1:9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.***

Seeking to know the meaning of the vision Zechariah asks an angel to interpret the vision for him. This is a second angel, it is not the angel of the Lord sitting on the horse. The angel answered he will show him the meaning.

***v.1:10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.***

The interpreting angel said he would explain the vision but here the angel on the red horse is the one who answers. The angel explains the mission of those he commands. The angels on the red, speckled and white horses were to roam the earth and report on the activity of the earthly nations. They were patrolling the earth observing the actions of man.

***v.1:11 And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.***

The angels had completed their mission and were now making their report to the lead angel. Their report was that at this time, present time for Zechariah, there was peace throughout the earth. Darius had indeed conquered all his enemies by this time and the Persian empire was secure and prospering.

This vision with its dialog confirm the prophecy given by Jeremiah. (Jer. 30:8-10, 46:27)

***v.1:12 Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord 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?***

As reported by the angels the world was at peace. As the rest of the world lived in relative prosperity the Jews were not all that well off. As Haggai has stated they were having problems with their crops which they were not meeting expectations. They were having problems with the Samaritans who were preventing them from building the temple and city walls.

This situation prompts the question by the angel sitting on the red horse of how much longer the Lord will subject Israel to these conditions. The prophets living before the captivity had predicted the restoration of the nation and eventual glory. (Is. 60:1-3; Jer 31:7-10)

It had been 70 years since they were scattered by the Babylonians and now even the angels were looking forward to God's promised end.

***v.1:13 And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.***

The angel's question is answered as God responds to the question by addressing the angel interpreting for Zechariah. The good and comforting words are words with promises. His words have an assurance that he has not deserted his people. The words that follow contain two things; first the assurance of love on the part of God toward Jerusalem and second that he will restore the prosperity of Judah.

***v.1:14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.***

The angel now passes on the good and comfortable words to Zechariah. He was in turn to proclaim these words to the people. The good word is that God is jealous for his people. This jealousy is not suspicious or envious but is used as an expression of love for what is his. The relationship God has with his covenant people is unique and they are his exclusive possession. (Ps. 78:68)

Zion is specifically stated since it is the mount on which the temple was built. (Ps. 132:13)

***v.1:15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.***

In contrast to the great love God had for Israel he was equally angry with the heathen nations under which the Jews were captive. The "*sore displeased*" would be more accurately translated from the Hebrew as 'great anger'.

God has used both the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish Israel for its sins but these heathen nations went to far in their persecutions of the Jews. His anger is for this reason and because the heathen arrogantly thought it was their power that contributed to their greatness. Once they had conquered their enemies they set themselves at ease thinking nothing could defeat them. (Is. 47:6)

They were "*quiet and careless in their confidence in their own power and prosperity, which they regard as secured for ever.*" Keil

When speaking of Israel, God was "*a little displeased*". The Hebrew used in this phrase indicates duration rather than intensity. This contrasts with his anger toward the heathen and toward the sins of Israel's fathers in verse 2. So the overall meaning would be he was very angry at Israel's sin but only for a short time. (Is. 54:7-8)

The heathen, even though picked by God as his instrument of punishment, helped of their own volition to make the affliction worse. This was so much so they would have totally annihilated the Jews altogether.

This verse as written by Keil as "*and with great wrath I am angry against the nations at rest; for I had been angry for a little while, but they helped for harm.*"

***v.1:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.***

The comforting words come as a promise to Israel. "*Therefore*" or because he loved Israel and had great anger against the heathen God would return to Jerusalem with mercy. The expression of mercy would be shown first by the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem where it previously stood. (Ezra 6:15; Ez. 41-45)

The line stretched upon Jerusalem indicates a measuring line used to mark the walls of the city. This surveyors line was the promise the city itself would be rebuilt. (v.2:1-2)

***v.1:17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.***

Even more promises were to be proclaimed to the Israelites. Not only was Jerusalem to be restored but also many of the other cities as well. The nation would once again prosper as God's mercy is spread throughout the land.

Summary: This first vision shows God's instruments of judgment ready to overthrow the nations of the earth who are at rest and promises the future glorification of the nation.

***v.1:18 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.***

Vision #2

In this vision Zechariah sees four horns. These horns are horns of an animal and represent strength and pride. For this reason the horns are symbolic of four ruling powers of the world. (Rev. 17:12)

***v.1:19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.***

Zechariah asks the interpreting angel what the horns represent and the angel explains the horns as those who had contributed to the scattering of the Jews. One of the questions here is what nations are being represented? There are three thoughts as to who they are. The first is that they represent the nations surrounding Israel in four directions. The Assyrians, Chaldeans and Samaritans to the north; Egypt and Arabia to the south; Philistia on the west and Ammon and Moab on the east. These nations at one time or another caused problems for Israel and to some extent displaced its people.

The second thought is that they were big four of Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Persia. These nations had large empires and had already caused the scattering of the Jews.

The third set of nations were the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans. These nations are taken from those mentioned by Daniel. (Dan. 2 & 7) Although these empires existed

only the Babylonians and Persians had risen to power as of this date in history. So this brings up the question as to whether this vision is prophetic concerning the other two "horns".

*Editors note:* Because Zechariah has no knowledge of any future kingdoms and that the visions are to be uplifting to the Jews with good and comfortable words the second interpretation of the horns seems to be the most logical.

It should also be noted that Judah and Israel are mentioned together with Jerusalem indicating God has not totally forgotten the northern country which had abandoned him ever since the kingdom split almost 425 years earlier.

***v.1:20-21 And the Lord shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.***

As a second part of this vision Zechariah sees four carpenters corresponding to the four horns. He does not ask what they represent but rather what their function will be.

The term "*fray them*" means to terrify or frighten. The gentile nations used their power (lifted up their horn) to defeat and scatter the Israelites. The carpenters are the nations God will use to overthrow each of these Old Testament superpowers.

God does not show how these things would come about but the vision is used to show God's people that those who had come against his people would be judged and punished.

Summary: Zechariah sees all eight objects appearing together. The angel refers to the four horns as kingdoms with Judah helpless before them. The carpenters then will be used to bring down these kingdoms.

***v.2:1 I lifted up my eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.***

The third vision begins with Zechariah seeing a man with a measuring line. He is a surveyor and is probably an angel although it is suggested by some to be Jehovah. Ezekiel had a similar vision many years earlier. (Ez. 40:1-3)

***v.2:2 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.***

Zechariah speaks to the man and asks him where he is going. The response by the man is that he is going to measure the dimensions of the city. The presumption here is that the city will be rebuilt according to the promises. (Jer. 31:38-40) The surveyor will mark where the walls would be built thereby defining how large the city will be.

***v.2:3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,***

At this point the interpreting angel with Zechariah starts to leave but as he does he is met by another angel.

***v.2:4 And said unto him, Run speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:***

A dialog takes place between the two angels in which the second angel gives a message to the interpreting angel who is then to relate the message to Zechariah, the young man. The message is written as if Zechariah is a third party overhearing the two angels talking but Zechariah is hearing it from the interpreting angel.

The message in the vision concerns the city of Jerusalem and the surveyor. The interpretation of the vision is given so that Zechariah comes away with the full meaning of the vision. The angel expands upon what Zechariah sees as dimensions being laid out for the city to state that Jerusalem will expand beyond material walls. There would not be enough room within the walls to hold all the people and cattle which would come to it. Towns and villages would spring up around the outside of the city. (Jer. 31:27)

The actual wall is rebuilt as prophesied. (Ez. 36:10-11; Dan. 9:25)

***v.2:5 For I, saith the Lord, will be unto here a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.***

Since the city will be so vast that no wall could protect it entirely God says he would be its protection. Like a wall of fire God would be around the city to prevent their enemies from invading. The temple was yet to be built and there was no protective wall to prevent any outside force from coming in and taking the treasures meant to be placed in the temple.

In addition to his might for protection they will also have his glory with them as he makes the temple his dwelling place.

***v.2:6-7 Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.***

The Jews had been widely dispersed throughout the north usually indicating the Babylonian empire and had fled the country to Ammon, Moab and Egypt when the Babylonians first invaded. A call is being made to these Jews who had not returned to Judah. They are encouraged to "*come forth*" from where they are now living. To "*flee*" would indicate some urgency to this message.

The reasons for this call are twofold. First, there was the promise of prosperity for the nation. Many did not return because their wealth and security contrasted with the ruins of the temple and city of Jerusalem. Secondly, judgment was about to come upon the nations who had scattered them. To remain where they were at would risk being caught in the coming destruction. Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke of this coming judgment and it did indeed come when Babylon revolted in the fourth year of Darius and he destroyed the city. (Is. 47:9, 48:20; Jer. 51:6)

***v.2:8 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.***

"*After the glory*" can be said to mean 'to display the glory of God'. In regards to the heathen the angel relates that it will be to God's glory when judgment is brought on them for their treatment of his people.

As for his people he considers them to be the apple of his eye. The word "*apple*" means the most tender part, which is to be protected. Israel was God's dearest possession and therefore anyone doing harm to them was doing the same to God himself. (Ps. 17:8)

***v.2:9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.***

To prove that they were the apple of his eye God would bring judgment against those nations who had 'touched' Israel. The shaking of his hand is a sign that he would bring destruction upon them. 'Them' are the four horns or nations who mistreated Israel. (Is. 11:15)

The conditions under which Israel was living would be turned around. Israel was a servant to the nations, they would now reap the spoil. "They" are the heathen nations. "They" would be the spoil to Israel. This would be the victory of Israel over those who oppressed them.

By execution of this judgment, in fulfillment of prophecy, Israel would know the angel was sent by the Lord. Looking back and knowing this prophecy and the fulfillment should give the people confidence in the fulfillment of things to come.

***v.2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.***

The "*daughter of Zion*" refers to the people living in Jerusalem and throughout Judah.

Eventually the captivity would be behind them and they would be prosperous once again. They were then to look forward to the time the Lord would make himself manifest among them. They should rejoice in the promise of the coming Messiah. (John 1:14)

***v.2:11 And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee.***

The call had been made for all Jews to return to Judah, to once again be part of God's people and be part of the blessings God would bestow upon the nation. Once Christ is sent to be among them all people of all nations would become part of the covenant promised to Abraham.

The Lord will dwell in the midst of all his people now, not just the Jews but the Gentiles also. Once he is there the people would know him through his works and miracles. This would be the proof God had sent him.

***v.2:12 And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.***

The future will see the promise extended to the Gentile nations. As assurance to the Jew God's relationship with them would not cease he states Judah will still be heirs to the holy land. The holy land is synonymous with holy place, holy city, holy mountain or holy people, a place where God makes his presence known. Physically the holy land is the area in which God's people live, in this case Judah. The area of Judah has been given to the Jews. Figuratively the Jews would not be put out of the presence of God. They would be heirs of salvation. (Deut. 32:9; Is. 62:12)

***v.2:13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.***

God's judgments and decisions are not to be criticized. Man is merely a mortal being, flesh and blood. He is not in a position to question the direction God will choose to take.

God's holy habitation is in the heavenlies. He is about to take some action. This action will be against the heathen nations previously identified as scattering Israel.

***v.3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.***

The fourth vision is one where Zechariah sees Joshua, the high priest, standing in judgment with Satan as the prosecutor. Joshua the high priest is the same person who was released from captivity by Cyrus and returned to Judah with Zerubbable. (Ezra 3:2, 8; Hag. 1:1) Joshua in this vision represents the priesthood and since Israel is viewed by God to be a nation of priests he also represents all Israel. (Ex. 19:5-6)

The vision is shown to Zechariah by a "he". The "he" is either the interpreting angel or God himself. The argument for the "he" being God is that the interpreting angel is just that, there to interpret the visions not to create them.

"The angel of the Lord" represents that part of the Godhead which is to judge Israel for its sins. At this point in time Israel does not recognize the three distinct parts of the Godhead. God was known as Jehovah or Yahweh and identified as 'I AM' by God himself. The identification of the angel of the Lord is inferred in verse 4. Only Christ could take away iniquity.

Joshua, symbolically the priesthood and Israel, was brought to this position by Satan. Satan in Hebrew means adversary. As the adversary he stands on the right hand of Joshua. This is the usual position of the prosecutor or the accuser. (Ps. 109:6) Satan opposes Joshua and he accuses him of sins in the hope that God would reject him because of the sins he committed.

***v.3:2 And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?***

Satan is rebuked, twice for emphasis, for any suggestion that God should forsake Israel for its sins. If the issue rested on works the city, nation and its people would be found guilty before the Lord. But, God makes it clear that he has chosen Jerusalem and because of this Satan's charge against it is dismissed. (Rom. 8:33-34)

If Joshua could be removed as high priest because of his sin the office of high priest would be dissolved altogether because no man was without sin. Likewise the nation, which Joshua represented would also be dissolved because of its sin. This would be contrary to the promises of God. (1 Sam. 12:22; Ps. 94:14)

God had not completely overlooked their sin. He had brought punishment on Israel by putting them in captivity for seventy years. Because of his love he has now delivered (plucked) them from their ordeal. (Ps. 89:30-35)

***v.3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.***

In the vision Joshua is standing before the Lord wearing dirty clothes. These dirty clothes represent his sin. God accepts him as he is thereby proving it is not his righteousness which causes God to accept him. (Is. 64:6-7)

Again the same is true of the nation. The dirty clothes are the sins its people had committed. Sin is the reason why Satan has accused Israel and wanted God to cast them

off. God has instead chose to cleanse the nation and restore it to glory. (1:17, 2:12)

***v.3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.***

There are attending angels on the scene and the angel of the Lord tells them to take the dirty clothes off of Joshua. Removal of the dirty clothes represents the removal of sin. The act of causing the iniquity to pass from him represents justification. Being justified means God has declared the believing sinner to be righteous and acceptable in his sight. (2 Sam. 12:13)

In putting on the new garment God is symbolically imputing his righteousness to Joshua and the nation. It is implied also that the priesthood is to be restored. (Is. 61:10; Rev. 19:8)

***v.3:5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by.***

A mitre is the headdress, also called a turban, worn by the high priest. (Ex. 29:5-6) Zechariah is the "I" and is so caught up in the vision that he actually becomes part of it as he asks that the mitre be placed on the head of Joshua. This is a sign of the priesthood being fully restored. The angel of the Lord stands by as a sign of approval to the proceedings.

***v.3:6-7 And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.***

With the role of priest now restored the angel of the Lord speaks of their responsibilities. The word "*protested*" means to 'solemnly declare'. There is an obligation given to Joshua and an oath taken by God. Joshua not only represents himself as high priest but also all those who are to follow him in that position.

The first obligation is to walk in God's ways. This is to be obedient to the Lord. It refers to the personal life and attitude toward the Lord. (Lev. 18)

The second obligation is to keep God's charge. The priests are to be faithful in performance of their official duties. In general they were to keep charge of the sanctuary. (Num 3:28) Some of the specific duties were to:

- a) keep the holy place; to burn incense, clean and trim lamps and place the bread on the table on the Sabbath (Ex. 30:7-8; Lev 24:5-8)
- b) keep the court; keep the fire burning on the altar, clear away the ashes, offer the sacrifices, sprinkle blood on the altar, and bless the people (Lev. 6:9-13; Ex. 29:38-44; Lev. 9:22; Num 6:23-27)
- c) general inspection; unclean persons, lepers, adulterous persons, items dedicated to the sanctuary (Lev 13-14; Num 5:15-30; Lev. 27:2-33)
- d) instruct people in the law; be the high court of appeals (Deut. 17:8-12, 19:17-19, 21:5)

- e) the high priest had other specific duties such as offering the sin sacrifice for himself and the people, offering the sacrifice on the day of Atonement, consulting the Lord concerning important theocracy matters, and supervision of the other priests (Lev. 4:3-12, 13:21; Lev 16; Num. 27:21)

If these two obligations were met three other privileges would be added:

- a) First, the priests would rule over the house of the Lord. They would have sole and exclusive authority in the temple and its courts. The king in many cases had taken authority over temple matters. (2 Kings 16:10-18; 2 Kings 22:3)
- b) Second, the priests would have total control of the temple courts. They would be in charge of the worship and sacrifices. They were to keep out idolatrous worship from the courts.
- c) Third, the priests would have free and direct approach to God just as the angels who are standing by God. This may be regarded as the reinstatement of the priesthood to its original calling where the high priest came before God on the Day of Atonement in the holy of holies. This had been restricted while in captivity since the temple no longer stood. This may also point to the time when the restrictions of the Old Testament would be ended and all men will have free access to God.

***v.3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.***

The vision continues with Joshua and the body of priests over who Joshua resides. Joshua is stated as the high priest and the "*fellows that sit before thee*" are the other priests of the temple. They are to listen to the revelation God is about to give them. As priests they should understand their office, especially the office of high priest. The priesthood was a shadow of the Messiah. They, as priests, were the mediators between man and God. For this reason they were men who were "*wondered at*". They were set as signs of the coming priesthood of Christ. They would be a wonder for all who had an understanding of their role. As priests they symbolized the future events for Israel.

God would send the Messiah described as being his servant. He would come into the world to do the will of the Father. Named here as the BRANCH no identity is given as to who he is or his mission. This will be made clearer in a later vision. (6:12-13) Other prophets have made mention of Branch to come out of Israel. (Is. 4:2; 11:1; Jer 23:5-6)

***v.3:9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.***

Interpretation of this verse proves to be, at best, very difficult. There are four elements to the verse, they are the stone, seven eyes, an engraving and the one day. There is a consensus among commentators concerning the stone and the one day but on the other two each has his own interpretation and many give more than one possibility indicating the uncertainty of the meaning.

The general feeling among commentators is that the *stone* represents the Branch spoken of in

the prior verse. This is the Messiah or Christ. (Is. 8:13-15; Ps. 118:22-23) Other opinions are that it represents the foundation stone of the temple which symbolically is Christ or is symbolic of the kingdom of God.

There are many ideas of what the *seven eyes* represent. The most common idea is fullness, perfection or completeness of which the number seven is said to represent. Other thoughts along this line are wisdom, knowledge, intelligence and universal light, in general omniscience. (Is. 11:2) Also mentioned are the seven Spirits of God. (Rev. 5:6) There is the idea of the eyes being the watchful eye of the Father. Also, Christ as seen by the prophets, saints and angels through his life and teachings. (1 Peter 1:10-11; 1 Tim. 3:16)

There is no real clue as to the meaning of *engrave the graving*. Some state it is the beautification of Christ through his suffering, similarly it could be the scars and wounds on the body of Christ. Also the perfect body of Christ. Engraving is the preparation of the stone symbolic of the preparation of the kingdom of God.

The *one day* symbolizes one of three things, the Day of Atonement Israel celebrated once every year, the death of Christ as atonement for sin or the second coming of Christ at the end of the world. In each of these cases there is the removal of sin from the believers.

***v.3:10 n that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree.***

It follows that the one day will be the day of the Lord. In that day the Lord will bring peace and security to his people. At this time people will embrace one another in friendship. "Under the vine" and "under the fig tree" are intended to show this period of peace. (Micah 4:4; 1 Kings 4:25)

***v.4:1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,***

Following the fourth vision Zechariah was apparently in a trance like state. The visions may have been so overwhelming he must have been deep in thought or so amazed he was oblivious to everything around him. (Rev. 1:17) The interpreting angel awakes him out of this state to bring him another vision.

***v.4:2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:***

In the fifth vision he sees a candlestick, or lampstand as many call it. The candlestick has a bowl on the top with seven lights around the edge, each in a small bowl. Some commentators believe there are seven lights on each of the small bowls meaning 49 lights altogether.

The candlestick represents one of two things; it is either Christ or the temple (church). The light given off is the knowledge of God that shines on everyone.

As in the fourth vision the number seven is prominent. There are seven lamps and seven pipes. These are again thought to represent fullness, perfection, completeness. or omniscience. Also, the seven spirits of God or the seven churches are possibilities. (Rev. 4:5; Rev. 1:4)

***v.4:3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.***

Zechariah also sees two olive trees, one on either side of the candlestick. The trees, in verse 12, are supplying the bowl on the candlestick a continual stream of oil. The interpretation of what the olive trees represent is given in verse 14.

***v.4:4-5 So 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 be? And I said, No, my lord.***

Zechariah has no idea what the vision is supposed to represent. He asks the angel for an explanation of the items in the vision. The angel apparently had expected him to know the meaning of the vision because he questions him concerning the reaction to what he sees. The angel probably thinks the vision should be easily understood by Zechariah and seeks an affirmation that the interpretation alludes him. Zechariah indicates he hasn't a clue.

***v.4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.***

Failing to answer to question directly the angel instead gives a message intended for Zerubbabel. It was Zerubbabel's task as leader of the nation to carry out the rebuilding of the temple. In this position he takes on the same task a Solomon had when he supervised

the building of the first temple. The angels message to Zerubbabel concerns the building of this temple. It would not be built through force as was Solomon's. Individuals would be moved by the spirit of God to accomplish this task. (1 Kings 5:13-16; Ezra 6:7, 14)

The pleasure God would take from the building would not be from the building but from the obedience of the people in fulfilling God's will. (Hag. 1:8) God would provide the impetus by instilling the desire within the people. (Hag. 1:14)

***v.4:7 Who art thou O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.***

The obstacles to building the temple seemed insurmountable. This is represented by the mountain. These obstacles would be removed or overcome as is symbolized by the mountains becoming a plain.

It is customary that dignitaries attend the ground breaking when the foundation of a building is laid and it is an important step in this process. In the same manner when the building is complete the dignitaries set the crowning top-stone or headstone into place. It is promised here that Zerubbabel will oversee the completion of the temple. The completion will be accomplished with great shoutings of joy. (Ezra 3:10-11; 6:15-16, 22)

***v.4:8-9 Moreover the word of the Lord 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 the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you.***

The foundation of the temple was laid in the second year after their release from captivity. The year was 537 B.C. It is now eighteen years later, 519, and the work of rebuilding the temple is being done in earnest. Zerubbabel was present and helped lay the foundation. Prophecy coming from the Lord through the angel assures Israel that Zerubbabel would be around at the time the building is finished.

This would be important to the many people working on the project since Zerubbabel was their leader and a motivating force behind the rebuilding. The prophecy also indicates the temple would be complete which in itself would assure the people their efforts would not be wasted. It will take about four years to complete and as stated in verse 7 Zerubbabel will have a hand in placing the final stone.

***v.4:10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth.***

There were those who did not want the temple to be built and probably even more who did not think it could be built. These were the ones who looked back at the greatness of the old temple, at the problems they were having, the little progress that was being made and were depressed and pessimistic about the future. However, when combined, all the small accomplishments would lead to a grand completion.

The "*plummet*" is used to indicate completion similar to the headstone in verse 7. At the completion of the temple even the doubters would be rejoicing and praising the Lord. The seven eyes of God seem to be helping with the completion of the building. Still the exact nature of the seven eyes is a mystery.

***v.4:11-12 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 again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?***

Still intent on knowing the full meaning of the vision Zechariah asks two more times about the objects standing next to the candlestick. Each of the questions has been more specific. In verse 4 he refers to "*these*", the next time to the "*trees*" and the third time to the "*branches*".

It seems as though he has figured out what the candle stick represents. Based on the last narrative by the angel it would seem to point to the temple. But what are the trees and why do the branches have pipes carrying oil to the bowl on the candlestick?

***v.4:13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.***

The angel has given the entire meaning to Zechariah and is either astounded or confused as to why Zechariah still does not understand the meaning.

***v.4:14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.***

The angel finally comes right out and tells Zechariah that the trees are the two anointed ones of Israel. At this time they are Zerubbabel and Joshua. In the fourth vision Joshua represented the priesthood. In this vision Zerubbabel represents the king or national leader.

Those who feel the candlestick represents Christ think this is a prophecy of the two offices of priest and king being merged into one with Christ fulfilling both. As representative of the temple the two offices come together to minister to the people.

***v.5:1-2 Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, 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.***

The sixth vision is one of a flying scroll. The scroll represents the law, similar to the two tablets at Sinai. Zechariah sees it flying in the sky, in plain view, easily seen by anyone.

The scroll is unrolled and its measurements, assuming a cubit is about 18 inches, are 30 feet by 15 feet. It is large enough for all to see and discern what is written. The message presented is that the law was clearly known by all those in Israel. They knew what was required of them and the punishment for breaking it.

The size of the roll was the same as that of the old temple porch. (1 Kings 6:3) Some commentators place significance on this because the porch was where the law was read while others ignore it.

***v.5:3 Then he said unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.***

The visions preceding this one were full of hope for the future, protection, expansion, restoration of the temple and the promise of God dwelling among his people. Now however there is to be a judgment made on those who refuse to follow the law. The curses spoken of here are the carrying out of God's oath given with the covenant.

(Deut. 29:12, 19-20, Ez 16:59) It is explicit in the giving of the law that those who keep it would prosper and those who broke it would be punished. (Deut. 11:26-28)

Although the curse ultimately covers the whole earth and all those living on it the curse is primarily directed to the Jews, both living in Judah and outside its borders.

The law was written on both sides of the scroll indicated by "*on this side*" and "*on that side*". A similarity is drawn with the commandments on the two sides of the stone tablets. It appears as though there were two specific problems to be dealt with in Judah at this time. The first was that of stealing. This is the breaking the eighth commandment. (Ex. 20:15) The second is swearing. breaking the third commandment. (Ex. 20:7)

***v.5:4 I will bring it forth, saith the Lord 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 remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.***

"It" refers to the curse, the punishment for breaking the law. God here emphatically announces he would be the one to bring the punishment. The punishment was directed at individuals, it was real, there would be no escape and it would be all consuming.

Again the two categories into which the guilty fell are mentioned, theft and swearing falsely in God's name. Theft in its most common form is committed against one's neighbor and the second set of commandments governed man's interaction with man. In this situation however the theft was against God. The foundation of the temple was laid many years

earlier but little had been done since that time. As a prophetic vision it shows the people putting themselves first and withholding what was due the Lord, depriving him of what was rightfully his. (Neh. 13:10; Mal. 3:8-9)

Swearing falsely was probably a result of their failure to put God first even though they were professing outwardly their commitment to him, to the rebuilding of the temple and to those who cared for the temple.

***v.5:5-6 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 an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.***

The interpreting angel comes again to Zechariah and announces yet another vision. In this the seventh vision Zechariah sees a ephah. As will be seen the ephah is of disproportionate size and is not readily recognized since the angel has to explain what it is. An ephah was a Hebrew unit of measure containing about a bushel or between five and seven gallons. Its shape was essentially a basket.

The angel tells Zechariah the basket resembles or takes on the appearance of Israel in the world. The sixth vision dealt with the sin of individuals, this vision deals with the sins of the entire nation.

***v.5:7-8 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.***

Two more objects appear in the vision, a talent of lead and a woman, the woman being inside the basket. The woman in the basket represents the wickedness present in Israel. This wickedness is the moral and religious decay brought about by the breaking of the commandments. The word 'wickedness' in Hebrew is feminine and may explain why the image of a woman is used.

The lead is the cover of the basket and when lifted up the sin is exposed and afforded more freedom. He, being the angel, identifies sin, pushes it back into the basket and returns the cover of lead over the mouth of the basket. This action shows that sin will not be allowed to spread unchecked and that God will put a stop to it.

***v.5:9 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.***

Two additional figures enter the vision, they are winged women. They pick the basket up into the air. This action represents the nation of Israel being removed from the land. The sin of the people will again be the cause for their removal. This is said to be the final scattering of the people as the Romans come in to eventually destroy the temple.

The wording "*wings of a stork*" is intended to present an image of a large bird capable of taking what it is carrying a long distance. This would represent a broad scattering of the nation.

***v.5:10-11 Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.***

Seeing these things transpire Zechariah wants to know why the winged women picked up the ephah (basket) and what they were going to do with it. The basket, representing evil in Judah, will be placed in Shinar, the region in Babylon where Nimrod first founded his empire. (Gen. 10:9-10, 11:6) Babylon is also used as the final place for wickedness because it epitomizes evil and all that opposes God.

The idea of building a house in this land indicates it will be a permanent stay. There they would establish themselves and continue to live generation to generation. At this point they would never again unite within God's covenant but live there in a system based on their own worldly views worshipping idols of their own making.

***v.6:1 And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.***

In this the eighth vision God establishes the fact that he is in total control of all events on earth. The two mountains refer to Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives. Between these two mountains is the valley of Jehoshaphat. In this area is where the Lord dwelt and from where his judgments came forth. (Joel 3:2,12) These two mountains of brass symbolize the strength and firmness of the place of God.

The chariots, in a general sense, are symbols of war and judgment. They are pictured coming out from between the mountains thus symbolizing the judgment of God coming out of the place where God dwells. Chariots are also used to represent agents of God and the strength and power of God to deal with any situation. (Ps. 68:17; 2 Kings 6:17)

The difficult part of this vision is trying to identify the specific nature of the judgments to be carried out by or through the chariots.

***v.6:2-5 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 grisled and bay 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 spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.***

Introduced into the vision are horses with the chariots making the vision similar to the first vision with respect to the colored horses. (except for the black horses, v.1:8) Applying the same interpretation to these horses as in the first vision the red horses represent a judgment of war and bloodshed. (Rev. 6:4) The black horses, not identified in the first vision, represent grief, sorrow or hard times. (Rev. 6:5-6) The white horses represent joy and victory. (Rev. 6:2) The grisled and bay horses are identified with the speckled horses as representing a mix of prosperity and adversity. There is however, another interpretation and will be described in verse 6.

Zechariah, not understanding the meaning of the vision, asks for an interpretation from the angel with him. The angel describes the four pairs of horses and chariots "*as four spirits of the heavens*". But what do the four spirits represent? There are two major interpretations as to their symbolic meaning.

- 1) The Hebrew word for spirits can also mean winds. (Jer. 49:36) These four winds are also associated with the four corners of the earth, those being north, south, east and west. (Rev. 7:1) Combining the interpretation of the colored horses and the chariots as angels with the four corners of the earth and the judgments sent forth by God the conclusion would be that God would dispense his judgments throughout the entire earth. The angels, whom God commands, would bring the judgments showing his sovereignty over all things.
- 2) Looking back to the second vision of the four horns and carpenters that represented world powers some commentators come to the conclusion the four spirits represent four world powers. Since the second vision dealt with the past this vision must deal with the future. There are ties made to the visions of Daniel and of future kingdoms known to

have followed the Babylonians. (Dan. 2: 39-40; 8:8-9) These empires are interpreted here as the Persians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. (Daniel's vision could have been one of smaller kingdoms) In this context these empires stood before the Lord in that it was his will that they were established and used by him for his purpose.

***v.6:6 The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.***

It appears these are the judgments to be dispensed by the Lord upon the earth, however there are obvious omissions. The red horses are not mentioned as well as the directions east and west. Why they are not mentioned is not known but many speculations are made as to their meaning.

First, the red horses, being war and bloodshed. The most common feeling is that they are to be considered along with the bay (speckled) horses. Second, the east; there are no speculations except to say only that the Arabian Desert was in this direction. Third, the west, where the NIV differs from the KJV. The NIV version of verse 6 reads:

*"The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south."*

Explanations as to why the words "toward the west" replaces the KJV "go forth after them" are dubious. One author explains it by stating "However, with a slight change in the Hebrew text the latter chariot would go toward the west, i.e., toward the islands and coast lands of the Mediterranean area." Another says "It (changing the wording) involves the addition of only one consonant, which gives 'after the sea', that is 'to the west'."

The black horses, being pestilence and famine, are to take hold of the north country. The circumstances of how this comes about are not mentioned here but the judgment came. (Is. 13:17-22) The judgment is for the evil nature of the nation occupying this area. (Jer. 1:14) If we place this within the interpretation of nations being raised up by God then the Persians (Medes) are the nation to bring this judgment. The Persians defeated the Babylonians and hard times usually follow for a defeated nation. Granted, it has been twenty years since their defeat but it could take many years for the victor to squeeze all the life out of a nation. Some commentators say this occurred about two years after this vision when in the fifth year of Darius he brought devastation to the land following a revolt.

Following the black horses are the white horses representing peace and prosperity. This peace, prosperity and victory could have come at two different times. The vision could refer to the victory Darius had over the revolting Babylonians or it could be referring to the Greeks who under Alexander the Great were victorious over the Persians. In any case it would seem this same general area would be relieved of its suffering at some point in time.

To the south was another great power recognized as a constant enemy of Israel. This was the nation of Egypt. Movement of the grisled horses to the south to take over this empire is said to be symbolic of the Roman empire conquering the known world of that time. Grisled here is interpreted as 'strong'.

***v.6:7 And the bay 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.***

The bay horses are in the same chariot as the grisled horses and also represent the Roman empire. The Romans conquered the entire world and so had the power to walk to and fro through the earth at their will. This power was granted to them by God. During this time there was also a general atmosphere of peace and individuals could also move freely throughout the world. This enabled the free flow of the Gospel as the apostles and others traveled and established churches in many areas. In this respect the bay horses could be identified with the speckled horses in representing both good and bad times.

***v.6:8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.***

The term "cried" means an important message was to follow. God's anger had been kindled against the country to the north, Babylon. Even though God used them for his purpose they destroyed Jerusalem, the temple and spread their idolatry and evil to the nations they conquered. For these reasons God's wrath would be brought on them. (Jer. 51:7,34-35; Hab. 2, 15)

***v.6:9-10 And the word of the Lord came unto me saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;***

The visions have come to a close and it is sometime later although there is no time reference given. Three individuals were about to come to Jerusalem to offer gifts to be used in support of the rebuilding of the temple. These three men had come from Babylon and are referred to as being "*of the captivity*" as was common when speaking of anyone taken as captive or living under Babylonian rule. The men were representatives of a contingent desiring to be a part of the rebuilding but not yet inclined to physically return to Israel.

Zechariah is instructed to go meet with these men on the same day they arrive in Jerusalem. They are staying at the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Meeting them was of some urgency since he was not to delay but see them immediately.

***v.6:11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;***

The gifts brought were silver and gold. Zechariah was to take the silver and gold and make crowns. The number of crowns to be made is not stated but there is general agreement there were to be two crowns. The crowns were then to be placed on the head of Joshua the high priest.

In doing this Joshua becomes a figure or shadow of the Messiah yet to come. It is supposed that two crowns were made to represent the kingship and priesthood coming together in one individual. The act of placing the crown on the head of Joshua the high priest rather than Zerubbabel the political leader, foreshadowed that the kingdom was to be spiritual not worldly.

The prophecy of the Messiah was that he would be both priest and king. (Ps. 110:4; 2:6)

***v.6:12 And speak unto him, saying Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of this place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord:***

When placing the crowns on Joshua's head Zechariah is to directly address him as THE BRANCH. Speaking these words verifies that a single person is receiving the crowns. The word 'branch' means 'sprout' in Hebrew and so there is the analogy to this branch growing slowly as a tender plant as opposed to being fully manifested right away.

The temple to be built by the BRANCH is the spiritual temple. Zerubbabel had already been commissioned to build the earthly temple and it would be completed by the time the Messiah arrives on the scene. This also gives emphasis to the statement of the Messiah's work. (Matt. 16:18; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:20-22)

***v.6:13 Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; 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.***

The prophecy that the person to be known as the BRANCH would build the temple is repeated for emphasis. Again, the building of the temple does not mean the physical structure, it is the spiritual temple of which Christ is the cornerstone.

Because the BRANCH would build this temple he would be due the glory. In Hebrew glory is defined as eminence. (1 Chr. 29:25) He would leave his position in the Godhead, live a perfect life and suffer death on the cross, this is why he would bear the glory. (Phil. 2: 8-11) After all is accomplished Jesus will take his rightful place on his throne next to the Father. (Heb. 12:3)

Not only will the BRANCH rule from his throne as king but he will also be a priest. This priesthood was prophesied earlier in the Psalms. (Ps. 110:4) This prophecy is also fulfilled in Christ. (Heb. 5: 4-6) The taking on of the dual role will not bring in conflict but would bring about harmony and peace. The two offices will be in full accord.

***v.6:14 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 the Lord.***

The crowns which had been placed on the head of Joshua to designate him as the type of the Messiah would be kept in the temple after the coronation. The crowns were to serve as a memorial for those who donated the silver and gold. It would also serve as a symbol of the Lord confirming his promise to fill his house with glory. (Hag. 2:7)

Of the four individuals mentioned earlier two here have different names. There is no explanation given for this except to say they are the same people. Many times individuals have been referred to by two names. Helem is Heldai and Hen is Josiah.

***v.6:15 And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.***

Those who were "*afar off*" were primarily the Jews still remaining in Babylon but it also refers to the Gentiles since they would be included in the salvation plan. (Is. 60:9-11)

Building in the temple refers to the contributions made by these individuals coming from afar who recognize the Lord as their king and priest. In building the physical temple they would offer wealth and labor. In the spiritual sense they would be the expanding temple. (Eph. 2:13; 1 Cor. 3:16)

One of the signs that the Messiah had come would be the people from afar, the Gentiles, coming to be part of the temple. To be identified with this Jew, Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of the Messianic prophecy was certain, the encouragement to Israel is to remain faithful and obedient so they could be a part of the new temple.

***v.7:1-2 And it came to pass in the fourth year of Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the Lord.***

Two years after his visions the Lord again comes to Zechariah. The time of year is early December by our calendar. The temple project was in full swing by this time having been started two years earlier. It would eventually be completed in 516 B.C.

The occasion for the Lord coming to Zechariah was to answer prayers brought by two men and their servants who had traveled to Jerusalem for this specific purpose. The men were sent by a delegation known as "*they*". All the commentators feel '*they*' is referring to Bethel, a city north of Jerusalem. Because of their foreign names, Sherezzer and Regemmelech, it is believed the men were Jews born in Babylon and had migrated to Bethel when freed from captivity. (Ez. 2:28, Neh. 11:31)

***v.7:3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?***

In addition to their prayers they were also to speak with the priests and the prophets concerning the issue in question. Their dilemma was whether or not to continue to observe a fast day in the fifth month of the year. This fast day was initiated while in captivity and commemorated the day the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians.

(Jer. 52:12-13)

On the surface the question was a reasonable one since now that the temple was being rebuilt and freedom attained what would be the necessity of observing the event any longer.

***v.7:4-6 Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?***

In response to the prayers for clarification of this issue the Lord speaks through Zechariah. God's response is to be heard by all the people, including the priests who would normally be interpreting Jewish law.

The Jews, in fact, had various other fasting days setup in remembrance of their being placed in captivity. In the seventh month, mentioned here, the fast day was in dedication to their leader, Gedaliah, who was assassinated. (Jer. 41:1-2) Other fasting days instituted (Zech. 8:19) were the ninth day of the fourth month when the walls of Jerusalem were breached. (Jer. 39:2-3) And on the tenth day of the tenth month when the Babylonians first started their siege of the city. (Jer. 39:1)

Feast days were more joyous than fast days but their purpose was to be the same, glory to God. These days however had become more ceremony than praise and God is now questioning their motives. Were the attitudes behind observing the special days a sign of true obedience or were they for their own benefit? (Lev. 23:27; Is. 58:3-7)

***v.7:7 Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and plain?***

What God really required of the people is placed in the form of a question. Instead of coming up with special observances wouldn't it have been better if they had obeyed the voice of the Lord when he spoke through his prophets.

A specific time is not mentioned but he reminds them of when Israel was obedient to him. These were times when Jerusalem and the area around it was populous and prosperous. There was no fear for their safety because there was peace throughout Israel.

***v.7:8-9 And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:***

There was a reason why Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed, why they had spent so many years in captivity. It appears they still haven't reached a full understanding as to why all this happened. God is now about to remind the people of the disobedience of their fathers and the consequences brought about for this disobedience. (Hab. 1:3-4)

There are four points brought up where the people had fallen short of God's precepts and to where he wanted them to return. The first is in administering justice. This not only applied to the courts but in the day to day relationships between the common people. All people are to deal truly and justly with one another. (Ez. 18:7-9)

Second, they were to have mercy and compassion toward each other. They were to exhibit kindness over and above what was normally expected. This meant they were to refrain from bringing harm or taking advantage of another.

***v.7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.***

Obedience meant positive acts of love to all individuals regardless of their station in society. God's promise prior to the captivity was the same as it was after the captivity. (Jer 7:5-7, 22:3-4; Ez. 22:7)

The widows, orphans, strangers and the poor were the most vulnerable in society. They were not to be taken advantage of in law or in commerce. (Amos 5:9-12) To '*imagine evil*' was to dream up ways of taking advantage of another. (Micah 2:1-2)

***v.7:11 But they refused to harken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.***

Even though the people were told of their disobedience they continued in their injustices. They were stubborn and obstinate, refusing to listen to the prophets giving God's warnings. The phrase "*pulled away the shoulder*" is likened to an ox not allowing the yoke to be put around its neck. Every excuse was made to get around submitting to God's commands.

In stopping up their ears they refused to admit they were wrong and that what was said applied to them. (Jer. 7:25-26)

***v.7:12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of the hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts.***

Because they refused to listen to God's words they hardened their own hearts. The meaning to the word 'adamant' is unbreakable hardness. The law was meant to convict them of their sin but having a hardened heart they could not recognize the wrong they were doing. What the prophets spoke of was dismissed and ridiculed and thus the spirit given to the prophets was rejected.

Because of their refusal to listen the wrath of God was brought on them in the presence of the Babylonians. (Hab. 1:5-6)

***v.7:13 Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear, so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts:***

Just as they turned a deaf ear to God's words so to God turned a deaf ear to their pleas.

They cried to God for him to remove his judgments but he would not hear them.

(Prov. 1:27-28; Is. 1:15; Hos. 5:6; Micah 3:4; Jer. 11:14) Basically they waited until it was too late and expected a merciful God to go back on his word.

***v.7:14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not, Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passeth through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.***

The result of their sins was the scattering of the people throughout the world of that time.

Warnings of this judgment were given in advance but all went unheeded. (Jer. 16:13, 15:14, 17:4; Deut. 28:49-50)

For the period of time they were in captivity the pleasant land that produced an abundance of food would lay unused and dormant (desolate).

***v.8:1-2 Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury,***

After urging them to obedience by using their fathers' experience he is now going to urge them by promising a coming prosperity. Prior to each declaration or promise the words "thus saith the Lord" are used by Zechariah to show God is the one behind the promises therefore they are sure.

Jealousy is used to show God's great love for Jerusalem and his people. (1:14) The jealousy of God is good, it is to love man but to hate sin.

*"God's jealousy is a measure of the intensity of his love towards those with whom he has entered into covenant"* Joyce G Baldwin

The jealousy of great fury is his hatred for sin that has come between him and his people. (2 Cor. 11:2; Deut. 32:16)

***v.8:3 Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain.***

The first promise is that God would return to the temple at Mount Zion. His presence had left the old temple prior to its destruction by the Babylonians. (Ez. 10:3-4, 11:23, 43:1-5) When the new temple is completed he promises to return. Also a part of this promise is the coming of the Messiah to dwell in their midst as was foreseen in the third vision. (v.2:10)

The character of Jerusalem would change from what it had been. It would become a city of truthfulness and faithfulness. (Zeph. 3:13) Jerusalem would not fall back into pagan worship, although other problems would arise idolatry would not be one of them.

Mount Zion, on which the temple was built would be called the holy mountain again because of the Lord's presence there.

***v.8:4-5 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.***

The second promise is one of peace and security. Men and women would live to an old age as opposed to dying young through war or oppression. The picture given is one where the elderly would have to use a staff to support themselves because of their advanced age. "Very days" meaning multitude of days.

The presence of children playing in the streets is a sign of security. There would also be no need to fear for their safety. It is also a sign of prosperity, families will increase and the population of the city would grow. (Is. 65:20) Zechariah also saw this in the third vision. (v.2:5)

***v.8:6 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts.***

The people would no doubt be a bit skeptical about the claims being made. Remember, the entire city is still in ruins and the temple is just now in the process of being rebuilt. Zechariah is now talking about greatness. Knowing what the people would be thinking God immediately addresses any such doubts. What he wants to get them to understand is that although the promises may seem incredible to them they are not incredible to him.

"*These days*" is the time since the captivity as opposed to prior to the captivity. The people had forgotten the power of God to deliver and restore their nation as he had done in the past.

***v.8:7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;***

As we have already seen the Jews were widely dispersed throughout the world. As in the third vision the promise is given that the Jews would return again to Jerusalem. The east country and west country are terms used to mean the whole world. They are opposites used to express the sum. (Is. 43:5-6)

Two interpretations are given to the word "*save*" as used here by Zechariah. The first being to deliver them from captivity and back to an independent nation. Even though they were allowed to return to their homeland they were still under the rule of the Persians. The second interpretation is of the coming Messiah which will bring spiritual salvation to all those that believe.

***v.8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.***

The restoration of Israel will be complete when all the remnant return. The Lord will once again bring them back into the covenant relationship. The words used here are covenant terminology and express the intimate relationship between God and his people. (Lev. 26:9-12, 42, 44-45)

***v.8:9 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.***

The words "*let your hands be strong*" is meant to be an encouragement to the people. He is speaking to those people who had been listening with their hearts to what the prophets were saying. They were to put their faith and trust in the Lord. Through their obedience to his word they would prosper and be at peace.

"*These days*" used here refers to the time from the laying of the foundation upon returning from Babylon, twenty some years earlier. The only two prophets known to be

in Israel during this time were Haggai and himself. (Ezra 5:1) Much of their encouragement to the people was to get the temple rebuilt.

***v.8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbor.***

In this verse "*these days*" refer to the present. (518 B.C.) The "*before*" is probably the period between returning from captivity and when the temple rebuilding began. (536-520 B.C.) Just after the release from captivity the foundation of the temple was laid. But since then no work was done. There was neither stability nor peace for Israel during this time. Each person fended strictly for himself. (Hag. 1:9)

As a nation their main enemy was the Samaritans. This was especially true after the Jews rejected their help rebuilding the temple. (Ezra 4:1-5) Their also may have been lingering hostility toward the Jews from the surrounding nations.

During this time the crops were thin and therefore there was no work for man or beast. Merchants had no goods to export so they didn't need to hire. The poor who lived by their labor had no way of supporting themselves or their families. Traveling was dangerous meaning that commerce was slow if not cutoff. There was no such thing as a good neighbor.

***v.8:11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts.***

As the people began to listen to the prophets and put themselves in obedience and began to build the temple things began to get better. God now promises to turn things around for them. He will not deal with them as he did before and during their captivity.

***v.8:12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.***

When the people return to obedience the entire situation will be reversed. The old covenant promises for their obedience will again be applied. (Lev. 26:4-6) The land which was desolate will respond with great yield.

***v.8:13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.***

God chose Israel to be his people and the promise was given to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation. (Gen. 12:2-3) However the covenant had its restrictions. If Israel didn't abide by God's rules they would suffer the curses. (Deut. 28:15, 37) Since they weren't obedient it was predicted by Jeremiah they would have these curses heaped upon them. (Jer. 24:9, 25:18, 29:22)

The original covenant was given to the nation of Israel. Since then the nation split in two, the northern ten tribes (Israel) and the southern two (Judah). The same covenant still applied to both as well as the curses. Israel was never faithful and was totally abolished when the Assyrians conquered them. Judah however lasted another 135 years until the

Babylonians came. Following 70 years of Babylonian rule the Jews are released and allowed to return home. The returning Jews consisted of descendants of both the kingdom of Judah and that of Israel. The covenant being restored at this time is being offered to all Jews not just to those of Judah. The northern Israel is no more, the 'new' Israel is one nation being a combination of the two.

Because of the wording identifying each nation separately there are commentators who believe the promise to save them is not entirely fulfilled. It seems to be more likely the promise to save is spiritual as opposed to a temporal blessing of Israel's return. (Is. 19:24-25) The prediction of a blessing was fulfilled when Christ entered the world. Again the encouragement to stay strong is given. They should hold onto their faith and the promise of God to save them.

***v.8:14-15 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not: So again I have thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.***

The contrast is made to what God did in the past with what he would do in the future. The promise of a curse was made if the people would not be obedient. This curse came true as he said it would. God did not change his mind concerning the judgments.

So, just as the curse came true now the people were not to fear because the blessings would also come true. Just as he didn't change his mind then so he won't change his mind now or in the future.

***v.8:16 These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:***

For the promise to be lasting the people were to do the same things the prophets had told their fathers. (v. 7:9-10) They were to be truthful and honest with one another and to render righteous judgments. (Deut. 1:16-17)

***v.8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbor; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord.***

Hatred, vengeance, and coveting were not to be a part of their lives. Giving false testimony and evidence seems to have been a problem within the society at that time. The law dealing with personal relationships is not be forgotten and the keeping of it is of paramount importance.

***v.8:18-19 And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.***

After digressing concerning major ethical and spiritual principals which underlie the outward observances of the law Zechariah now returns to the original question. (v. 7:3) The four fast days commemorating the overthrow of the Judah are to be changed to feast days. The fast

days were days of mourning, the feast days were to be days of joy. A new day was coming and the people were not to look back at the past but to be joyful about the future. The past days were days of disobedience, they should be forgotten. Looking forward to serving the Lord and being the recipient of his promises is what the future holds.

***v.8:20 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities;***

The importance and greatness of Jerusalem is again reiterated by the prophet. People from many other cities would come to Jerusalem fulfilling the prophecies. (Is. 2:3; Micah 4:1-2)

***v.8:21-22 And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.***

A great spiritual awakening will take place in future years. Individuals from other cities will continually look to and come to Jerusalem for their spiritual needs. Those who have become part of this spiritual awakening will encourage others to go also. Prior to the coming of the Messiah many people became proselytes to the Jewish faith. As the word spread people from the surrounding gentile nations would recognize Jerusalem as the religious center of the world. They would be there as Christianity has its beginnings and would be converted subsequently spreading the gospel message. (Is. 60:3-5)

***v.8:23 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.***

In "those days" is in reference to the time when large numbers of people will be seeking after the Lord. As an example of how many would be coming to Jerusalem the figure "ten" is mentioned. Ten is used as a number indicating a large or complete number. (Num. 14:22) Possibly indicating there will be ten gentiles for every Jew seeking the true God.

Israel will be the means by which the Gentiles are drawn to the Lord. Taking hold of the skirt is a gesture of inferiority. The gentile taking hold of the skirt of the Jew shows the superiority of the God of the Jews to which the world aspires to know. That the true God was with the Jew was a compliment and the gentiles desired to be associated with them.

Chapter nine through fourteen are considered to be Part II of the book of Zechariah. They contain two major prophecies and are believed to have been written late in his life (480 B.C.). The prophecies center around judgments and blessing leading up to and including the appearance of the Messiah.

***v.9:1-2a The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord. And Hamath also shall border thereby;***

The first prophecy begins with the word "*burden*" which would indicate some kind of judgment is to come. Some translations use the word 'oracle' in place of 'burden', their reasoning being the chapters do not contain strictly judgments but blessings as well.

The first two places mentioned in conjunction with this "*burden*" are Hadrach and Damascus.

Hadrach: The actual location is not known but the popular opinion is that it was a province or territory in northern Syria or Syria itself. From Assyrian writings the name is Hatarrika.

Damascus: Thought to have been founded by Uz, son of Aram. Known to have existed since the time of Abraham. Defeated by David and ruled over by Solomon and other kings of Israel until freeing itself during Asa's reign. Warred with Israel, conspired against Judah and was eventually overrun and destroyed by the Assyrians. Eventually it was rebuilt and became a famous city under the Persians.

Hamath: Ancient Syria was divided into two parts with Hamath being the capital city of the northern half. Known from the time of David it eventually fell to the Assyrians. After Israel was dissolved following Assyrian conquests inhabitants of both areas were mingled with each other.

The exact reason for the judgment is not stated but history shows that as Alexander the Great began his conquests Syria came under his rule. Speaking of the burden, the first portion would be placed on Hadrach and the "*rest*" placed on Damascus.

During the time this burden is taking place the eyes of the whole world, both gentiles (man) and Jews (Israel) will be directed to the Lord. All men who realize God is in total control of all events will be looking to him for deliverance as the governments of the world begin to change in connection with the new world order about to unfold.

***v.9:2b-4 Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.***

As Alexander continued his world conquest he moved his armies south along the Mediterranean coast. Tyrus (Tyre) and Zidon (Sidon) were old Phoenician cities in his path.

Zidon (Sidon): Located on an island just off the mainland this ancient city was referred to in scriptures as far back as 1400 B.C. They worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth and through

Jezebel, the daughter of a Sidonian king, introduced the false gods into Israel. Sidonians were skillful in philosophy, art and astronomy, thus an indication they considered themselves wise. The city was first invaded by Shalmanezzer of Assyria then by Babylonians Sennacherib and Esarhaddon and finally conquered in 330 B.C. by Alexander.

Tyre (Tyros): Sister city to Sidon that once consisted of two parts; a city on a small but well protected island about one half mile offshore and a well fortified city on the mainland. Those who lived there were seafarers and at one time dealt in Hebrew slaves. It's trade with Arabia brought much wealth into the city and may be why Zechariah makes note of it here. When the Babylonians moved in Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to the city for thirteen years and it is debated whether he was ever victorious. It is said the walls of the city were 150 feet high thereby making the city quite a strong hold..

The prophecy is that despite its wealth and strong defenses it will be overthrown. This was fulfilled when in 332 B.C. Alexander took the city after a siege of seven months. He eventually built a causeway to the island to overtake it.

***v.9:5-7 Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.***

Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod were all Philistine cities with Gaza being the capital. As Alexander advanced south these cities saw what was happening to Sidon and Tyre and were fearful of what would happen if he wasn't stopped. Zechariah, along with Zephaniah and Jeremiah predicts the fall of each of these cities. (Zeph. 2:4; Jer. 25:20) Azzah is Hebrew for Gaza.

Ashkelon, the first city mentioned, would see the coming armies and fear would grip the city as they awaited the fate of the northern cities. Gaza would also see the situation they were in and would be sorrowful in anticipation of what was to come. Ekron's expectation was that Tyre would withstand Alexander's onslaught but would be put to shame when he succeeded in defeating Tyre.

For Gaza the prophecy said the government would be overthrown and it's king killed. Historians say 10,000 people were slain after a two month siege on the city by Alexander.

The word "*bastard*" used in connection with Ashdod means that the city would be taken over by people alien to the region. Those not the rightful heirs would rule over the city.

In general the Philistine nation would come to an end as denoted by the words "*cut off*". The blood sacrifices given to their false gods would cease and the idolatrous practices would end. The remnant of the Philistine people will be converted to believers of the Lord.

As the princes or leaders of the Philistine are converted they will have equal standing as governors of cities of Judah. The people of Ekron are termed Jebusites as an example to the

Jews. Jebusites inhabited Jerusalem prior to David conquering it, after his conquest the people who accepted the religion were incorporated into the nation of the Lord.

***v.9:8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now I have seen with mine eyes.***

The promise is given here is that God will protect Israel from the foreign invader yet to come. Alexander's army conquered Sidon and Tyre and continued down the Mediterranean coast taking the cities of Philistia. He conquered Egypt, founded the city of Alexandria, came back up the coast and moved across Persia as far east as India. However he did not advance his armies against Jerusalem.

The statement that God now sees means he is now intends to take action. He will hold Israel's enemies accountable and bring judgment upon them. The promise to Jerusalem was fulfilled as is here prophesied.

This account, as told by Josephus, cannot be verified:

While Alexander was storming Tyre he sent a letter to the Jewish high Priest asking for provisions for his army. The high priest refused claiming allegiance to Darius the Persian king. Alexander, angered by this, vowed to march against Jerusalem. After conquering the Philistine cities he turned toward Jerusalem. The priest upon hearing this ordered the people to pray and give sacrifices to the Lord for their deliverance. Following this God came to the priest telling him what he must do. They were to adorn the city with wreaths, open the gates and go out to meet Alexander dressed in white garments and priestly robes. Never being received in this manner before Alexander came forward and on seeing the group of Jews dressed in fine garments fell prostrate on the ground before them. His officers and men meanwhile were struck with amazement by his actions. Explaining later why he did this he said he had a dream in which God urged him to continue confidently with his plan to take over the Persian empire. The high priest was the one delivering the message in the dream. Alexander was invited into the city where he sacrificed to the Lord under the direction of the high priest. He was told the prophecies of Daniel concerning the empire to defeat the Persians and believed it to be himself. He therefore let the Jews continue to observe their own laws but had to continue to pay tribute.

***v.9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.***

The transition is made from the coming of one type of king to the coming of another. The coming of this new king should be met with great rejoicing by the people of Jerusalem. The word "*greatly*" means there should be no measure to their joy. The reason for this is that this king is coming for their benefit, not for his own gain but for theirs.

This king is Christ, the Messiah and his character is that he is just and righteous. (Is 11:4-5) His judgments would be righteous thereby showing man his sin. As a way out of this sin he also brought salvation.

This king would be mild and gentle. Riding upon an ass would express peace and his meekness. This is opposed to riding a horse, a symbol of war. The fulfillment was Christ's entry into Jerusalem. (Matt. 21:1-5; John 12:14-16)

***v.9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from river even to the ends of the earth.***

Chariots are symbols of power and strength. These will be taken away from Ephraim and Jerusalem. Ephraim represents the northern ten tribes of Israel and Jerusalem represents the nation of Judah. Under the Messiah the two nations will be united as one.

The battle bow represents the weapons of war which will not be needed to spread the kingdom over which the Messiah will rule. This new kingdom will be a spiritual kingdom without physical boundaries. It will spread throughout the entire world signified by 'sea to sea' and 'from the river to the ends of the earth'.

***v.9:11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.***

As for the earthly kingdom of Israel, God will bring them out from under the rule of other nations. Being ruled over is as if they were prisoners in a pit. God would remember the covenant promises symbolized by the blood sacrifices. (Ex. 24:5-8)

***v.9:12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;***

For the many years the Israelites were under foreign rule they had the hope of their eventual freedom. They were prisoners of this hope and could do nothing to free themselves until God delivered them. To fulfill this hope they must turn to the Lord as their stronghold. The reward for their belief in God would be the blessings he would bestow upon them. The blessings would be double the hardships they were now going through.

Israel is the shadow of man's position in the spiritual kingdom. He is trapped in the pit with no way out except his hope that he may eventually be freed by another. Only God can bring the freedom from the state man is in and he does it through the triumphant entry of the new King. Christ becomes the stronghold believers should turn to and by doing this the blessing they will ultimately receive will far outweigh the hardships of this life.

***v.9:13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled my bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.***

Part of their recompense will be victory over their enemies. In prophesying this Zechariah uses a figurative description of the two nations comprising Israel. Judah will be the bow that is bent when the bow string is attached. Ephraim is the arrow used to fill the bow. The sons of Zion are the undivided Israelites who will rise up against the Greeks. The Lord will make them a strong fighting force typified as a mighty man with a sword.

The fulfillment of this came when the Maccabees overthrew Antiochus Epiphanes. The point of this verse is that Israel will gain victory over their enemies with God's help. (Dan. 8:8-14)

***v.9:14 And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.***

Just as in the days when Israel left Egypt he will intervene on behalf of the Jews against their enemies. (Ex 14:19-24) The might of God is depicted as an arrow as powerful as lightning.

The sound of the trumpet blowing will be the inspiration of God leading them on to battle. The whirlwinds depict the destructive force which they will let loose on their enemies.

***v.9:15 The Lord of hosts shall defend them, and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones, and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.***

As well as being their offense God will also be their defense. The sling stones represent weapons of war. God will subdue the weapons the enemy brings against his people. The devastation brought on the enemy will be violent and bloody. That they will devour them and drink their blood shows the completeness of their victory. (Num. 23:24)

As conquerors they will revel in their victory as though they were drunk with wine. Their joy is compared to the sacrificial bowls filled with blood and as the corners of the altar after a sacrifice is made.

***v.9:16 And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.***

The triumph in that day will have been brought about by God. Just as the shepherd defends his flock so God will defend his people. The reason for God's concern for their safety is that he considers them to be precious stones.

An ensign is a distinguishing mark, or honorable emblem, a badge or symbol of authority. As precious stones they are the honorable symbol of God's glory to be shone throughout the land.

***v.9:17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.***

The goodness and beauty is that of God. After Israel's deliverance from their enemies the blessings will be provided. Corn and new wine symbolize peace and prosperity.

***v.10:1 Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.***

To be prosperous the nation of Israel depended upon its agricultural base. A plentiful harvest meant success of the nation. To be successful and prosperous the prophet is here exhorting prayer to the Lord for the blessings it needs. (Deut. 11:13-15)

The latter rain is the rain near the end of the growing season as opposed to the early rain at the beginning when the seeds are planted. The later rain is in the spring around April and May. The early rain is during autumn, October and November.

***v.10:2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.***

To be prosperous prayer had to be directed to the Lord. It was foolish to put any faith in idols. The most common idols were teraphims or household idols. They were worshipped as givers and protectors of earthly blessings. The meaning of vanity is emptiness, worthlessness or futility. Idols were just this, they could do nothing to help the people prosper.

Diviners interpreted omens and used physical signs as a means of foretelling the future. Any predictions of the future were lies because they could not know what the future held for Israel. Their dreams of a prosperous future prior to the captivity were giving the people a false sense of security.

The result of vain and false practices was that the people (the flock) would wander not having a true watchful shepherd to care for them. This was what happened to their forefathers. As reliance on Baal and other false gods, with their prophets, crept in, the nation wandered farther and farther from the Lord eventually into captivity.

***v.10:3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats; for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.***

Here Zechariah is speaking exclusively of the southern tribe of Judah. The shepherds who lead the people away from God are the goats. Since the earthly leaders did not take care of the flock as they were directed they will be judged accordingly. (Ez. 34:1-4)

As for the flock, he judged them and determined who his sheep were and made them his calling them his goodly horses. (Ez. 34:17, 20-22)

***v.10:4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.***

The "*him*" in this verse refers to the tribe of Judah. Metaphors are used to describe the characteristics the leaders for Judah will possess. All these characteristics can be attributed to Christ as the spiritual leader.

- a) The corner represents the cornerstone. A leader on which the nation will rely on to direct its return to self reliance.
- b) The nail, or tent peg in Hebrew, holds something firmly in place. It would be someone who can be trusted and can bear the burden of leadership.
- c) The battle bow symbolizes power and warfare. The leader will led Judah's armies against it's enemies.
- d) Every oppressor, that is every ruler who will oppress every enemy will come from Judah.

***v.10:5 And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.***

The Lord promises to make Judah a mighty nation and to restore it to prominence by defeating its enemies. They will fight because they know the Lord is behind them. They will overthrow mighty armies who will be ashamed (confounded) of their defeat.

***v.10:6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them.***

Judah and Joseph represent the southern and northern kingdoms. They will be made mighty and united. God will restore them into the land promised to them, all will be forgiven as he restores his covenant with them.

***v.10:7-8 And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.***

Ephraim, being the northern kingdom, will be made strong again. They will be glad and rejoice at their restoration. The meaning of the word "hiss" is signal or whistle. He will call all the descendants of Ephraim back to their homeland. (The picture presented is one of the shepherd whistling to the flock) When the call is made so many will respond that the population will be as large as it had ever been. (Is. 7:18-19)

***v.10:9 And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.***

The scattered people of the covenant promise were 'sown' in many lands. When the call comes they will remember the God of their fathers and will return to their homeland. Being able to live with their children implies they will be in their country for a long time. (Ez. 6:8-9)

***v.10:10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.***

Still referring to the northern kingdom, they were dispersed when the Assyrians conquered them. The Assyrians had spread them throughout their empire and some had also escaped to Egypt. Being a little more specific Zechariah mentions the names of the countries from where the Israelite refugees will come. The area of land where they will settle is in Lebanon and Gilead. Each place is a symbol of strength and splendor. And again the statement is made that there will be many returning to this land, so many there will not room for all of them. (Is. 11:11-16)

***v.10:11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.***

Nothing will prevent the exodus of people from where they are living to their new homes. Afflicting the sea, smiting the waves and drying up the rivers are examples of God removing the obstacles of the people's return to Israel. Regarding the government of the two nations, Assyria and Egypt, they themselves will not be able to prevent the people from leaving. The pride and sceptre departing the nations indicate their loss of power.

***v.10:12 And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.***

The final promise is that their faith will be strengthened. The source of their strength will be the Lord. Walking up and down means going about their daily lives, their lifestyle. They will be living in obedience to God's word. (Micah 4:5)

***v.11:1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars***

Zechariah begins a new prophecy with figurative expressions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation as a whole. Lebanon is an area north of Jerusalem and is the region where the cedar trees grew. Figuratively Lebanon is many times referred to in comparison to the glory of Israel and the cedars were used to construct the temple. (Is. 60:13) Fire is used to represent destruction in both the physical and spiritual sense. (Is. 1:7; Is. 9:18)

In connection with the physical and earthly kingdom of Israel the prophecy is that the nation will suffer and fall. The Romans marched on Jerusalem through Lebanon and destroyed the entire land including Jerusalem.

Concerning the religious nature of the prophecy, the temple stood for the spiritual glory in Israel and the fire consuming the cedars would indicate destruction of the temple and thus the end of God's acceptance of the Jewish system. The Romans actually fulfilled this in 70 A.D.

***v.11:2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.***

As further indication of the coming destruction the fir and oak trees are figuratively used to show the spread of devastation. If the cedars, representing a higher stature, would fall what would happen to that of a lesser stature. The fir and oak represent the lesser stature and would also fall as do the cedars. Not only would the temple be destroyed but the royal palace, homes and businesses as well.

***v.11:3 There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.***

There are generally three classes of people in Israel; the spiritual leaders (priests), the political leaders (royalty, rich) and the common person. The shepherds are the spiritual leaders and the roaring young lions are the political leaders. Because of the coming destruction they will be lamenting the loss of their pride and glory. This pride and glory can be interpreted as being their wealth and possessions. The fall of the Jewish nation will bring about the loss of all their worldly goods.

***v.11:4 Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;***

The command given by God is to feed the flock. The flock represents the people of Israel and although they are doomed to be slaughtered they are still to be administered to. In feeding the flock Zechariah, and possibly other prophets, are to continue the instruction and teaching of the people. The slaughter eventually comes at the hand of the Romans.

The feeding of the flock implies that the Jews could not plead ignorance of God's will. The prophets were ordained by God to bring his word to the people. They were to teach and warn them of the penalties of disobedience.

To this end Zechariah becomes a type of Christ as he attempts to instruct the people and is rejected just as Christ himself directly confronted them with the truth and was rejected.

***v.11:5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.***

The reasons for their destruction are many and here Zechariah brings to light one area where reform is needed. The leaders had for many generation been corrupt. The justice system mainly benefited the rich and powerful. The same is true continually down to the time of Christ. Those in power sold their own people into slavery and praised the Lord for making themselves rich. The processors, or buyers, did whatever they wanted to with those they purchased and thought there was nothing wrong with what they did. (Hos. 12:7-8)

The fact that this practice continued was, in part, the fault of the shepherds who did not put up any objections. It was the shepherd's job to uphold Jewish law and comfort the people but they turned their backs on the whole situation offering no consolation or compassion. (Matt. 27:5-6)

***v.11:6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.***

As a result of their corruption and the lack of spiritual leadership the Lord will withdraw his compassion from the nation. As outside forces continue to take advantage of a worsening situation in Israel God will turn away and allow things to decay. The Roman armies eventually take control of the area and the government is ruled by the emperor in Rome. The Romans rule the land with an iron fist and when the Jews attempt to revolt they are totally destroyed. And as is here stated God does not intervene to deliver them.

***v.11:7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.***

Following his instructions (v.4) Zechariah declares that he has done what God had asked him to do, namely to feed the flock. He gave special attention to those of the flock that were oppressed indicated by the "*poor of the flock*". Christ, of whom Zechariah typified, did all this and more. He also declared his job to be complete having fed the flock. (John 17:4, 6)

As an indication of how he accomplished the feeding of the flock the prophet uses two staves as a symbolic representation of the principles of his leadership. The first staff, Beauty, represents graciousness and favor. Through the Lord's grace the Jews were prosperous and blessed. The covenant relationship that existed between them and God assured them a favored place among all nations as long as they were obedient.

The second staff of Bands was a staff of unity. Being Jews, worshipping the same God, and having the same covenant unified them spiritually and brought the two nations together. They were to both be heirs of God's salvation.

***v.11:8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me.***

As part of his actions of feeding the flock three shepherds were cut off as leaders of the people. What three leaders is not mentioned and speculations are numerous, ranging from foreign kings to Jewish priests.

Being symbolic of Christ brings up the question as to what three leaders he cast out. In this case most opt for three classes of leaders. The most likely of these are the priests, judges, false prophets and civil leaders.

The month spoken of in which the three shepherds were denounced is also subject to wide interpretation. Speculations go from an actual one month to 210 years or an unspecified short period of time to an unspecified long period of time.

Although the first part of this verse deals specifically with the shepherds the second part is believed to deal with the people as a whole. In spite of all his efforts the people just did not want to accept his teachings, they came to detest what he said and him personally. Because of this the prophet came to the end of his patience and despised their attitude and their continued disobedience.

The same is true of Christ. They dismissed his teachings, his miracles and his true love for the people. They eventually hated everything about him, denounced him and finally got rid of him by killing him.

***v.11:9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.***

Finally, when all means of trying to convince the people to accept him fails the prophet ends his association with them. He leaves them to go their own way. Without leadership the people will suffer the consequences of his rejection. Death and destruction will be the result.

Many point to the actual eating of human flesh during the fall of Jerusalem as the final result of God's leaving them to their own ways for the rejection of his Son.

***v.11:10 And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.***

As a sign of his rejection of the flock the prophet breaks the staff symbolic of grace and favor. Protection will no longer be available to the people.

The breaking of the staff signified the breaking of God's covenant which he made with the people. Christ verifies this prophecy when he told them the covenant would be given to another. (Matt 21:43)

***v.11:11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.***

Those who listened to God's word from the prophets knew the meaning of the action taken by Zechariah. They recognized the truth of the word of God and knew that one day the end

of the nation would come. Through this prophecy the remnant of believers would be spared. (Luke 21:20-22)

***v.11:12 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.***

Having basically quit his job as shepherd of the flock he goes to the people and asks for his final wages. He is not demanding payment but leaves it up to them to pay him fairly for the leadership he has provided. He tells them not to pay him if they didn't think he deserved it.

The Jews now had a choice. They could pay him well and ask him to remain in their service or discharge him with or without pay. They considered what they thought his services were worth and paid him thirty pieces of silver. The value of the thirty pieces of silver was very low, in fact it would be considered an insult to be valued at such a low worth.

As to a person's worth the price of a servant killed in the field was determined to be thirty pieces of silver. (Ex. 21:32) So, by paying thirty pieces of silver they were saying he wasn't worth much more than an slave.

This entire scenario is a parallel to the life of Christ. He becomes the shepherd of the flock and is ultimately rejected. His life is bargained for when Judas negotiates with the chief priests and the price is set at thirty pieces of silver, the price of a servant. (Matt. 26:14-15)

***v.11:13 And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.***

The Lord uses a bit of sarcasm by calling the thirty pieces of silver a goodly price.. He tells Zechariah the money is to be given to a potter. By taking the money Zechariah accepts the price and finds the potter in the temple.

Here Zechariah takes on the role of Judas following the betrayal of Christ. The event described here is prophetic in that the thirty pieces of silver cast to the potter represented the purchase of a potter's field made by the priests following Judas' rejection of the money. (Matt. 27:5-10)

Note: Although this prophecy parallels the actual events portrayed in Matthew the apostle states he is referring to a prophecy given by Jeremiah. (v.27:9) This is explained by commentators in a couple of different ways; 1) a translation error in Matthew, 2) Matthew is referring to a prophecy spoken of by Jeremiah but not written or 3) reference to Jeremiah 19:1-13 where the Lord denounces the actions of the people for false worship. The valley of Hinnom is where the potter's field was located.

***v.11:14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.***

The second staff, Bands, represented the unity of the Jewish people. It was primarily the coming together of the northern and southern kingdoms. The breaking of this staff signifies the dissolution of the covenant nation. The nation would break into various factions leading to disunity and eventual Roman conquest.

*"The breakup of the nation into parties bitterly hostile to each other, was one of the most marked peculiarities of the later Jewish history, and greatly accelerated the ruin of the popular cause in the Roman war." Chambers*

***v.11:15 And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.***

Having rejected the good shepherd a foolish shepherd will take his place. Zechariah is to now act out the part of the foolish shepherd. The characteristics of the foolish shepherd are just the opposite of the good shepherd. He would be a corrupt, selfish and greedy leader who will not care for the flock

***v.11:16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.***

The foolish shepherd will not tend to the needs of the flock but will eventually destroy them. There are four main areas where the foolish shepherd will neglect the flock:

- 1) He will not care for the lost, those who have gotten lost or are wandering away will be let go.
- 2) He will not seek the young, the young would not be taught and instructed in the proper way and would be lost, never to become part of the flock.
- 3) He would not help the injured, compassion and concern for the sick and injured would not be a consideration for the foolish shepherd.
- 4) He would not feed the healthy flock, would not tend to the needs of the people by instruction and encouragement enabling them to gain knowledge and understanding.

What the foolish shepherd would do is take from the flock. There would be violence and pain suffered by the flock at the hands of the shepherd. This foolish shepherd can be identified as the Roman government where the emperor is a god, the chief priests looking for power and prestige or the entity known in the scriptures as the antichrist.  
(Matt. 23:13-30; 2 Thess. 2:3-4)

***v.11:17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.***

The idol or worthless shepherd has a judgment pronounced against him. The punishment is symbolized by the sword cutting his arm and blinding his right eye. The arm is symbolic of strength and power, the strength of the shepherd should have been used to defend and protect the flock but was instead used against it. For this reason the power of the shepherd would be cut off. Similarly the eye is symbolic of the watchfulness the shepherd should have over the flock. Since the foolish shepherd did not watch over the flock he would be blinded

suggesting the inability to see clearly and make correct judgments. The loss of both power and decision making would lead to the ultimate destruction of the foolish shepherd.

***v.12:1 The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.***

This begins the second of the two prophecies concerning the future of Israel. Just as the first prophecy it starts with a "burden" indicating some sort of judgment. (v.9:1) There is no indication of the point in time when this will take place, only a reference to "that day".

The difficulty in understanding this prophecy is that there seems to be no specific time period that can be pinpointed. Is it a time prior to Christ's coming, after his death or some future end time? Is the prophecy to be considered literal or symbolic? If symbolic, is the prophecy directed toward Jews or Gentiles; Judaism or Christianity?

The basic premise is put forth on which the events of the prophecy are all founded. God is in total control of all things. He created all things and he sustains all things. Even the spirit of man was formed by him to serve him. Recognizing this fact will remove all doubts about whether he has the ability to fulfill this prophecy.

***v.12:2 Behold I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.***

Zechariah speaks of a siege on Jerusalem, but is this siege literal or is it a metaphor. If literal Jerusalem will be besieged by the nations around them. However, the "cup of trembling" or rather the resulting defeat will be to the nations at the hands of Jerusalem and Judah. The time of the siege could be prior to Christ's coming when Jerusalem was promised protection from its enemies and eventually gained its freedom. (i.e. first prophecy)

If the prophecy is symbolic the time would be after Christ's death, Jerusalem would be the church and Judah the believers. The nations, (i.e. the world) would be constantly besieging the church and its believers in an effort to destroy it. The victory however would be God's people as he gives them his protection.

There are those who make this siege the ultimate conflict at the end of time giving the prophecy an apocalyptic scene where Christ and the church are finally victorious.

***v.12:3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.***

"In that day" is referring to a time in the future when Jerusalem will become a burden to those trying to overtake it. (This future time is sometime after 480 B.C. when the prophecy is given) In its literal interpretation those coming against the city will have a difficult time overtaking it illustrated by the lifting of a heavy stone. They themselves will eventually be defeated no matter how great their numbers.

In the symbolic interpretation the attempt to destroy the church will prove fruitless. The new covenant will be established with Christ as the headstone. All people will have to deal with this 'new' religion, it will be a hard decision to make, likened to lifting a heavy stone. Those who choose to dismiss it or destroy it will suffer disaster. (Matt. 21:44)

***v.12:4 In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.***

In the literal siege the nations around Judah will rise up into open warfare against Jerusalem. They, however, will be powerless against a people protected by God's power. The horse and rider are symbolic of the instruments of war. Being plagued with madness and blindness would indicate their ineffectiveness through the intervention of the Lord. At the same time God would be granting mercy and protection to Jerusalem indicated by the opening of his eyes on the house of Judah.

In the day that God establishes his new covenant he will confound all those who would seek to prevent its coming. To those who would inquire of the these things he would give them understanding, to those who would not he would not reveal himself to them.

(1 Cor. 1:26-28)

***v.12:5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God.***

The governors of Judah are the leaders, of the church they are the pastors and teachers. In both the literal and spiritual sense the leaders get their encouragement and strength from the people they serve.

***v.12:6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.***

The leaders of the people will be made strong and confident illustrated by the in the fire in the hearth and the torch. Their leadership will spur the people on to victory over the nations who had come to overthrow the city. As a result of the victory Jerusalem will be firmly established.

In like manner the leaders of God's church would be confident and would take the gospel message a spread it throughout the world. Through the spreading of the word the church would be firmly established.

***v.12:7 The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.***

In saving or preserving Judah the tents of Judah outside the walls of the city would be saved first before the splendor of the house of David and before the more permanent structures of the inhabitants in Jerusalem. In other words, the saving of people and their possessions would not be dependent on any type of social stature or position. In this way no one could claim themselves superior to another.

The same thoughts hold true in the church of the new covenant. Position or status within the community or fellowship would not offer any special merit or privileges with regard to the saving grace of God. (Luke 18:10-14; Gal. 3:28)

***v.12:8 In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.***

When the day comes when the enemy is at the gates of the city the Lord will strengthen the people. David had been a great example of strength and glory so for the weak to be given the strength of David would be highly desirable. The strong individuals are designated as the 'house of David'. The house of David will lead the people just as God, or the angel of God, led the Israelites out of Egypt. (Ex. 23:20, 23)

The believers in the Lord would be defended by the Lord. The weak believers faith would be strengthened in that day and the strong would lead and instruct the people.

***v.12:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.***

This is basically a summary of the preceding verses in that at some point when anyone comes up against Jerusalem they will be under the wrath of God to be destroyed.

In regard to the new church, anyone seeking to eliminate it would come under the condemnation of the Lord.

***v.12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.***

The spirit of grace and supplication is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit will be poured out upon all classes of people; the leaders, indicated by the 'house of David', and the common people identified as the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit will give them the understanding of who the Messiah was and what the Messiah had done for them. Those who would accept the word would have a new understanding of who it was that was hung on the cross and was pierced for them. (John 19:34). Recognizing this they would bitterly mourn for him as if it was their firstborn son who was killed.

The pouring out of the Spirit is most notable at Pentecost when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and 3,000 people were baptized. (Acts 2:1-4; 16-17, 41; Joel 2:28)

***v.12:11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.***

In the days following Christ's death there would be a great mourning as stated in the previous verse. This mourning is compared to the mourning of the Israelites on the death and defeat of king Josiah's army at the city of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.

Josiah was the last great king of Judah to follow after the word of the Lord by reintroducing the law from the book found in the temple.

*2 Kings 23:28-30 & 2 Chronicles 35:20-25*

Outside the Jewish nation, especially after the fall of Nineveh, world events were changing as Babylon sought to extend its empire and exterminate the old Assyrian strongholds.

The Egyptians fearing the rise of the Chaldean king Nabopolassar became allies with the Assyrians. The Babylonian army under the command of prince Nebuchadnezzar was advancing westward toward the Mediterranean and was preparing to meet the last vestiges of the Assyrian army at Carchemish on the Euphrates River north of Israel. The Egyptian Pharaoh, Necho, honoring the diplomatic ties assembled his army and marched north to aid the Assyrians.

As the Egyptian army moved through Judah toward Carchemish, Josiah, commanding his army, moved to cut off the Egyptians. (v.20) Josiah did this for one of two reasons; one he was a vassal of Assyria and wanted to help the Babylonians who might treat him better and be afforded protection by them. Or, more likely, he was attempting to better his position or at least not make it any worse. Being a vassal he may have thought it might be to his advantage if the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians thereby freeing them from Assyrian control and giving him independence. If the Egyptians entered the war and came away victorious they would be the dominant power and might have designs of moving into Judah.

As Josiah deploys his forces in the valley of Megiddo the Egyptian king sends his ambassadors to meet with Josiah. The message to Josiah is that Egypt has no quarrel with them but is on a mission from God to go to war against the Babylonians. In other words, get out of the way or I with the help of God will destroy you. (v.21)

Josiah did not believe the Egyptians would just quietly pass through or not cause problems later, so, he dressed himself as an ordinary soldier so he could fight on the front lines without being recognized as the king. As it turns out, the Egyptians were actually told by the Lord to do what they did. Whether or not they recognized the message as coming from the Lord is much debated. (v.22)

In battle Josiah is shot by an arrow and withdraws. (v.23) He is taken by chariot back to Jerusalem where he dies. (v.24) Of those that mourned his death Jeremiah is specifically mentioned. (v.25)

The death of Josiah must have been commemorated by some type of memorial for it to be widely known and recognized some 150 years after it occurred.

***v.12:12-14 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart, the family of the house of Nathan apart, and the wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart and their wives apart.***

That the land and every family would mourn is a statement of universal mourning. The prophet also mentions four specific families as examples or as to give a cross section of who would be mourning. Two families would be of the royal line and two would be of the priestly line.

The royal families are from the house of David, king of Israel, and Nathan, the son of David from whom Zerubbabel was descended. (2 Sam. 5:13-14; Luke 3:27-31) The priestly families would be from the house of Levi, patriarch of that tribe, and Shimei, grandson of Levi. (Num. 3:17-18)

While the mourning is led by both the civil and religious leaders every family in the nation would mourn the death of the Messiah. The word "*apart*" is used to indicate this mourning would not be a public mourning but a deep personal mourning to be done in private or seclusion.

The wives are mentioned separately because it may have been the custom for the men and women to separate themselves from one another during these times.

***v.13:1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.***

In that day represents the time in which the new covenant is established. A fountain is used to represent the new covenant and it will be open for all to take from. The new covenant is based on Christ's death and through him all can come to have their sin and uncleanness washed away. (Jer. 2:13, John 4:14)

The use of water is symbolic of the process of cleansing one of uncleanness, the removal of sin or absolution. (Num. 8:6-7; 19:19)

***v.13:2 An it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.***

Zechariah foretells that in these days there will be no idol worship in Israel. It was fulfilled in the fact that the Jews acquired an aversion to idols and idolatry. They rejected beliefs in Baal, Ashtoreth and others they so commonly revered.

False prophecy will also be brought to an end. False prophets encouraged the Jews in their sin and they followed with disastrous results. At this time they will be identified and driven out. The "*unclean spirit*" leading the false prophets is considered to be the devil.

***v.13:3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.***

To abolish false prophecy it will be the duty of the parents to prevent their children from promoting such ideas. When false prophecy does come stern measures are to be taken to stop it. (Deut. 13:6-10)

***v.13:4-6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.***

Because of the punishment a false prophet would receive a possible scenario is given concerning the discovery of such a prophet. He will not boldly give his interpretation of a vision he claims to have seen. He will conceal his identity by not wearing the clothes of a prophet, most likely a hairy garment (animal skin). If accused of being a false prophet he will deny it and claim to have been a farmer since he was young.

Another sign of a false prophet is that he may have self-inflicted wounds on his body. When questioned about them he will say he got them in an accident or some other cause at a friends.

***v.13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.***

In the first prophecy Zechariah took on the role of the good shepherd and broke the two staffs signifying the dissolution of the old covenant. In this prophecy he has told of a great mourning to take place and to watch out for false prophets. But what would become of the good shepherd? Here the sword, symbolic of death, would be raised against the good shepherd. The term "*my fellow*" has the meaning of neighbor or one 'intimately joined' with God. The reference is made concerning the one to come as the Messiah.

The prophecy is that when the shepherd is killed the sheep (followers) will be scattered. Christ reiterates this prophecy to his disciples shortly before his death. (Matt. 26:31; John 16:32)

Even though the death of Christ is prophesied as being an act of Israel (12:10-13) it is here presented as the sovereign act of God since he is the one pictured as bringing the sword against the shepherd.

The little ones are the believing remnant to which the Lord will extend his grace in these latter days of the new covenant.

***v.13:8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.***

The mercy afforded the remnant would be saving them from a coming judgment. This judgment would take place over time and would result in the deaths of two thirds of the Jewish nation. Many deaths would take place during the Roman conquest of Jerusalem while many others would come through persecutions suffered for years afterward.

***v.13:9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God.***

One third of the nations survives by escaping to the mountains. This one third that survives the judgment will be made stronger through the trials they will have escaped. (1 Peter 4:12-13) These trials use to purify ones faith are likened to the purifying of silver and gold by fire. (1 Peter 1:7)

***v.14:1 Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.***

The chapter opens with the defeat of Jerusalem and the prophecy of what will happen in its wake. As the events unfold are they to be taken literally or figuratively and in either case at what time in history do they take place?

Taken literally there will be a great battle with all nations coming against Jerusalem. The city will be overrun and the conquerors will invade individual homes and take the valuables to divide among themselves. Women will be raped as half the city is taken into captivity.

That this is an actual event is not greatly disputed the bigger question is when will it happen? There are two thoughts; first is that it is a prophecy of Jerusalem's fall to the Roman empire and historical events confirm it took place. Second is that it is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. The primary reasons for this are the statement of "all nations" coming against Jerusalem and that half the city went into captivity. It is felt that neither of these occurs while the Romans ruled the world. All the nations were not united against Jerusalem, only the Romans. And, taken with v.13:8 only one sixth of the population would be left as a remnant meaning the number killed or taken captive would be far too many.

(The belief here is that Zechariah's prophecy is to the Jews of his day and to those first generation new covenant believers. This event is therefore a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans which occurred in 70 A.D.)

***v.14:3 Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.***

If viewing the destruction as a literal event then following the devastation it is promised the Lord will come to fight against those who had attacked the city. The promise is backed by confirming past events where the Lord came to the aid and defense of Israel in their time of need. Some suppose the example refers to his defense from the Egyptian army but this probably has a more general reference to the many times he fought for them. (Josh. 10:14, 42; 23:3; 1 Sam. 7:10)

If this concerns end times events the appearance of the Lord is a prelude to apocalyptic events when the Lord will come to seek his revenge on all who oppose him. (Rev. 19:11-16)

On the other hand if the destruction is in the first century A.D. then the Lord is seen as coming to the aid of the believing remnant during the Roman occupation and his dissolution of the Roman empire.

***v.14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.***

In Zechariah's prophecy God is seen as reigning sovereignly over all the earth. He protects his people and defeats all who would come against them. Following this great battle he describes what seems to be large movements of land as the face to the earth changes.

When viewing from an end times perspective the Lord is seen as returning to earth at the same spot from where he ascended after his first coming. (Acts 1:9,12) At this time the Mount of Olives will cleave or split in two, half the mountain will move to the north the other half to the south with a great valley created east to west.

If the prophecy was given to the Jews of the first century A.D. it is clear this never literally took place therefore the splitting of the mountain takes on a symbolic meaning there is a literal portion that was fulfilled when Christ stood on the mount of Olives and ascended into heaven. This concluded his first coming and completed the events establishing the new covenant. The splitting of the mount of Olives becomes symbolic of the separation between the old covenant of the Jews and the new covenant where both the Jews and Gentiles have the gift of salvation.

The splitting of the mount represents the taking down of the wall between the Jews and gentiles. The valley created between the split mountain is the common ground or pathway which brings the Jew and Gentile together in the new covenant.

*"The mountain being divided, one-half toward the north and the other half towards the south, there shall be a very great valley, that is, a broad way of communication opened between Jerusalem and the Gentile world, by which the Gentiles shall have free admission into the gospel-Jerusalem, and the word of the Lord, that goes forth from Jerusalem, shall have free course into the Gentile world"* Matthew Henry

***v.14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.***

The prophecy says that half the population of Jerusalem (14:2) will escape the city and not go into captivity. The end times advocates say the valley created by the splitting of the mountain will be the way of escape for those fleeing the city. The flight of the remnant from Jerusalem is compared to the flight of those living during the reign of Uzziah when an earthquake struck the area during his reign (790 - 740 B.C.). (Amos 1:1) Azal is unknown but was probably a place somewhere east of the Mount of Olives.

When viewing this as symbolic the promise is that there will be some Jews who will flee into the valley to save themselves. The life they save will be their spiritual life. Fleeing into the valley is representative of fleeing the old covenant for the new covenant.

*"The valley of the mountains is the gospel-church, to which there were added of the Jews daily such as should be saved ..."* Matthew Henry

***v.14:6-7 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light***

For those believing this is an end times prophecy the last days will be chaotic and will include cosmic signs where the brightness of the sun and stars will go dark. (Joel 4:15; Matt 24:29) The day will not be distinguishable from the night because of the darkness of the heavenly bodies and God will provide whatever light will be needed.

*"Because of the topographical, cosmic, and, indeed, even cataclysmic changes, that day will be 'unique'. The situation will be such that it can be classified as neither day or night - 'a day known [only] to the Lord'. But after the judgment and suffering are past, there will be light again, possibly symbolizing the ushering in of the new order."* Frank E. Gaebelien

Matthew Henry sees this as partially symbolic. That day is the time from the first coming to the second coming. The light, being a description of Christ, is not clearly understood nor entirely understood. The affairs of the church are neither entirely good nor bad but a mixture of both.

***v.14:8 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.***

For the end times thinkers the waters are literal. The summer and winter months are dry times of the year. When the final days are here the waters will flow out from Jerusalem keeping the land from drying out in the summer and winter. There will be a time when planting can occur all year long resulting in abundant harvests and a prosperous people.

Symbolically the living water is the gospel message which originated in Jerusalem and will spread across the land. The former sea and hinder sea represent the spread in all directions, east and west. The gospel will be continually preached and is contrasted with the dry period of the summer and winter months.

***v.14:9 And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.***

If this is an end times prophecy then following the victory the Lord has over those who oppose him he will usher in his new kingdom. There will be no worship of any other God or idols, only the Lord will be recognized as God. (Rev. 11:15)

God has always been the king over all the earth although man has not always recognized this fact. Under the old covenant the Lord was God to the Jewish nation, they were his chosen people. Now under the new covenant the Lord will be God to all people of all nations, that is the king and God that can be recognized over all the earth.

***v.14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.***

Geba was a city located about six miles north of Jerusalem close to the border of Judah. Rimmon was located to the south of Jerusalem close to the border of Edom. The area between these two cities was a hilly region, in other words it was not a flat plain.

After the Lord sets up his kingdom on earth the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt. There are those that believe this area will actually be transformed into a plain and that Jerusalem will be elevated on a mountain overlooking the entire region. (Is. 2:2; Micah 4:1)

*"The mountains which are around about Jerusalem hid and protest it, but because they will no longer be needed as a defense they are to be leveled, so that the city dominates the land, as befits the capital city of the King of the whole earth."* Joyce G Baldwin

Figuratively the lifting up of Jerusalem is representative of the spiritual elevation of the new testament church above all others. Physically the city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt and this can also be symbolic of the covenant being rebuilt into which all must enter to be saved.

*"The gospel of Christ, where it comes in its power, levels the ground, mountains and hills are brought low by it, that the Lord alone may be exalted."* Matthew Henry

***v.14:11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.***

The city, having been rebuilt in the new millennium. will be prosperous and peaceful. The city will no longer be subject to hostile attacks and its residents will be safe and secure.

Figuratively Jerusalem represents the church. As the gospel message is spread many people will come and dwell in the safety of its promises. The Lord will not allow the destruction of his church and will protect it from all evil. (Matt. 16:18)

***v.14:12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.***

The focus of the prophecy changes and attention is now on the side opposed to the Lord or opposed to the new covenant church.

For the believer of an end times prophecy once the new millennium has been ushered in any one coming against the Lord will be the recipient of devastating punishment. This punishment will be like a living death. The flesh will be eaten away while the individual is still alive, their eyes will decay in their sockets and their tongue will dissolve in their mouth. Generally the idea is of utter destruction.

Viewing Jerusalem as representing the new covenant church this is a promise of protection and safety for the believer. Anyone coming against the church will bear punishment directly from the Lord. Whether the punishment stated here is literal or is to be taken as a general sign of the judgment given out is not clearly understood.

***v.14:13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor.***

The great tumult is interpreted as panic. However the prophecy is taken the result of punishment inflicted on anyone attempting to defy the Lord will be panic. If an actual battle is taking place those attacking will fight against each other in an effort to escape the their own death.

In general the world is filled with sin. Those who do not believe in the salvation message and follow Christ's example will be filled with panic over their own fate. Those who fight against the church will become part of the world with all of its destructive forces. Individuals who prey on their neighbors and world situations where nations fight against nations will always exist unless made a part of Christ and his new covenant.

***v.14:14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem, and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, to great abundance.***

In a literal battle Judah will join with Jerusalem to defeat the enemy. There are a few who translate 'at' as being 'against' but most think this does not make sense in the context of the prophecy. As relating to an end times prophecy this means that Jerusalem will prevail and the spoils will go the victor, that being God's people.

When viewing this figuratively Jerusalem is the new covenant church but is Judah representative of believers coming to the aid of the church as it is attacked by unbelievers or is Judah the Jewish believer in the old covenant attacking the new covenant church. The true church of Christ will be the victor and come away with all the blessings of the Lord bestowed upon it.

***v.14:15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.***

The animals and all of creation suffer because of man's struggles between themselves. The plagues set upon man become plagues to everything around them.

*"The inferior creatures often suffer for the sin of man and in his plagues. Thus God will show his indignation against sin ..."* Matthew Henry

***v.14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.***

The heathen will not be entirely destroyed by the judgment on those attacking Jerusalem. A portion of them will become part of the remnant going forward into the new millennium. Going along with an end times prophecy is the thought of the remaining unbelieving Jews now being converted and being made part of the new Jerusalem along with many others once opposed to God.

The feast of tabernacles "*seems to speak of the final, joyful regathering and restoration of Israel in the full kingdom blessing, as well as of the ingathering of the nations.*" Gaebelein

When looking at the prophecy from a new covenant standpoint there will be believers from all nations. The new covenant has been opened up to all the gentile nations and from all the nations there will be those converted to Christ and the salvation he offers.

The feast of the tabernacles was a time of grateful rejoicing. It is also called the festival of booths when the Israelites remembered the way their ancestors lived after being brought out of Egypt. This same concept is to be kept in the new covenant church as the believers should rejoice in the knowledge of their salvation and the coming out of the bondage of sin.

***v.14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.***

As a literal punishment for not converting and becoming part of the new Jerusalem rain will be withheld from them. Rain is used as an expression of the blessings of God being bestowed upon the earth or upon a particular nation. No matter how the prophecy is viewed rain, as a blessing, is withheld for disobedience.

***v.14:18-19 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.***

Withholding certain graces may or may not adversely affect everyone. Anyone not affected may feel they had escaped punishment. Not so, plagues will be added that will eventually affect them.

Egypt is used as an example of this idea. If rains are withheld from Egypt they would not be affected as much as other nations. Egypt doesn't get much rain anyway and primarily gets its water from the Nile, therefore withholding the rain would not be such a hardship. But even Egypt, as with any nation, will suffer the consequences as plagues are added that would affect them.

***v.14:20-21 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.***

The words 'holiness unto the Lord' were inscribed on the gold plate of the tiara of the high priest. In the times of the new covenant this inscription would become very broadly used. So broadly used that it would be put on the bells on horses bridles. The indication here is that the distinction of what was holy and what was not holy would become less and less noticeable.

The pots in the sanctuary used for catching blood of a sacrifice were considered more holy than those used for boiling or holding ashes. This concept would be abolished. To take this even farther the pots in someone's home would be just as holy as those in the temple. In general this would signify the end to the ceremonial law. Worship of God could now be done in many ways.

# *Zechariah*

## *Chapter 14*

The Canaanite represented the heathen and pagan beliefs. In the end nothing unclean would enter into the new kingdom. As this relates to the new covenant this would mean no pagan practices would be brought in to corrupt the true gospel message of Christ and what he has done for the salvation of mankind.

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