

The Prophets, Book 16

Zechariah

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi made up the trio of Restoration prophets, who ministered during the two-phase return from captivity: (1) the rebuilding of the Temple; (2) and the later rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and restoration of the fortified cities in Israel. These three books are the only post-exilic (i.e. written after the exile and return from captivity) books of prophecy; and their writings closed out the Old Testament.

Haggai and Zechariah ministered during the time of the completion of Temple rebuilding, after the work was stopped; Malachi ministered about 90 years later, during the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls, and his is the last Old Testament book of prophecy.

Like Haggai, the setting for Zechariah is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah where he is named (Ezra 5:1, 6:14 and, probably, Nehemiah 12:16), and in the book of Esther, who made the Restoration possible¹. And, like Haggai, he began his ministry in the second year of the reign of Darius, King of Persia and successor to Cyrus the Great. Zechariah was the grandson of Iddo the prophet who, it seems (Nehemiah 12:16), had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon 16 years earlier as a member of the original group of Israelite returnees (Zechariah 1:7)².

Zechariah was apparently a young man (2:4), and is generally believed to have been younger than his friend Haggai; his book is much larger, and it records many visions. His account begins two months after the beginning of Haggai's account, and his recorded ministry lasted about two years; but his total ministry seems to have covered about 50 years, extending to the emergence of Greece as a power in world history.

Prophecies of the Messiah and the End Times. The Book of Zechariah has been aptly described as "the most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological [dealing with events of the end times], of all the writings of the Old Testament³." Much of the book reads like Revelation. He speaks of "the day of

¹ Concerning Esther's probable role in the return of Ezra and Nehemiah to Jerusalem, see the study guide to Esther, introductory material, "Esther's Role in the Restoration."

² There are references to Iddo and his writings in Scripture, but there is no surviving book bearing his name. It is generally considered that Iddo's writings were included in the books of I and II Chronicles. See in this regard II Chron 9:29.

³ George L. Robinson, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, as quoted in Unger, Merrill F., *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Zechariah, Book of, p 1183.

the Lord,” the time when Christ Jesus will return to Earth in the Second Advent; and he uses the expression “in that day” 21 times, referring to the day of the Lord.

Zechariah's immediate ministry was to encourage finishing the job of the rebuilding of the Temple; his greater purpose, however, seems to have been to reveal a great deal about the coming Messiah. His book contains more allusions to the coming Messiah, in both his First and Second Advents, and in his millennial glory, than all of the other Minor Prophets combined. Zechariah also includes some amazingly precise prophecies concerning the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus in his First Advent.

Like the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel, those described by Zechariah are difficult to interpret, and commentators through the ages have found the visions a bewildering challenge. St. Jerome wrote that he had difficulty in trying to understand them, and the great Matthew Henry described one portion as “dark, and hard to be understood.” And, so, you and I should not be discouraged if they are a challenge for us.

A. Author. The human author was the prophet Zechariah, grandson of Iddo the prophet. As they do with the Book of Isaiah, some critical scholars argue that there was "a second Zechariah," who wrote the last six chapters, and that they were "later additions."

They argue that the language and style of the last six chapters are different. Their chief objection to Zechariah's authorship of these latter chapters, however, is that they include some amazingly accurate predictions of the conquest of Alexander the Great, and of the coming Messiah. This objection flows, of course, from their basic rejection of the miraculous, including divine inspiration of the Scriptures. The foundational assumption of the most extreme critical scholars is that prophecies concerning future events are not possible; therefore, they reason, these chapters must have been written after the events, so as to make them **appear** to have been supernatural revelations.

Both parts of the book, however (again like Isaiah), are quoted in the New Testament as being the writings of the same man. And, if nothing supernatural is possible, then all of the Bible is a scam, I have wasted 15 years of my life in writing this study guide, and you are wasting your time reading it. But, as we both know, we are not wasting our time. It seems strange that those humanistic scholars, with their bright minds and excellent educations, seem incapable of such a simple, inescapable, logical conclusion.

The subject matter of the first seven chapters, 10 amazing visions, is quite different from that of the last six. The visions of Chapters 1-6 deal with the contemporary situation as the Temple was being rebuilt, but also contain prophecies of the future. The last six chapters are largely messianic and

eschatological prophecies of the distant future. It is entirely possible that Zechariah wrote the last six chapters much later in his life, without the urgency of the situation dominating the first seven chapters (getting the Temple re-built). It would seem that, in the relative peace of those latter chapters, he was peering into the far-distant future, undistracted by other, immediate and pressing concerns, which could explain the difference in style and vocabulary.

B. Time and Place. Zechariah almost certainly wrote his book in Jerusalem, about 500 BC.

C. Theme. Zechariah's immediate theme is the importance of rebuilding the Temple and living in obedience to God's Word; his transcendent theme is the coming Messiah and the ultimate fulfillment of God's plan for man. His is a message of encouragement and promise; and, he consistently uses the unique (YHWH) name of the LORD. Frequently, Zechariah identifies the LORD as "the LORD of hosts" (LORD Sabaoth--the unique, self-existent, all-powerful One, who commands an unbeatable army--the army of Heaven.). In this way Zechariah seems to be looking far into the future when the army of YHWH will completely destroy the armies of Satan in the end times. He seems also to be reminding the people in this way that they need fear no earthly army, if only they will obey, trust and honor the LORD. This is a lesson that, alas, since the Exodus, they had never fully learned.

D. Highlights. Highlights of Zechariah include the following:

1. Visions of the LORD's Plan for Jerusalem and the cities of Israel. (Chapter 1)

The LORD of hosts appears to Zechariah and lays the foundation for the messages that will constitute the book. The LORD reminds Zechariah that his ancestors never got the message that the LORD is immortal and all-powerful, and compares this with the mortality of the disobedient children of Israel, and of their false prophets ("Who are they...do they live forever?"). Three months later a prophetic word comes to Zechariah in a vision of many horsemen, led by an angel on a red horse. The prophet asks who all of these horsemen are and he is told that these are those whom the LORD has sent to check on the people and they have found the people to be idle, self-serving and doing nothing to serve the LORD ("at rest").

The angel asks the LORD of hosts how long He will continue to express his indignation against the Israelites, which has been going on for 70 years (the Babylonian captivity). The LORD replies with comforting words, saying that He is greatly displeased with the pagans around Jerusalem who are (temporarily) prospering, and that He will return, the Temple shall be completed, and a measuring line will be stretched forth upon Jerusalem (apparently a reference to the rebuilding of the walls).

Zechariah then looks and sees “four horns” (pagan powers) and the LORD explains that they are the ones who have conquered and scattered Judah and Israel. Zechariah then sees three builders or smiths, and the LORD explains that they are the godly powers that will terrorize the pagan powers, and drive them out.

***NOTE:** The word “fray” in v 21 is an English word that has long ago fallen out of use; it appears only three times in the AV (KJV) (Deut 28:26; Jer 7:33; and here in v 21). The Hebrew word is “charad,” meaning to flee in fear. In all three instances it is used to mean to scatter or to put in fear causing something to flee. In Deuteronomy and in Jeremiah the context makes this clear, describing vultures and other scavengers feeding on corpses, and they cannot be frightened into flying away. Here, the context does not make it as clear, but the meaning is the same: to put the wicked persecutors in fear, causing them to flee.*

2. The Vision of the Measuring Line. (Chapter 2)

An angel appears with a measuring line in his hand. Zechariah asks the angel where he is going, and the angel says that he is going to Jerusalem to measure it (apparently for building a protective wall around it). A second angel appears, instructing the first to tell Ezekiel that Jerusalem will be inhabited, prosperous and at peace, for the LORD will be a protective wall around the city and will dwell in the midst of her.

Here is a picture of the future glory of Jerusalem, where the LORD will dwell in the midst of the city and will be their wall of protection (“wall of fire round about”). The LORD calls to the Jews who are still in Babylon to return and be a part of the restoration, and says that any enemy who would harm Israel touches “the apple of his eye.” He tells them to sing and rejoice, for He will dwell in the midst of them. Note the promise of the future when “many nations” will call Jerusalem their capital--not just the Jews. This suggests the far distant future, in the end times when all things will be made right, as well as the Restoration in Zechariah’s time.

NOTES:

a. The word “apple” appears eight times in the AV (KJV), all in the OT, and four different Hebrew words are thus rendered. In three appearances it simply means “apple,” the fruit. In two appearances it is used metaphorically to mean something to be protected because it is precious and beloved. And in three instances it is used to mean simply something to be protected. Here, in v 8 the Hebrew word, “babah” suggests the pupil of the eye (some modern versions render the word “apple” and footnote the word as “pupil”). At any rate, it expresses something definitely to be protected, as we protect our eyes, thus something precious.

The phrase, "apple of my [his, her] eye" has become a common expression in modern English, meaning a beloved favorite. In Haiti, teaching the people that they are precious to God, I used this phrase, telling them that if there were many ripe and delicious apples on the tree, still they would be the one that God would choose above all others. The people stared at me blankly; they did not understand at all. Then I realized that they didn't know what an apple is, for apples don't grow in Haiti. I began all over again, telling them that they are the "mango" of God's eye, and their faces lighted up with understanding and delight!

*b. Here the restored homeland of the Israelites is called "the holy land." Although, today, this synonym has come to be a common way to refer to the land of Israel, this is the **only** place in the entire Bible where it occurs.*

3. Prophecies of the Coming Messiah. (Chapter 3)

Zechariah sees a vision of Joshua the high priest in filthy garments, standing before the angel of the LORD, with Satan at his right hand to resist him. Then the LORD Himself rebukes Satan, apparently nullifying his testimony as to the sinfulness of Joshua, and causes the filthy garments to be clean⁴. In all this, Joshua (whose name means "YHWH is salvation") seems to represent all of the children of God. This definitely appears to represent the coming ministry of the Messiah as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), in which all of the redeemed of the Lord will be cleansed and clothed in robes of righteousness. The angel, speaking for YHWH, refers to the coming Messiah as "my servant the BRANCH." This title is also used by Isaiah (11:1) and Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15) to refer to the coming Messiah; but only in Zechariah is the word in all capitals. This is extremely significant, for it is a clear revelation of the divinity of that future Messiah, i.e. YHWH and the coming Messiah will be one and the same. The salvation will be accomplished "in one day"--that Day of Atonement when Jesus will become sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God⁵. And then, in the last verse, the prophecy leaps forward to the millennial reign of Christ, speaking of every man under his grape vine and fig tree⁶.

4. Encouragement to Zerubbabel. (Chapter 4)

The angel of the LORD (probably not the pre-incarnate Christ) wakes Zechariah with another message. Zechariah sees a vision of a golden, seven-part, lamp stand ("candlestick") with an olive tree on each side, but the vision is not explained. He is told to encourage Zerubbabel to finish the Temple. He has laid the foundation, and the angel says that he will also finish it. Zerubbabel is not to "despise the day of small things"--the humble foundation which has lain abandoned for 16 years;

⁴ Jude 8-9.

⁵ II Corinthians 5:21.

⁶ Micah 4:4.

rather, he is to look forward to the finished work. And, he is reminded, he will not do it in his own strength. In an oft-quoted reminder that is wise for all of us to remember, the angel says that the final accomplishment will be "Not by [your own] might, nor by [your own] power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts."

Then there follows a mysterious dialogue about the golden lamp stand and the olive trees. The angel doesn't explain, but says that the lamp stand represents "the eyes of the LORD" which run to and fro through the whole Earth⁷. This seems to be an expression of the omniscience (all-knowing attribute) of God⁸. The two olive trees, which are supplying the oil for the lamps, are "the two anointed ones that stand by the LORD of the whole Earth"; this seems to refer to the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-4 who are slain and rise from the dead⁹.

5. The Flying Scroll and Flying Ephah. (Chapter 5)

Zechariah looks up into the air and he sees a very large scroll, unrolled; it is 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. The angel asks the prophet what he sees. He replies, simply, that he sees a scroll in the air above him and that it is 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. The angel explains that the scroll is the curse that goes out, over the whole Earth, and that it is to punish those who lie and bear false witness in the LORD's name, swearing to things that are not true. Such people, says the angel, shall be cut off (excommunicated, or banished from the fellowship of the Lord's people). The judgment against liars and thieves shall be so fierce that it will remain in the midst of their houses and will consume even the timbers and stone foundations of their houses.

The angel again tells Zechariah to look up into the air and asks him what he sees; he replies to the angel by asking him what it is. The angel says that it is an ephah-size basket or container, the equivalent of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a bushel; and, he says, it is the same throughout the Earth. The angel then picks up a talent of lead (the cover of the basket, which weighs more than 100 pounds), and within the basket sat a woman. The angel says, "This is wickedness," and replaces the lead cover.

Again Zechariah looks up and sees two women with very large wings, like the wings of a stork. They lift the basket into the air and the angel asks where they are going with the basket of wickedness. He then answers his own question, saying that they are carrying it to Shinar (Babylon) to build a house for wickedness and establish it on its foundation¹⁰.

6. Four Chariots and the BRANCH. (Chapter 6)

⁷ See in this regard II Chron 16:9.

⁸ In this regard see Rev 5:6.

⁹ It is generally thought that the two witnesses of Rev 11 will be Enoch and Elijah, for they are the only two people in the Bible, including Jesus Himself, who have not experienced physical death (consider Hebr 9:27).

¹⁰ Genesis 10:10.

Zechariah sees in a vision four chariots coming out from between two mountains of brass¹¹. The first is pulled by red horses, the second is pulled by black horses, the third is pulled by white horses, and the fourth is pulled by grised and bay horses¹². Zechariah asks the angel what the vision means, and the angel replies that four chariots represent the four spirits of the heavens that go forth, over the Earth from the presence of the Lord of all the Earth. The angel goes on to say that the black horses, followed by the white horses, go forth into the north country (probably Babylon and Persia--note that two chariots go to the north). The grised horses go toward the south country (probably Egypt--note that only one chariot goes to the south); and the angel seems to be saying that the bay horses patrol throughout the Earth. The angel cries that the two chariots going to the north have brought (or found) peace there.

In another vision the angel commands Zechariah to take certain men of the returned captives and have them make crowns of silver and gold. One crown is to be placed on the head of Joshua the high priest, and the other crowns are to be placed in the Temple as a memorial, and those from far off will come to Jerusalem and build the Temple. The angel tells Zechariah that he will know that the LORD of hosts has sent him to Zechariah, and all will come to pass if he will diligently obey the voice of “the LORD your God.”

NOTE: *In vv 12 and 13 there is a messianic prophecy to the effect that the BRANCH (Christ) shall build the temple of the LORD and “bear the glory [as of the only begotten of the Father]”¹³. He shall also rule there, seated on his throne, and shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be “between them both” (the dual offices of priest and king).*

This is a mixed prophecy (which the angel pronounces without explaining). To us it is obvious that the angel is speaking in these two verses of a temple to be built by Christ Jesus in his Second Advent, i.e. of the Millennial Temple, where He will reign as both Christ the High Priest and Christ the King. Zechariah, on the other hand, surely had not the foggiest idea as to what this meant; yet, thanks be to God, he faithfully recorded what the angel told him.

7. A Basic Lesson that They Never Learned. (Chapter 7)

In the 4th year of the reign of Darius, King of Persia, a delegation is sent to the Temple (under construction) to ask for religious guidance from the priests and prophets there, and to pray. During the 70 years of captivity in Babylon, there had

¹¹ In the bible brass represents judgment; but its meaning here, in the two mountains, is unclear, and the angel does not explain.

¹² A bay horse is reddish-to-dark brown with black main and tail. “Grisled” is more difficult to define but is basically dark hair mixed with gray, and speckled or dappled throughout.

¹³ John 1:14.

been fasting and mourning in the 5th month of the year, to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem; and in the 7th month there had been fasting and mourning to commemorate the murder of Gedaliah by wicked Ishmael.

Zechariah prophesies, saying that during those 70 years of captivity the people had mourned, but for the wrong (self-centered) reasons. And, because they had hardened their hearts and rejected a law made clear by the prophets who had gone before, the LORD will not listen to them. That law, which the prophets had made clear, over and over, since the giving of the Law to Moses, may be thought of as the law of kindness. God's people are to be protective and kind to the powerless, i.e. the widow, the orphan, the friendless foreigner, and the poor. Because He had cried out this lesson (through his prophets) and they would not hear, so, when they cry out to the LORD, He will not hear them.

NOTES:

a. After the destruction of Jerusalem, and the carrying away to Babylon of most of the remaining Jewish people, Nebuchadnezzar appointed godly Gedaliah as his governor of the Jewish remnant, and protector of Jeremiah (whom some of the royal family had been trying to kill). After only two months of peace under Gedaliah, Ishmael, a wicked member of the royal family, conspired to murder Gedaliah and declare himself king. After murdering Gedaliah, Ishmael came to his senses, realized that Nebuchadnezzar would return and kill him for what he had done, and he fled to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with him. This ended all hope of a Jewish remnant, living peacefully in the Holy Land as a Babylonian province or colony; thus it was an event worthy of mourning.

b. The Book of Zechariah, like much of the Bible, is rich in metaphor; an example is found in 7:11. Here, the LORD has been repeating an admonition the people have been hearing (and violating) since the time of Moses: that they should care for and protect the weak and the helpless among them. But, He says, they have "pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear." This is a perfect, vivid, illustration of one who rejects love, comfort, or correction (in this case, correction).

8. It's going to Be Good, So Get Back to Work! (8:1-17)

The Lord again speaks to Zechariah, and He speaks in the Person of the LORD of hosts (the YHWH sabaoth, Who commands the invincible heavenly army, the army before which all earthly armies melt away). He says that He is returned to Jerusalem, and it shall be called "a city of truth¹⁴." Life there will "yet" be blessed (in spite of all the wrong that has gone on before--wickedness, injustice,

¹⁴ Here is an interesting thought. A city where truth prevails will be a blessed place of peace, safety and prosperity. See in this regard; John 6:14; Jn 8:31-47; Jn 17:17; I Jn 5:6. And see the LORD's summary of what is required of the people, in v 16, and in the last clause of v .

want, and general misery). The elderly will again dwell in peace and security, and children will play safely in the streets, filling them with their laughter. The LORD will re-gather his dispersed people, and they shall dwell in Jerusalem, and they shall be his people, and He will be their God. All of this will be wrapped in peace and righteousness¹⁵.

And so, says the LORD of hosts, get back to work and build the Temple. He then reminds the people how bad life was while work was ceased: there was no prosperity, there was no employment, and there was no peace, for there was conflict and strife. Now, He says, there shall be blessing and prosperity; but there are conditions: there must be **truth**. The people must speak truth to one another, and judgment (judicial matters) in the city gates must be **in truth**. Also, He says, they must imagine no evil against one another, and hate false oaths, things that He hates.

9. Life When the Temple Is Rebuilt, and Righteous Worship Is Restored. (8:18-23)

The LORD of hosts goes on to tell Zechariah what life will be like when the Temple is rebuilt and righteous worship is restored. The feasts will be celebrated in Judah in gladness and joy. Again emphasizing the foundational importance of truth in all aspects of life, He says that the people should love “truth and peace.” It seems true that where truth prevails, there will be peace; and, conversely, where truth is trampled, and lies and deception prevail, there can be no peace¹⁶.

As a result of this blessedness and righteousness, word of it will spread among the other cities of Israel and be drawn to it. Foreign, strong nations will wish to know and worship the LORD of the Jews. And pagan nations will be so powerfully that the LORD describes this in metaphor, saying that 10 men, each speaking a different, foreign language, will cling desperately to the garment of one Jew, saying “We want to go with you (to Jerusalem), for we have heard that ‘God’ is with you.”

NOTES:

a. Verses 21- 23 make an interesting distinction. Verses 21-22 use the YHWH name, the unique name of our LORD, because it is to the worship of YHWH that the pagans are drawn, even though they neither know nor understand What or Who that is. On the other hand, those 10 symbolic pagans of v 23, speaking 10 different languages, “have heard that God is with you.” We should recall that “God” is the English translation of the Hebrew, “Elohim,” and that the word can be used to refer to false, pagan gods as well as to the true God. Here, in v 23, the

¹⁵ Verses 3-5 are a perfect word picture of a city where peace, order, and safety prevail.

¹⁶ We may see this concept in its purest essence by remembering that Jesus is the Truth (Jn 14:6), and He is also the Prince of Peace (Is 9 :6).

*pagans are expressing themselves as they understand (actually, misunderstand) the meaning of "God (god)" to be. The "G" is capitalized in v 23 because the translators of the AV (KJV) **did** know which God the pagans were referring to (as has been true with most subsequent English translations).*

b. In v 23 it is clear that these foreigners want what the Jews have because they have heard that a mighty deity is with them. They are not attracted to the Jews; rather, they are attracted to the almighty deity of the Jews.

The same thing is revealed in the crossing of the Israelites into Canaan under Joshua, at long last, after wandering in fear for 40 years. The pagan Rahab, in Jericho, told the spies of Joshua that her pagan city could easily have been conquered, 40 years earlier, not because they feared the Israelites, but because they feared the God of the Israelites. They had heard of the mighty acts of the Israelite's God--and even knew that his name is YHWH (Josh 2:1-11).

Regrettably, this is a lesson that the Israelites never learned.

10. The Coming Greek Conquest, and a Promise. (9:1-8)

The first seven verses of Chapter 9 contain a remarkable prophecy of the coming conquest of Palestine and Syria by Alexander the Great, which will occur about 200 years in the future. The principal cities of the area are named, **in the exact order** in which they will be conquered by Alexander, beginning in Syria and ending in the fortified cities of the Philistines. In addition to the supernatural nature of its prophecies, critics have attacked Zechariah because one of the areas mentioned in Alexander's conquest is "the land of Hadrach" (9:1). Because there was no other record in ancient literature of such a place, they said (of course) that this was evidence that the Bible is unreliable. By now you probably already know what is coming; yes--in the late 19th Century, archeologists found Assyrian inscriptions with numerous references to Hadrach, a city associated with Damascus, and the Bible won again. Hadrach was an important Syrian city-state on the Orontes River, between Damascus and Hamath.

Verse 8 is a beautiful promise that, in spite of Alexander's coming conquest, with the warfare and destruction that will be going on in Tyre, Sidon, and Philistia nearby, the LORD will encamp round about the restored Jerusalem and keep his people from harm.

We must remember that Zechariah's mission in the Restoration is to encourage the returned people to resume work on the Temple, and that is what he did. This prophecy, however, is for the benefit of those future Israelites who will experience Alexander's conquest and escape utter destruction.

NOTES:

a. Verses 2-4 are a perfect prophecy of the conquest of Tyre by Alexander. Tyre was wealthy and proud, a prosperous seaport on the coastal trade route. The city

included a fortified island just off the coast, considered to be impregnable (it had never been conquered). Earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had laid siege to the mainland city, and laid waste the smaller cities around it, but never conquered the city itself¹⁷. Alexander destroyed the mainland city, used its rubble to build a causeway to the island, conquered and completely destroyed it. As Ezekiel had prophesied, it was reduced to a barren island where fishermen spread their nets to dry, and was never rebuilt.

As Zechariah prophesied (verses 5-7), from Tyre Alexander conquered and destroyed Philistia and its principal cities, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, Gath and Gaza. And then, according to Josephus, he visited Jerusalem as a friend, and offered a sacrifice in the Temple, guided by the High Priest¹⁸. This is a fascinating possibility indeed, and in perfect harmony with the promise of v 8!

***b.** In v 6 above, "a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod" means that the proud Philistines will no longer possess Ashdod; instead, a mongrel mix of foreigners will dwell there, and the Philistines shall be no more.*

***c.** In the 1st Century, Josephus recorded the marvelous details of the fulfillment of v 8 and the Lord's protection of Jerusalem and the Jewish people. He did this by giving Alexander a dream, and then telling the high priest Jaddua (at whom Alexander was furious) of the dream, and by telling Jaddua exactly what to do when Alexander's army arrived to destroy Jerusalem. Alexander, who had come to destroy Jerusalem and make an example of the high priest, instead befriended the high priest, and embraced the Jewish nation as friends. (Josephus, Antiquities, 11.8.3-4.).*

11. A Prophecy of the Coming Messiah. (9:9)

Suddenly, and without explanation or introduction, Zechariah's prophecy turns to the First Advent, and the coming of the Messiah. His words in verse 9 are so obviously describing what we shall see in the gospels concerning Jesus of Nazareth that even the most casual reader, if he has read the gospel accounts, would recognize them for what they are. And what an opening declaration--it deserves to be shouted by a crier, running before a majestic procession: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee!" If Zechariah were writing this today, as a script for the public reading of the verse, he would be justified in writing, in parentheses, before the declaration of verse 9, "(trumpet fanfare here)"!

With this declaration of messianic Good News, he continues to describe the coming Messiah and his entry into Jerusalem in words so perfect that they will be

¹⁷ Whether or not Nebuchadnezzar actually conquered mainland Tyre is still disputed; but the probability is that he negotiated with the Tyrians and did not destroy the city. Alexander, coming later, did.

¹⁸ Josephus, Antiquities, 11.8.1-5.

quoted in two of the gospels, and described to in the other two¹⁹. "...behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt of an ass." What could be more clear?

12. Peace, Dominion and Liberation in the Second Advent. (9:10-11)

And then, again suddenly and without a preface, Zechariah begins to speak of the Second Coming of the Messiah and events of the End Times²⁰. In verse 10 Zechariah paints a word picture of a future time when Christ Jesus will return to Earth in the Second Advent; and it is a picture of a time of peace and dominion. There will be peace in the former Northern Kingdom of Israel ("Ephraim") and in the former Southern Kingdom of Judah ("Jerusalem"); and there will be peace in the rest of the World ("the heathen"). And, in this establishment of peace, the dominion of Christ the King will be universal ("...even to the ends of the Earth").

Verse 11 speaks of the blood covenant by which prisoners are set free from "the pit"²¹. Still seeing into the far distant future and the Second Advent, Zechariah seems to speak of the prisoners of sin and hopelessness, who will have been set free by the blood of his sacrifice, which sealed his covenant of redemption. They (those of sinful mankind who turn to Him for redemption) will be set free from the pit of torment, where there is no water to quench their thirst or ease their torment.

13. Good News for the Prisoners of Hope. (9:12-17)

In verses 12-17 the "prisoners of hope" are told to "turn to the stronghold," i.e. look to and trust the LORD, who will generously bless them. As the LORD of hosts, YHWH the Commanding General of the Armies of Heaven, will lead his irresistible army in the destruction of the heathen forces of evil. His soldiers shall go forth rejoicing in triumph over the enemies of righteousness and will be powerful ("as the corners [horns] of the altar. In powerful imagery ("his arrow shall go forth as the lightning") Zechariah speaks of what appears to be the final battle of the End Times, when the army of Christ the King will completely, and with finality, destroy the forces of Satan. Then, says Zechariah, the flock of the LORD will be as precious jewels in his crown, lifted up in victory over evil.

And, in that happy ending, there will be abundant corn and wine²².

14. The Ingathering and Restoration of the LORD's Scattered Flock. (Chapter 10)

Chapter 10 is a rather cryptic, mysterious, prophetic promise of the future ingathering and restoration of the LORD's scattered people. He promises rain,

¹⁹ This passage is quoted in Matthew 21:4-5 and Jn 12:14-15; and the event is described in Mk 11:1-11 and Lk 19:29-38.

²⁰ Henry Halley (Halley's Bible Handbook, p 382) eloquently expresses this sudden change of scene: "In the same breath, the prophet sweeps forward to the day of final triumph."

²¹ Reference to "the" pit, rather than to "a" pit seems to imply the ultimate place of hopeless, eternal, confinement and torment, i.e. the place of doom for the unredeemed.

²² Throughout the Old Testament "corn and wine" is a metaphor for abundant prosperity.

even out of season, when needed, and rebukes the people for trusting in idols which have, as false shepherds, led the people astray and scattered them.

Pronouncing his anger at false teachers (shepherds), the LORD of hosts declares that He (the Good Shepherd) has united his people and made them to be a strong and united thing like his glorious war horse.

He alone is the source of blessing and prosperity, and from Him shall come the Messiah (the cornerstone, and the nails that hold a building together); and He is the source of all military success.

Verses 6 through 12 are a beautiful promise of restoration in the Promised Land (we must remember that when Zechariah was prophesying, only a small remnant had returned). In the restoration it will be as though the people had never been punished for their unfaithfulness; they will be mighty, more powerful than their enemies; there will be rejoicing, and their numbers shall increase. In the ingathering of the LORD's people He will seek them out, even from far distant places, and they will do all that they do in his name. Verse 8 is an interesting expression of the thoroughness, and the personal nature, of the ingathering. The prophet says that the LORD (the Good Shepherd) "will hiss for them," as a shepherd whistles for his sheep, calling them in, until every lamb is accounted for, and safely in the sheepfold.

15. A Parable of Good and the Bad Shepherds. (Chapter 11)

Chapter 11 speaks, in cryptic, mysterious language, of both good and bad shepherds. Like the rest of Zechariah's prophecies, it could bewilder the best of students and commentators, were it not for verses 12 and 13. These two verses clearly speak of the Good Shepherd, Jesus of Nazareth, and his betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Thus Zechariah is comparing, throughout the chapter, the blessedness of life in the family of the LORD, with Jesus as our Shepherd, with the misery and tragedy of rejecting Him and following false ("idol") shepherds into idolatry and rebellion.

In the early verses (1-9) Zechariah describes destruction, want and misery in even the most lush and desirable places: the cedar forests in the mountains of Lebanon, and the rich pastures and forests of Bashan (the well-watered area of Golan, on the Syrian border)²³. In verse 7 he speaks of two "staves" (staffs, heavy rods, or shepherd's crooks). He calls one "Beauty" and the other "Bands." This seems to symbolize the grace and blessedness ("Beauty") of belonging to the Good Shepherd, and of the unity and solidarity ("Bands") in the flock of the Good Shepherd (as the iron bands hold the individual parts of a well-made barrel together).

²³ The high plateau in what was ancient Bashan is today called the Golan Heights.

Verses 10-14 describe the breaking of the covenant with the Good Shepherd because of the unfaithfulness of the people. By cutting into pieces the shepherd's staff ("Beauty") there will no longer be protection and feeding of the sheep. And by the cutting asunder the other staff ("Bands") the unity of the Israelites (the divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel) will be ended and the sheep scattered²⁴. Suddenly, and without explanation, verses 12 and 13 speak of the coming Messiah and his betrayal by Judas; and then he goes on to speak of cutting into pieces the "Band"²⁵.

In the final three verses (15-17) Zechariah speaks of the false ("idol") shepherd, the suffering of the sheep under his wicked care, and finally of the destruction of the shepherd, losing to the sword both his arm (power) and his vision ("right eye"), leaving him helpless (or dead).

NOTES:

a. The capitalization of the first letter in both "Beauty" and "Bands," in vv 7, 10 and 14, is not an indication of divinity; i.e. it does not mean that these two words refer to the LORD, for when Zechariah utters them he is speaking the words of the LORD. Instead, capitalization of the first letter in each word takes the place of what will later be quotation marks. As was pointed out in the Introductory Material, the AV (KJV) was translated before the adoption of quotation marks, and they appear nowhere in the translation.

The dating for the genesis of quotation marks is somewhat hazy, but they did not come into general use until late in the 17th Century, or early in the 18th Century, i.e. about 100 years after the translation of the AV (KJV), which was first published in 1611.

b. The identity of the three shepherds in v 8 is unknown; however, they may represent the last three Hasmonian rulers of the Jews during the "Silent Years," in their unsuccessful war against the Romans, which ended about 115 BC.

16. Jerusalem Will Be a "A Cup of Trembling." (Chapter 12)

Chapter 12 is entirely a prophecy of the End Times. Verse one lays the foundation for the prophecy by expressing a fundamental reality: the absolute supremacy of the LORD who created, and maintains, all things. He "stretcheth

²⁴ The two kingdoms (Judah in the south and Israel in the North) no longer existed by Zechariah's time; but the memory of them was still fresh in the minds of the returning Jewish people.

²⁵ See also in this regard Matthew 26:14-15; 27:3-10. Zechariah's remarkable prophecy includes even the fact that when Judas (not named but clearly identified) returns the 30 pieces of silver, he will do it "in the house of the LORD." Jesus quoted this prophecy, but attributed it to Jeremiah; for an explanation of this apparent "error" see the explanatory NOTE following Highlight 74 in the study guide to Matthew.

forth the heavens,” He “layeth the foundations of the Earth, and He “formeth the spirit of man within him [giving him life]²⁶.”

The great and final battle in the End Times will center on Jerusalem. The enemies of the LORD will be seeking to destroy Jerusalem and the people of the LORD. In verses 2 through 8, in vivid, powerful, poetic imagery, Zechariah describes the destruction and terror that will overwhelm the enemy, making Jerusalem, with its people trusting and glorifying the LORD of hosts, “a cup of trembling” for them. Jerusalem, as a symbol of the empowered people of GOD, will destroy the enemy as quickly and completely as a roaring fire consumes dry sticks of wood, or as dried wheat or barley, cut and bundled in sheaves, is consumed by fire when put to the torch. For emphasis, in verse 8, the prophet says that in that day even the old and feeble “shall be as David,” becoming mighty warriors. The people of Jerusalem (“house of David”) shall be as fearsome, terrifying, and overwhelming to the ungodly enemy as the literal presence of God, or the angel of the LORD.

In verses 9-14, again in beautiful poetic imagery, Zechariah describes the mourning that will take place when, in the end, the eyes of the people, from the highest to the lowest, including the priests and Levites are opened, when all of them realize that they have caused to be crucified their un-recognized Messiah (“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced”)²⁷. He compares the outpouring of grief that will take place, when they realize what their ancestors had done, to the great and prolonged mourning in Jerusalem, when good King Josiah was killed while fighting the Egyptians at Megiddo. And, interestingly, he says that this great and prolonged mourning will be done in two groups, with women separated from the men (as was the ancient custom in such religious gatherings).

***NOTE:** At this point it may be useful to remember that Zechariah’s book, like the other 65 books of the Bible, was not written in chapters and verses; the chapter and verse divisions were added much later, for convenience in locating and referring to specific passages. And, although they are immensely helpful, they are not inspired; and, at times, they can be misleading. Verses 12:11 through 13:5 might be thought of as a parenthetical passage--one as if in parentheses--book-ended between the two descriptions of the Messiah’s wounds in 12:10 and 13:6. If this is so, then 12:11 through 13:5 would describe events in the same future time period, after the return of the Messiah in the Second Advent. With this interpretation, the grief expressed in 12:10, at the sight of the Messiah’s wounded body, and the realization of what their ancestors had done, is continued in 13:6.*

²⁶ It is the spirit (human spirit) that gives life to the body and soul (mind); this spirit is a gift from our Creator, and it departs from us at the moment of death, either to return to Him, or to be separated from Him in eternal torment.

²⁷ This prophetic statement in v 10 is quoted in Jn 19:37, and paraphrased in Rev 1:7.

Since no one seems really to know how to interpret this passage, we shall continue, based upon this interpretation.

And, speaking of 13:6, interpreters have struggled with it since at least the time of Matthew Henry (1662-1714), and we shall tackle it in the next highlight.

17. Prophecies of the Coming Messiah and Purification of the LORD's People.
(13:1-7))

Chapter 13 opens with a beautiful prophecy about a fountain that shall be opened in Jerusalem, "for sin and uncleanness." This may refer to the blood and water that flowed when, on the cross, Jesus' side was pierced by the Roman spear, as suggested in 12:10. Or it may refer to the shedding of his blood in general, as the remedy for our sins. Another possibility is that it refers to that life-giving stream of the water of life, flowing from the Temple in Ezekiel's vision of Ezekiel 47, Joel's vision of Joel 3, or John's vision of Revelation 22. I am inclined to think that all four visions are different, poetic ways, to speak of the same thing.

The prophet goes on to speak of what will happen "in that day" (when the Messiah returns). Idols and idol worship shall be removed from the land. False prophets and their evil spirits shall be driven from the land. Those who persist in prophesying falsely will be put to death by their parents (those who begot them, and know them better than anyone else); and those who are ashamed of their deception and confess, will apparently live²⁸.

And this brings us to verse 6.

That Controversial Verse, 13:6

As we have seen, one thing that can make the Old Testament prophets difficult to understand at times, is the fact that different topics are sometimes mixed in the same passage, where a verse speaking of one topic may be followed, without warning or explanation, by a verse, or group of verses, on an entirely different topic. Verses 1 and 6 seem to be extreme examples of this characteristic. Verse 1 is obviously a beautiful promise of the LORD's ultimate remedy for sin and death; yet it is immediately followed, without preamble, by verses 2 through 4, speaking shockingly of removing false prophets and putting them to death. Verse 5, in the context of verses 2 through 4, seems to speak of those false prophets who confess their deception and (we might assume) are forgiven. And then, abruptly, comes verse 6, and opinions as to its meaning are deeply divided.

The traditional view is that it is an important prophecy of our suffering Messiah, who was wounded "in the house of [his] friends," i.e. the House of David, the Jewish people who rejected his claims as Messiah and had Him put to death. The critical, modernist, scholars on the other hand, see verse 6 as just the opposite; they

see it as a continuation of the four verses before it, and take it to describe a false prophet who has cut himself in acts of idol worship. They also place the wounds in the chest (i.e. **between** the hands), which obviously changes everything. Although Jesus was beaten and injured in his chest, and his chest was torn by the Roman whips, we (both traditional and critical interpreters) think of his wounds on the cross as being those in his hands, feet, and his pierced side.

The traditional view, that verse 6 speaks of our suffering Savior, is strengthened by the fact that it is immediately followed by verse 7, which is undoubtedly a messianic prophecy, for it is quoted by Jesus Himself, concerning Himself, in preparing his disciples, on the night in which He was betrayed, concerning the horrors that were about to begin.

NOTES:

a. The shocking matter of the execution of false prophets by having their parents run them through with spears or lances, mentioned in one verse, and then left behind without comment, is, it seems to me, loaded with meaning, but with meaning which is forever left unspoken. It would seem more appropriate in Leviticus or Deuteronomy than after the return of Christ. Yet for us to pursue it and seek to understand it at this point would be only speculation, and probably a futile distraction; and so we won't.

b. Concerning the controversial v 6, even the esteemed Frances Siewert ("The Amplified Bible") follows the critical approach, although she treats it much more gently (almost lovingly), causing it to describe one of the false prophets who has been corrected and has repented. In the process of her rendering she reveals the crux of the translation conflict; it lies in the Hebrew prepositions "in" or "between"; thus the vast difference between "in" his hands, and "between" his hands."

By far the worst treatment of v 6 known to me is in the Living Bible (paraphrase), in which Kenneth Taylor shockingly rendered the verse as, "And if someone asks, 'what are these scars on your chest and your back?' he will say, 'I got into a brawl at the home of a friend.'" And he footnotes it to describe the wounded one, saying, "This is a false prophet who is lying about the reason for his scars." He, of course, believed that his paraphrase was perfectly valid; but to me it borders on outrageous blasphemy.

In the more recent incarnation of Taylor's "Living Bible," "The New Living Translation (NLT)," the verse is considerably less offensive to the traditional mind; but it still has the wounds on the chest. And, instead of "in the house of my friends," the NLT limits the meaning to a single, non-spiritual, event of violence "at my friend's [singular] house." It then footnotes v 6 with an alternate possibility for the location of the wounds as "wounds between your hands."

18. The LORD's Purified Remnant. (13:8-9)

The meaning of the last two verses of Chapter 13 seems clear: they speak of the death of 2/3 of the Israelite nation and the purification of the surviving 1/3 by going through the fires of tribulation. The LORD will declare that those of the purified remnant are his people, and the purified remnant of the people will declare that "The LORD [YHWH] is my God [Elohim]."

The difficulty lies in knowing of what time period the prophet speaks. Some believe that the prophet speaks of the Great Tribulation; others, including Matthew Henry, believe that it refers to the coming destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus in 70-71 AD, ending Temple worship and the Aaronic priesthood, and that the purified remnant will be the Church (perhaps the Church that would emerge after the trials of the Roman persecutions). Hosea 2:23 seems strongly to support this interpretation. If this latter was Zechariah's meaning it would be ironic, since he was sent to encourage the first returnees from Babylon to finish re-building the Temple (which Titus will completely destroy).

NOTE: Verse 9 is one long sentence, with four clauses. Notice that in the third and fourth clauses, "I will say, 'It is my people':" and, "and they shall say, 'The LORD is my God'," the "I" in "It" and the "T" in "The" are capitalized, something that we would not do. The reason is that, in the early 17th Century, this was the way to indicate a quoted statement. Since quotation marks had not yet been thought of when the AV (KJV) was first published, the first letter of a quoted portion within a sentence was capitalized, as in "It" and "The" here.

We have seen this before, but it may help to be reminded--especially in reading Zechariah, where our minds may grow weary, just from trying to understand his meaning. Languages evolve; and it would be about 90-100 years after the first publication of the AV (KJV) before quotation marks would come into use.

19. The Final Siege of Jerusalem. (14:1-3)

The final chapter opens with the statement, "Behold the day of the LORD cometh." It reads like a trumpet fanfare, calling attention to what follows; and what follows is a clear, prophetic, declaration of what we call the Second Advent, i.e. the triumphant second coming to Earth of Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah.

The first three verses seem to be out of chronological order, because they speak of things that will occur **after** the LORD's return; and yet verse 4 seems to describe the moment of his arrival, on the Mount of Olives (and we shall get to that in the next highlight).

Nevertheless, verses 1-3 seem to speak of that final battle, described in Revelation 20, when all of the pagan nations, inspired and deceived by Satan, will besiege Jerusalem in what will appear to be a hopeless situation for the saints, yet

all of the attacking hoards will suddenly be destroyed by the LORD, and final judgment will begin.

20. The Awesome, Triumphant Return of Christ Jesus the Messiah. (14:4-5)

When Christ the LORD returns to Earth, He will stand triumphantly on the Mount of Olives²⁹. The Mount of Olives shall split, with half of it moving to the north, and half of it moving to the south, creating “a very great valley,” running east and west. The valley will reach to a place called “Azal³⁰.” People in the vicinity of Jerusalem will flee “to the valley of the mountains,” as their ancestors had fled to escape the great earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. This earthquake in Uzziah’s time, mentioned in Amos 1:1, must have been disastrous, for it continued to be a point of reference long after it. At the time that Zechariah was seeing and recording this vision “the earthquake” mentioned by Amos was 300 years in the past.

And, when the LORD returns, He will bring with Him “all of the saints.” The meaning of “all of the saints” is not explained, but probably means all of the redeemed who have gone before to be with him at the time of their deaths, as described in I Thessalonians 4: 12-18. In addition, this vast multitude may include angelic beings³¹.

NOTES:

a. Beneath the Mount of Olives there are fault lines capable of causing earthquakes, but they are inactive. And besides, what is described here does not sound like a natural earthquake. A severe natural earthquake could open great cracks, such as are seen along the San Andreas fault in California, and such as were opened in the great earthquake of Fairbanks, Alaska in 1967; but such severe earthquakes do not create “a very great valley.” Verse 4 seems to describe a supernatural event--not a natural one.

b. The great 17th Century commentator, Matthew Henry, wrote that vv 4 and 5 “are dark and hard to be understood,” so you and I should not be discouraged if we are not sure of what to make of them. Dr. Henry then summarized the various interpretations by the respected scholars of his day, and the result is a figurative, or metaphorical, interpretation that is very lengthy. We shall not venture into that vast and confusing morass of intellectual rambling, but will take the verses to mean just what they say, and do the best that we can with the literal meaning.

²⁹ As the angel told the gathered disciples who had just seen the Lord Jesus ascend into Heaven from the Mount of Olives, his return would be to the same place from which He had ascended (Acts 1:9-12).

³⁰ The location of Azal is unknown. The Greek rendering in the Septuagint, “*Iasol*,” suggests Wadi Yasul, a streambed tributary of the Brook Kidron, between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives.

³¹ See also in this regard Colossians 3:4 and Jude 14-15.

***But wait.** For me, however, there is still one matter that needs to be examined in this passage. There is one word that demands explanation, and it is the very last word in the two-verse passage: it is “thee.” Until that last word, Zechariah is describing events that will take place; but that last word, “thee,” means that he is, suddenly, addressing someone directly. In Hebrew the word rendered “thee” is a singular--not plural. Is he addressing you and me as individuals, i.e. the readers of his words? I think not, for “all the saints” will be coming with the person he addresses; thus, it seems to me, Zechariah has been faithfully describing the return of the Lord for us and, quite suddenly and abruptly, he seems to look unto the returning LORD, and address Him alone. So, perhaps, we should just capitalize the “T” in “Thee,” shake our heads in wonder, and press on³².*

21. No Days and Nights--Only Light. (14:6-7)

In verses 6 and 7, Zechariah describes an atmospheric condition that seems to be like nothing that we have seen in nature. “In that day,” he says, “the light shall not be clear or dark.” He seems to be saying that there will no longer be the divisions into day and night, light and darkness, as we have known heretofore; instead, it seems, it will be like continuous day, something “known [only] to the Lord.” What can this mean? It seems to mean that when the Creator is present, as will be the case when He returns to Earth, there can be no darkness.

22. Rivers of Living Water, and Everlasting Peace and Prosperity. (14:8-11)

In perfect harmony with the visions of Ezekiel (47:1-12) and of John in the last chapter of Revelation (22:1-2), Zechariah describes supernatural, life-giving waters flowing, east and west, from Jerusalem. These living waters flow eastward to the “former sea” (Dead Sea), and westward, to the “hinder sea” (Mediterranean Sea)³³. This flow of living, life-giving water will be constant--not seasonal, bringing life in a continuous flow to all that it touches. And the LORD will be King of the Earth; He, and He alone, shall be worshipped, and only his name alone shall be revered. The land around Jerusalem shall become a great plain, from Geba in the north, to Rimmon in the south. But Jerusalem will still be raised up above this great plain, in its original place. It shall be fully inhabited, and the people will dwell securely, and there shall be no more curse or destruction.

***NOTE:** In v 8 the water flowing in both directions, bringing life to whatever it touches, is called “living water.” The phrase “living water(s)” occurs in seven*

³² It is interesting to me that only one of the commentators that I have consulted about this word seems to have noticed, as I do, this sudden change to the second person singular. Only Mrs. Siewert (“Amplified Bible”) seems to have noticed it, for she translates the word as “Him” with the “H” capitalized. At least she suspects that “thee” is a reference to the Lord, but she converts it to the third person, and italicizes it because “him” is not there.

³³ It helps in understanding the unfamiliar use of the words “former” and “hinder” in v 8 to remember that the Temple faced eastward. Thus “former,” or “to the fore,” from the entrance of the Temple, would be eastward. Similarly water flowing from behind the Temple (“hinder”) would flow westward.

passages in the Bible. Four such passages are in the OT (Song 4:15; Jer 2:13 and 7:13; and here, in Zech 14:8-9). And it appears in three passages in the NT (Jn 4:10-11 and 7:38, and in Rev 7:17). In addition, a stream of life-giving water appears in Ezekiel 47:1-12, and again in Rev 22:1-2, although the literal expression, “living water(s),” does not appear these passages. The first two verses of Rev 22 are a condensed version of Ezek 47:1-12; and, in both passages, the stream is called a “river of water of life.”

But, back to the phrase “living water(s).”

In every occurrence of “living water(s),” the expression refers to the Holy Spirit³⁴. Some modern translators render this phrase, “**running**” or “**flowing**” water(s), removing the supernatural sense from the phrase. This is, in my opinion, regrettable at best; and it is probably blasphemous. On our farm we have a major creek, some tributary branches, and an ever-running spring. We also have several ponds and a small lake. The water in these flowing streams is much fresher than the standing water in the ponds and lake; but it cannot impart life, and cannot even be compared with what Jesus spoke of to the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4), or what he cried out about on the last day of the feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7).

In the four OT occurrences of “living water(s)” the underlying Hebrew word for “living” is “chay” and it means “alive” or “a living thing.” The root word from which it is derived in Hebrew is “chayah” meaning “to live.”

In the three NT occurrences of “living water(s)” the underlying Greek word for “living” is “zao” meaning “living” or “to live.” In both the Hebrew and the Greek, there is absolutely no linguistic relationship between “living,” and “running” or “flowing.”

And so, how do we explain the substitutions by the non-traditional, critical translators? According to the great Church historian Philip Schaff, it seems to flow from their fundamental tendency to reject the supernatural³⁵.

23. A Final Battle for Jerusalem. (14:12-15)

Zechariah then writes of a final battle with wicked people who attack Jerusalem. In this battle the LORD will smite the enemy with a mysterious plague which will destroy the enemy, causing their flesh, their eyes, and their tongues to melt away. It sounds like a nuclear or biological attack. He also prophesies that, as in past battles where the Lord supernaturally protected his people, the enemy soldiers will kill one another³⁶. The horses, camels, jackasses and mules of the enemy will also

³⁴ In the case of Zech 14:8, the expression may well have double meaning--i.e., both literal, life-sustaining water, and the supernatural touch of the Holy Spirit.

³⁵ Schaff, Philip: *History of the Christian Church*, Vol I, p 315.

³⁶ Judges 7:22; I Sam 14:15-20; II Chron 20:22-24.

perish from the deadly plague; and the people of Judah will gather an abundance of gold, silver and expensive garments from the dead attackers³⁷.

24. Former Enemies Will Come to Jerusalem and Worship the Divine King.
(14:16-19)

Those who survive, of the nations that had made war on Jerusalem, will come to Jerusalem and worship the divine King, the LORD of hosts, keeping the feast of tabernacles each year. Those who fail to come to Jerusalem and keep the feast of tabernacles will have no rain, and those nations which fail to come and keep the feast will suffer “the plague³⁸.”

25. The LORD’s Reign in Complete and Perfect Holiness. (14:20-21)

With his final use of the expression “in that day” (the Day of the LORD), Zechariah expresses the absolute and perfect holiness that will prevail when the triumphant LORD shall reign over all of the Earth (verse 9). Henry Halley eloquently expresses this time as “The grand consummation of prophetic dreams³⁹.”

Every utensil will be consecrated and holy. Even the bells on horses, that jingle as they walk, will declare “HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.” Even the common pots in Judah, in which meat is boiled in cooking, will be as sacred and pure as the gold vessels in the Temple. And in that glorious day there will never again be a “Canaanite” (pagan, wicked, or unclean person) in the Temple, the “house of the Lord of hosts,”

³⁷ Her again, in v 14, is an illustration of the fact that, in the ancient Orient, fine garments were considered to be of great value, on a par with silver and gold.

³⁸ The plague that will strike the heathen nations which fail to come to Jerusalem may be the cessation of rain and the famine that would follow. It may be the mysterious plague that destroyed their armies when they attacked Jerusalem. The plague, however, is not identified.

³⁹ Halley, Henry H.: Halley’s Bible Handbook, Large Print Edition, “Zechariah,” p 383.