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Zechariah Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview of the book of Zechariah, Steve Gregg explains that the prophet was a priest by birth and a prophet by calling who encouraged Jews to rebuild the temple after their exile in Babylon. The book heavily emphasizes repentance, judgment, and hope for the future restoration of Jerusalem. With an estimated 54 portions of Zechariah alluded or quoted in New Testament writings, the book is influential upon them. The apocalyptic-style writing uses language of sensationalism and symbolism to describe relatively ordinary historical events but conveys encouraging messages to the Jews that God is paying attention and will bring justice to the region.

Transcript

Alright, we're going to be taking two sessions. We'll take a break in between them. Two sessions on the book of Zechariah.

Now that's a very quick treatment. Deke just mentioned to me here that he looked online and saw that my online treatment of Zechariah is 10 hours long. Because online I cover the book verse by verse and we're not going to try to do that here.

Now in the past months we've been going through minor prophets. We're actually going through the books of the Bible in the order that they appear in the Old Testament. Which means after tonight we have only one other one and that's Malachi coming up next month.

Then we'll be in the New Testament. But in the case of these other books we've been taking, they're short. Which means that my announced intention is to give an introduction and an overview of the book.

But these really short books are only two and three chapters long. We've just taken them verse by verse. And so we've become accustomed to belaboring them.

But at this point, because Zechariah is 14 chapters and because it is very deep and because going verse by verse would be very time consuming, I'm going to literally do an overview of the book. I will dwell on some of the details that I think are most important

for me to comment about. But you can get the whole series if you have the time and want to use it that way by going to our website, thenarrowpath.com and looking under Zechariah you'll find there's quite a few lectures there.

Maybe if something we talk about today just doesn't get talked about thoroughly and you are curious and want to go and listen to the first by verse, then you can. But we're going to do a two hour flyby. One hour, then we'll take a break and then we'll take another hour.

That's the plan. Now Zechariah is one of the prophets that encouraged the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian exile to build the temple. The other one was Haggai.

We looked at Haggai last time. Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries. They started prophesying approximately the same time.

Zechariah went a little longer in his ministry. He went at least two years. We have dated prophecies documenting two years, but there's also some undated prophecies that might have been given later still.

So we don't know the exact number of years he prophesied, but he was like Haggai, raised up at the time when Zerubbabel and 50,000 of the Jews from Babylon had returned. One of their first tasks was to build the temple that had been burned down 70 years earlier by Nebuchadnezzar. So that was the project and much of the early chapters of Zechariah are about that subject.

Zechariah himself has a very common biblical name. There's something like 30 men in the Bible who are named Zechariah, which can be confusing at times because sometimes, for example, there's a place where Jesus mentions the death of Zechariah and it's somewhat confusing as to which one he's talking about because there's so many Zechariahs. For example, Jesus said in Matthew 23, 35, that the blood of all the martyrs of Old Testament times, the guilt of that was going to come upon the Jews of his generation, meaning they would be judged, and they were in AD 70 when their temple and their city was destroyed by the Romans.

But Jesus said that this was going to be the payment for their guilt, for all the blood that was shed from Abel. This is referring to Matthew here, Matthew 23. Matthew 23, verse 35, Jesus said that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

Now, Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, is the name of the author of this book, sorry, the book of Zechariah is by Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Edo, the priest. So that's Zechariah, the son of Berechiah. And yet Jesus said that this Zechariah perished at the hands of the Jews between the temple and the altar.

Now, this seems very strange that he would say that because, first of all, we have no record of how this particular man died. That is, in the historical books of the Old Testament, we don't read of his death. We only read of his prophecies.

We don't read anything about his life or death. And yet Jesus speaks as if his listeners will know exactly what he's talking about when he says, whom you slew between the temple and the altar. If it was this guy, he was like 500 years before their time, they would not even know how he died.

But there is another Zechariah in the Bible, in 2 Chronicles, named Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. That's in 2 Chronicles 24, in verses 20 and 21. This was a priest and a prophet also.

And his name was Zechariah, his father's name was Jehoiada, and he did die in the manner that Jesus describes. So there have been people who have wondered, did Jesus make a mistake? I mean, there's a lot of Zechariahs. Maybe he thought it was this Zechariah, or maybe he just forgot the name of the father.

But I don't know. My theology about Jesus makes it not likely that he would make any mistakes. I don't know that he could make a mistake about something like this.

I don't even think a good Bible teacher could, much less Jesus. So what's up with that? Well, it's interesting that Luke has the same statement of Jesus, but it's rendered just a little differently. In Luke 11, verse 51, this is Jesus speaking the same thing that we read in 23, verse 35.

And in Luke 11, verse 51, Jesus said, Now that's the same information, the difference is he doesn't say the son of Berechiah. The Zechariah that is known to have perished between the altar and the temple was another Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. Now interestingly, Luke doesn't mention the son of Berechiah, and therefore there's nothing to explain in Luke's version.

In Luke's version, we know anyone would assume he's talking about Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada. Who, by the way, in the arrangement of the Old Testament books in the Jewish Tanakh, what we call the Old Testament, 2 Chronicles is the last book, the last historical book in their canon. And therefore, the prophet who died in 2 Chronicles, chapter 24, is the last prophet, not chronologically, but in their canon.

Abel would be the first, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada was the last prophet whose death is recorded in the canon of the Old Testament. Now there were perhaps other martyrs after his time, but not recorded in their canon after that time. So it sounds like Jesus is talking about from Abel to the son of Jehoiada.

So why does Matthew's version say the son of Berechiah and thus confuse things? Well, some people thought, well maybe both Zechariahs died the same way. We know that the

son of Jehoiada died that way, but maybe the son of Berechiah died that way too. But that seems very unlikely for the simple reason that Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, was one of the few prophets that was well received by the people.

Before the exile, most of the prophets were persecuted, even killed, by the people of Israel. After the exile, they had learned their lesson. Haggai and Zechariah, who encouraged them to build the temple, the people responded favorably.

They're like the first prophets that the people ever did respond favorably to. And there's nothing to suggest that the exiles who had returned, these were the faithful remnant who returned from Babylon, that they would somehow kill this prophet, or that he was even remotely unpopular with them. So it doesn't seem like the prophet who wrote this book died in the way that Matthew 23, 35 says.

Now you might say, but then are you saying Jesus was wrong? Or maybe Matthew was wrong? I'm not saying either. We know that the books of the Bible have come down to us by being copied over and over again, because old copies would wear out, and people who wanted to preserve the text would make a new copy. And then that would wear out, so they'd make a new copy.

And they keep making copies to keep the text in existence. And we also know from the manuscript evidence that from time to time, a scribe who is making a copy of a Bible book would sometimes write in the margin of the book, like a commentary or an explanatory note that the copyist thought helped clarify things. And to my mind, the easiest explanation that doesn't compromise anything about Jesus or Matthew or anyone else, is that some copyist copying an earlier copy of Matthew, and that the original Matthew probably said the same thing Luke said, just Zechariah whom you slew, not Zechariah son of Berechiah, that a copyist wrote in the son of Berechiah mistakenly, because he knew the name, son of Berechiah, because that's the famous Zechariah who wrote the book of Zechariah.

The other Zechariahs are lesser known men. So that some copyist wrote that in a margin, and then the next person who copied it thought that was part of the text and wrote it in without thinking, and so it became part of our manuscripts. This is what we call this textual corruption, which means that not that there was a mistake made when Matthew wrote or when Jesus spoke, but some scribe somewhere in the centuries after that wrote it down wrong, put something in there.

And so, I mean, if a person wants to, they can believe that this Zechariah we're studying tonight died the same way the other Zechariah did, but there's, I think, it doesn't seem likely, given the mood of the people at this particular time. They were receptive to the prophets. They were obedient to God, and therefore, it's not likely they killed their own prophet in this case, as they had another Zechariah.

So, this is what comes, perhaps, of having too many Zechariahs. When you've got 30 people in the Bible named Zechariah, including the father of John the Baptist, who's, of course, in the news has his name, so Zechariahs, but that's just the Greek form of the name Zechariah. So, got a lot of these guys.

The name means Yahweh remembers, and maybe that's why it was such a popular name. I mean, whenever somebody has their prayer answered or something like that, they might want to commemorate that by naming their child Yahweh remembered me. They didn't forget.

He heard my prayer. So, they named their kid like that. That's how a lot of people got their names in biblical times.

He was, like some other important prophets, a priest as well as a prophet. He's a priest by birth and a prophet by calling. Some of the other famous priests who became prophets that we know about would be Jeremiah and Ezekiel and John the Baptist.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel, John the Baptist are all from priestly parents and would have been priests themselves if God hadn't called them away from that line of service into the prophetic ministry. So, Zechariah also. In Ezra, both Haggai and Zechariah are mentioned by name a couple of times, and Zechariah is called the son of Edo.

But actually, as we see from his own book, he's not the son of Edo, he's the grandson of Edo. But that's not too strange. The Bible often refers, I mean, Jesus in Matthew 1 is called the son of Abraham and the son of David, even though there's scores of generations between, still to be the son of David means you're descended from David.

To say he's the son of Edo, as the book of Ezra says, means he's descended from Edo. Edo is a famous priest who came back with the exiles. Zechariah was his grandson and the generation between them was Barakiah.

So it says in verse 1, in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Barakiah, the son of Edo, the prophet saying. Now, in the time of this prophet and of his contemporary prophet Haggai, the leaders of the community were Zerubbabel, who is the governor commissioned by Cyrus to return to build the temple. That's Zerubbabel, and he's mentioned by name a number of times, both in Haggai and Zechariah.

And then there's the priest at the time named Joshua. Now, that's another name you see a lot of in the Bible. Of course, famously Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho, but then there's a lot of other Joshua's, including Jesus.

The name Jesus is a Greek form of Joshua. But there was a high priest at this time named Joshua, and Zerubbabel and Joshua are the two leaders of the community, the political leader, the governor on the one hand, and the religious leader, the high priest on the

other. And these men are addressed by name numerous times in the book because of their role, the important role of rebuilding the community and especially the temple.

Now, I don't want to go through all the historical background because we did that with Haggai. It's the same historical background, same period of time. The Jews had been in captivity 70 years in Babylon.

Cyrus, the Persian, raised up, conquered the Babylonians, gave the Jews permission to come back to build their city and their temple again and their community, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar 70 years earlier. That's the background. And so 50,000 of them came, which is a very small minority of the number of Jews that were actually in exile.

Probably there were well over a million, maybe 2 million at this time in exile, and here 50,000 of them care enough about God to come back to Jerusalem and build the temple so they can worship him again. What about the rest of the Jews in exile? Well, they apparently were comfy, you know, been settled in some place for two or three generations. You've got your family business going.

You've got your little farm, your homestead. You've got your friends. You've got your synagogues.

You've got, you know, you're comfy. Who wants to make a 500-mile trip on foot to go back to build a city, you know, from scratch? Well, some people wanted to, but not most. And, of course, that's been the case as far as the geographical distribution of the Jews ever since that time, too.

It is still the case that Jews almost all live outside of Israel. There never has been a time that most of the Jews have been in Israel. They're all what we call the diaspora.

Now, these Jews had been part of the diaspora into Babylon, but they came back. They were the returning exiles, the remnant. The rest of the Jews stayed where they were, and their descendants are still in these places and other places like New York City and L.A. and places like that in large numbers.

They went to Russia and Poland and places like that and multiplied a great deal, too. But the point is most Jews never came back, and therefore the temple they built was not as great and glorious as it would have been had they had more resources, human and financial. And this came up in the Book of Haggai, that the people who had lived long enough and had seen the old temple of Solomon before it was destroyed, they were very discouraged when they saw the new temple.

Just when the foundation was laid, they could tell it was going to be an inferior structure, and they wept, the Bible says. But in any case, the temple did get built, and largely it was because Zerubbabel and Joshua, the governor and high priest, were encouraged by

these two prophets who rose up and the people obeyed. That story is in the first six chapters or so of Ezra.

The story is not found in the books of the prophets, but we know of it. Now, let's talk about the book. This book is only 14 chapters, and they're not extremely long chapters, so even though it's got a pretty good number of chapters, it's a short book.

And yet, it is heavily influential upon New Testament writings. How so? Some have estimated that there are as many as 54 portions of Zechariah that are alluded to or quoted in the New Testament writings, and that these different passages in Zechariah appear in 67 New Testament places. Obviously, some of these were used more than once, but the point is, a book that's no bigger than this, having such a large portion of it taken up into the New Testament writings and applied, means that it is a book that has a lot to say to Christians, or else the apostles who wrote the New Testament wouldn't have said so much from the book of Zechariah.

It obviously is a prophetic book, and it speaks of things not only at the time of Zechariah, when they're building the temple, but after that. In fact, the book divides into two major sections. The first eight chapters are considered to be a major division, and the latter six chapters, chapters 9 through 14, are the other major division.

Now, there's another subdivision, actually several subdivisions, but if you're going to divide the book into the most obvious parts, just like you divide the Bible into the most obvious divisions, Old Testament, New Testament. If you divide Isaiah into the most obvious divisions, it would be Isaiah chapters 1 through 40 is the first one, then chapters 41 through 66 is the second. Some books, although you can subdivide them into smaller units, chapters, and subunits, they divide really neatly at a certain point, and Zechariah is one of those books.

The first eight chapters are different than the last six chapters in a number of ways. One way is that the first eight chapters are concerned about the building of the temple, but that got done in a few years' time, and Zechariah had some more prophecies, but they weren't about the rebuilding of the temple. That was old news.

They looked further, as far in the future as the time of Christ. There's a number of messianic prophecies that are fulfilled in Christ. The triumphal entry, him riding on a donkey, is mentioned in chapter 9. Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

In chapter 13, verse 7, Jesus said that would be fulfilled in Gethsemane that night. And other passages in Zechariah have their relevance in the time of Christ, and that was 500 years or so further out in the future from Zechariah's time. Now, many popular teachers say Zechariah looks even further forward than that, speaking about the end times, even the millennium, after the second coming of Christ.

This is how the premillennial dispensationalists understand chapters 12 through 14, especially. Chapters 12 through 14 are the final section of the book, and very, very difficult in some of its passages to interpret, but fortunately, numerous quotations or allusions to it are found in the New Testament, which is what, of course, gives us the key to interpreting the passages. Now, the popular teachers of prophecy are likely to tell you that chapters 12 through 14 look as far forward into the future as the second coming of Christ and the millennium.

That is not my opinion, but it is a common opinion. We'll consider that when we get to those chapters. But if that is so, or even if it isn't, it's clear that Zechariah looks way forward into the future, at least 500 years to the first coming of Christ, if not 2,500 years even to the second coming of Christ.

And therefore, the prophet in the last six chapters is looking ahead, whereas the first eight chapters look at his own time. Really, in the first eight chapters, he doesn't predict much of anything, except you will finish this temple, you will get it done. Okay, so he encourages him that way, but that's like a real short-term thing.

That happened within a few years' time. But then he's looking at things hundreds of years out. Now, that's one difference between the first eight chapters as a segment and the last six chapters as another segment.

The first eight are relevant to Zechariah's own time and the building of the temple. The last six are not. They are hundreds of years later in their fulfillment, as we shall see.

That's the first way these chapters are divided. The second way that they're divided is that the name Zechariah appears throughout the first eight chapters as the one who prophesies or as the one who is the writer. But in the last six chapters from 9 through 14, Zechariah is not mentioned.

In other words, it doesn't say that he wrote them. This has led some scholars, and especially the more liberal a scholar is, the more likely they are to take this view. But even some conservatives have their questions whether Zechariah actually wrote the last six chapters.

First of all, they're very different in content. They don't have the name of the prophet on them, and they always have to sort of like they do with Isaiah chapters 40 through 66, the liberals always say Isaiah didn't write those. Well, one thing about it is Isaiah doesn't mention himself in those chapters, and he does in the earlier chapters.

And Zechariah doesn't mention himself in chapters 9 through 14. Now, I personally believe that he wrote them nonetheless, but the point is they don't mention him as the author of them. And a third thing that's different is that the first prophecies in the first part of the book are dated.

The author tells us what day, or at least what year and month, usually what day, the prophecy came and was given. It's like a journal with a time stamp on it. But when you get to chapters 9 through 14, there's no mention of when the prophecies were given, much less when they would be fulfilled.

So it's kind of a major break between one kind of material and another kind of material in the book. Now, you can subdivide those two portions. One subdivision is that chapters 1 through 6 contain several visions.

Depending on how you break them up, some have thought there's as many as 10 visions, but it's hard to say, 8 visions at least. And those are in the first six chapters. Then in chapter 6, before it's over, the latter part of it is an acted parable.

Now, you may be aware, if you've been through the prophets of this, that the prophets often acted out parts of their message. Jeremiah wore an ox yoke over his shoulders when he was prophesying that the yoke of Babylon was going to come upon the people. Jeremiah was also told not to get married, because that would be a picture of his message that people who are married are going to have a lot of grief when Babylon falls.

Just like Jesus said, woe to those who are nursing children and pregnant in those days. In hard times, it's hard to have kids and stuff. And so in order to underscore that, Jeremiah was told not to marry.

He was also told to purchase a piece of land in Jerusalem while he was in prison, even though the land was going to be evacuated for 70 years, because it was part of his message that God's going to bring the Jews back, and owning land in this place will be worth something someday. So Jeremiah was told to buy a piece of land. These are acted prophecies.

Isaiah had some of this, not as much as Jeremiah did. Ezekiel had more than most. He did all kinds of crazy things.

We won't go into all that. Hosea's acted prophecies. He had to marry a harlot in order to depict God's faithfulness to Israel, his unfaithful wife.

So the prophets often had to do very strange things in order to depict their message visually. Now when we were going through Ezekiel, I probably mentioned this, that there's a reason for these things being as strange as they are. It's not just that they did something kind of ordinary, and said that's like a parable of what I'm talking about here.

They did things that were bizarre, so that people would say, why did you do that? And that's just the point. People are almost more receptive if they think they asked you to tell them. When witnessing to a person, I'm not very good about walking up to a stranger cold and saying, hey, do you know the Lord? I've just never been good at breaking the ice like that.

But I'm always happy if they say, you know, what are you carrying there, a Bible? Oh yeah, let me talk to you about that. Let them think they are the ones who thought of having the conversation. That's a great teaching of ours.

Jesus, much of his teaching was given when people asked him questions. Oh, I'm glad you asked. Here's some things I want to tell you.

And when they think they asked, then they're listening for the answer. And so the prophets were sometimes doing these really bizarre things, so that people would say, what in the world? What are you doing that for? Oh, okay, well this is what that means, you know. And so he has an acted parable himself in chapter 6, the latter part, where he actually makes a crown and sets it on the head of the high priest Joshua.

I'll talk more about what that means a little later. So that's what chapter 6 has. Up through chapter 6, you've got the eight visions and one acted parable.

Then in chapter 7 and 8, we have several oracles, I think four oracles, yeah, that Zechariah gives in response to some people who had come back. They hadn't come back to live in Jerusalem, but they were Jews who were sent back from Babylon to inquire of the priests in Jerusalem about some practices to take the information back to the exiles in the Diaspora. And they had some questions about should they continue certain fasts that they had begun to do which were commemorating the tragedy of the destruction of Jerusalem 70 years earlier.

And they had been fasting on these different annual occasions to commemorate when the siege began and when the walls were breached and when the temples burned down. They had these anniversaries of these things that they were fasting and mourning on. And now that that was all over, now that the nation is restored, the Jews in exile wanted to know, I wonder if we should keep doing these fasts.

I mean, do we still need to commemorate these grievous things when we're living in happier times now? So they sent messengers to Jerusalem from Babylon to ask the prophet, and he gave them the answers in chapters 7 and 8. So we have four, we'd say oracles. An oracle is just a spoken prophecy from, you know, thus saith the Lord, etc., etc., etc. That's an oracle from God.

So we've got eight visions, one acted prophecy, and four oracles in the first eight chapters. Then, and that's how the first section of the book subdivides. Now the second section of the book, interestingly, divides right in half.

You've got six chapters, chapters 9 through 14. The first three of them are one prophecy and the latter three are one prophecy. And the interesting thing that punctuates them, to let us know they are separate, is that each of them begins with an unusual expression.

In chapter 9, verse 1, it says, The burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach. Now, if you have a modern translation, you probably want to say the burden. That's a King James and New King James expression, and it's a good one.

It speaks, a number of the prophets speak of the burden of the Lord. The burden of the Lord is the burden that's on God's heart, which he shares with the prophet, and the prophet now has that burden to unload by sharing what's on God's mind and what's on God's heart by sharing God's burden. And that's the word there.

But since that's an unusual word for modern listeners, and most modern Bible readers don't want to think very hard, which is why the church is as weak as it is today, but modern translations have dumbed things down, and so instead of saying the burden, they say the oracle. Something like that. If you have modern translation, you might say the oracle of the word of the Lord.

But the expression at the beginning of chapter 9 is the burden of the word of the Lord, and there's only two other places in the Bible that has that expression. The next one is in chapter 12, verse 1. Chapter 12, verse 1 begins, the burden of the word of the Lord. And then interestingly, the only other time you find that expression is in Malachi chapter 1, who is another post-exilic prophet who came along later than Zechariah.

Malachi 1 begins the burden of the word of the Lord. Now, the burden of the word of the Lord is the first part of the sentence. In chapter 9, verse 1, it's the burden of the word of the Lord against Hadrach.

In chapter 12, verse 1, it's the burden of the word of the Lord against Israel. And in Malachi 1, it's the burden of the word of the Lord for Israel. So, I mean, I can't tell you why it's important that that phrase is used.

But the rareness of that phrase, the fact that it's only three times, and two of them are in Zechariah, and each of those two introduces a three-chapter prophecy, is how we divide the second part of the book. Chapters 9 through 14 divides into two burdens of the word of the Lord. One is chapter 9 through 11, the other is chapters 12 through 14.

Now, chapter 9 through 11, in my opinion, well, I'm not going to tell you what they are now until we get to them, but I just want you to know that that's how the book divides. You've got two major sections, chapter 1 through 8, and then chapters 9 through 14. The first section divides into eight visions, apparently all I had in one night.

He didn't get any sleep that night. And then there's an acted parable, and then there's the four oracles that he gives. Then the second section, chapters 9 through 14, is divided exactly in half into two sections called the burden of the word of the Lord.

And it's the second section that looks into the Messianic times, at least the first coming. Some people think the second coming as well. We'll examine that more carefully later.

All right. One thing that makes Zechariah difficult for modern readers is the same thing that makes Revelation and Daniel difficult for modern readers. These books have large sections that are called apocalyptic literature.

The Book of Revelation is almost entirely apocalyptic literature. Probably the only exception would be the seven letters to the seven churches in the first three chapters, and maybe the last portion that we call the epilogue in the last part of chapter 22. But the rest of Revelation is all apocalyptic visions.

Daniel has plenty of apocalyptic visions, not as many as Revelation, but he's got Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which is interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar's second dream, which is also interpreted. Then Daniel has two or three visions himself. And these represent nations as beasts and things like that.

A lion, a bear, a leopard, a ferocious beast with ten horns, and so forth. This is the kind of way that apocalyptic imagery is. The Book of Revelation does the same thing.

Dragons and all that kind of stuff. This is the way apocalyptic writers wrote. Zechariah has a fair share of apocalypticism in his writings too.

I guess the thing I would have to say, if you're not familiar with this kind of literature, is that things that are relatively ordinary historical events, maybe not really ordinary because they're kind of important events, but whether they're important or not, they're not supernatural events. They are ordinary historical events in that sense. They're described in terms that suggest a real sensationalism, such as you'd only find today in the most wild science fiction movies or something like that.

Just stuff that's surreal. The rise or fall of a kingdom is like the earth is shaking and all the islands vanish, and the stars fall from the sky, and those kinds of things. That's the kind of language that apocalyptic imagery uses to speak of things that we would just say, oh yeah, Babylon fell there.

Yeah, the sun was dark, the moon fell to the light, the stars fell from the sky, all the mountains were removed. Yeah, that was when Babylon fell to the Persians. Now, none of those things literally happened, but that's the way the apocalyptic writers spoke of such things.

That's the apocalyptic style. And Zechariah has a fair amount of that, especially in the latter chapters, in the second section. Now, all the visions are symbolic.

The acted prophecy is symbolic. There's plenty of symbolism from beginning to end, and therefore Christians have always had some difficulty with Zechariah. I have to say, I consider Zechariah to be the most difficult book of the minor prophets.

If we included all the books of the Old Testament, I'd have to put Ezekiel as the hardest.

But when you get to the minor prophets, Zechariah definitely holds that distinction. If you take the whole Bible, I think the book of Revelation holds that distinction myself.

But that's because these books are highly symbolic in their visions and so forth. And one thing I need to let you know, as we're going to look at eight visions very rapidly here, is that when you read a vision, you're going to read a whole bunch of details that you're going to want to know, what's that detail mean? For example, the first vision he sees all these horses, and they're different colors. And he tells what the colors of them are, and which directions they route off and so forth.

And you want to say, OK, what does the red mean? What does the dappled color mean? And so forth. And I have to say, Zechariah became a lot easier for me to understand when I stopped trying to find meanings to every detail. In most cases, an elaborate vision has one basic point it's making.

You can read the vision and say, oh, the point of that is this, in a single sentence. Yeah, but what about these colors? What about these myrtle trees? What about this guy speaking to this guy talking to this other guy? And there's an angel over here and the angel of the Lord over here talking to this other guy. Who are they? Never mind all that.

Most of that doesn't matter. The truth is a picture is worth a thousand words. And when I was young, I think I was in junior high, we had to read, I think it was David Copperfield.

And I was always a poor reader. I'm still a very slow reader. So I made my mom read it out loud to me.

You may not remember that, but my mom's right here. She read David Copperfield out loud to me. I remember thinking, this is so boring.

It takes three pages to describe the curtains in the room. He takes 10 pages to describe the dust on the old piano. I mean, it's like everything is so descriptive.

It takes so long to have it. And I realized that that was written before there was television, before there were movies, before you could just look at it and you'd see those things. No one has to describe them to you.

You watch a movie now and everything about the room you catch in a single glimpse. You don't have a picture. If he wants you to picture it, he's got to describe every little thing.

Now, not every little thing is important to the plot. It's just bringing you into the picture, which you could get in an instant looking at it. Now, what he got, what Zechariah got is an instant picture.

And he's trying to, you know, he's trying to, these horses, I saw these colors and these

colors, and there were these myrtle trees over here, and there's this guy talking to this guy. And we think, okay, everything's got to be significant, right? Not necessarily. This one statement that this one guy makes to this guy may be the whole purpose of the vision.

But the prophet tends to describe all the details because it's interesting to him, and he wants us to be able to kind of live it with him. But when you try to look for a lot of detailed meaning of these things, I think you get lost in the weeds and you really are not understanding the way a vision works that well. At least that's my opinion.

So, we're going to look at these visions real quickly. Chapter 1, the first vision, he sees riders on horses. Let me just read some of this.

I can't read the whole book, but let me just read this so you see what we're talking about here. In verses 7 through 17, after the introduction of the book pretty much, he says, on the 24th day of the 11th month, which happens to be in the Jewish calendar February 15th, this is the year 519 B.C., which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, that's the Persian king, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Barakai, the son of Edo, the prophet. I saw by night and behold a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow, and behind him were horses red, sorrel, and white.

And I said, My Lord, what are these? So the angel who talked with me said to me, I will show you what they are. And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are the ones whom the Lord Yahweh has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth. So they answered the angel of the Lord who stood among the myrtle trees and said, We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is quietly resting.

Then the angel of the Lord speaks and answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against which you were angry these seventy years? And the Lord answered the angel who talked with me with good and comforting words. So the angel who spoke with me said to me, Proclaim saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal, and I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease, for I was a little angry and they helped, but with evil intent. Therefore, thus says the Lord, I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy.

My house shall be built in it, says the Lord of hosts, and a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Again, proclaim saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, My city shall again spread out throughout the prosperity. The Lord will again comfort Zion and will again choose Jerusalem.

Now that's the end of the first vision. What do we see? Well, we've got horses, we've got

myrtle trees, we've got an angel of the Lord, we've got someone else talking to him and vice versa, there's conversation. But what is the meaning of the vision? Well, it seems clear the horsemen on these various horses, let's not worry about their color, that the horsemen are scouts.

They're bringing a report back to the angel of the Lord, who they answer to apparently. And he says, okay, what did you find? They say, well, what we found is we've been walking to and fro throughout the earth, and we find all the earth is resting quietly. Now that sounds like a good thing.

Yeah, but it's not. The earth that he's talking about is the pagan nations who have done harm to the Jews. And God is angry at the nations for what they did to Jerusalem.

He doesn't want them to be at ease. He thinks they deserve to be punished too. Jerusalem went through their punishment.

Now what about these nations that are still at ease? Shouldn't they be punished too? That's the thing. The scouts come back to say, listen, these nations, they're doing fine, they're happy, and nothing wrong with them as far as they're concerned. And God, the angel of the Lord, speaks to them and says, listen, I'm zealous for Jerusalem, and I'm angry at these nations that did this.

I don't want them to be at peace. I want them to suffer their turn, and they will. Now what we're going to find is that when we go through all the visions, the last of the visions, which is chapter 6, we see the horses again.

But this time they're attached to chariots. And they're kind of in the same scene, but now the horses have chariots attached, which is a war vehicle. And they go off different directions to fight against the pagan nations.

So at the beginning, the report is brought that the nations haven't suffered yet. Israel has. The Jews have.

The Jews' suffering is over now. They're coming back to Jerusalem to rebuild it. That's all good.

But the nations haven't really—the score hasn't been settled with these people yet. But in the last vision, it's going to be because God sends out troops, as it were, against the nations to bring judgment on them, so that they too experience judgment from God. Remember in Habakkuk.

This is before the Babylonian exile. God told Habakkuk the prophet, I'm going to judge Jerusalem for all its idolatry and its wickedness, and I'm going to bring the Babylonians in, and they're going to destroy you. And Habakkuk said, wait a minute, God.

They're worse than we are. They're pagans. You know, we may not be all that good, but we're not as bad as the Babylonians.

They're really wicked people. You can't do that. You can't use them to punish us.

And God spoke back to Habakkuk and said, basically, yeah, I can. I can do that, and they'll get punished too in due time. You know, I'm going to punish all the bad people, but first I'm going to use some of them to punish others.

Then they'll get theirs in their own turn. That's what God told Habakkuk. Now this is kind of what this is saying.

Okay, Jerusalem's had their suffering. They've been through their Babylonian defeat and captivity. Now it's time for the Babylonians and the other pagan nations.

It's their turn now. And that's this first vision just says God's keeping track. Now God, of course, doesn't literally have people reporting to him.

Horseback riders going out to all the nations, you know, we have better surveillance than that of the nations from satellites. I'm sure God doesn't need horsemen to report to him about what's going on here and there. This is simply an image depicting the idea that God is in fact keeping tabs of things.

God knows what's going on. He's aware that these nations have not yet gotten their punishment. And don't worry, it's not as if he's ignoring the situation.

That's the kind of thing that a vision like this means. Now the second vision is in the same chapter. It says in verse 18, Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns.

Now these horns apparently from the way the rest of the vision goes are metal horns. And they probably are reminiscent of the four horns on the altar, which were on the bronze altar, bronze horns on the four corners, which they tied a sacrifice to so it wouldn't get off the altar before it was, you know, before it was dead. So anyway, it doesn't matter that these are horns of the altar or not.

They're horns. Now a horn, also in prophecy, usually represents some kind of a political power. Daniel saw in Daniel chapter 8 a ram with two horns, which was the media Persian empire.

The Medes and the Persians were the two horns. And it was attacked by a he-goat that had a notable horn in the middle of its head and killed it. And that was Alexander the Great, the notable horn.

And then when that horn was broken, four horns came up in its place, which were the four generals that replaced Alexander after he died as the head of the Grecian empire.

The horns in the prophecy refers to power. David even in the psalm says, you know, God has exalted my horn.

Really? Was he a unicorn? What? Did he have a horn? No, his horn is simply an image for his strength against enemies and so forth. Now here there's four horns. We'll have to talk in a moment what they mean.

And I said to the angel who talked with me, what are these? And he answered me, these are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen, the kind of people who work with metal, like horns. You can reshape them if he wants to.

And I said, what are these coming to do? So he said, these are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could lift up his head, but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, cast out the horns out of their nations and lift up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it, of the nations that did that. Okay, so he's saying, yeah, these four political powers, and I don't think there's four specific in mind, although he could be referring to the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians, which were the four empires which historically Israel had been vassals under, had been defeated by and were serving under. First Egypt in the days of the pharaohs when Moses led them out.

Then there was the Assyrian Empire, which had destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and also did great damage to Judah, but wasn't able to conquer Jerusalem. Then there was the Babylonian Empire that did conquer Jerusalem. Then there's the Persians that conquered that.

So this could be the four horns, or it may simply mean the horns, because it's four, they represent the four compass points. Sometimes the whole world is represented by the idea of the four winds, the north, the south, the east and the west and so forth. And so whether it's talking about the nations around the world or whether it's talking about the historic nations that afflicted Jerusalem, they have been fat and sassy and secure and they've not experienced any harm, but now there's someone coming to terrify them.

Craftsmen who can melt them down, who can destroy them, can reshape them. And craftsmen have power over, especially if they're metal workers, over metal things like these horns. So the idea here is simply that these powers that terrified Jerusalem at one time, now they're going to be terrified now.

Now what exactly causes that? Well, usually other nations. Most of these nations are conquered by either the succeeding nation that conquered them, or maybe it's just a general statement that all nations eventually succumb to other nations. I mean, there's no nation that lasts forever except the kingdom of God.

So in any case, it's an encouraging word to the Jews that those, sort of like what was

implied in the first vision, God's paying attention, he knows these nations have done you wrong and nothing has been done to them yet. They'll have their turn and God has the craftsmen available to take power over these horns and to terrify them. And so you see these kind of strange visions, strange images, and then the explanation is like something really simple.

Chapter 2 has the next vision, and this is really an interesting one, because this looks forward, I believe, into the Messianic time. It says, Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. So I said, Where are you going? And he said to me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what its width and what is its length.

And there was the angel that talked with me going out, and another angel was coming to meet him, who said to him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls because of the multitude of the men and livestock in it. For I, says the Lord, I will be a wall around her, and I will be the glory in her midst. And then he addresses the Babylonian exiles who have not left Babylonia.

He says, Up, up, flee from the land of the north, says the Lord, for I have spread you abroad like four winds of heaven, says the Lord. Up, Zion, escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. For thus says the Lord of hosts, He sent me after the glory to the nations which plunder you.

For he who touches you touches the apple of his eye. For surely I will shake my hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me.

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion. For behold, I am coming, and I will dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become my people.

And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you, and the Lord will take possession of Judah as his inheritance in the holy land. And I will choose again Jerusalem, be silent all flesh, before the Lord, for he is aroused from his holy habitation.

Now, initially, a man is seen with a measuring line. This reminds us a little bit of Ezekiel chapter 40, where he sees a man with a rod measuring this temple in this vision. Here a man is going to measure Jerusalem itself.

He's got a measuring line for that, a surveyor's line, I guess. And so we see this guy going out with a measuring line to measure Jerusalem, and an angel says, go tell that guy, don't bother, because Jerusalem is going to exist as towns without walls. The boundaries are not going to matter, because Jerusalem is going to be defined differently.

It's not going to be just this geographical spot, which you can measure with a measuring

line. It's going to be towns, it's going to be un-walled territory. And it goes on to say, you know, the Gentiles are going to be part of this.

It says that very clearly in verse 11. Many nations, that's Gentiles, will be joined to the Lord in that day. They shall become my people.

The inhabitants of Jerusalem will be made up of the Babylonian exiles who return, who, by the way, the ones who have not yet done so are exhorted to do so in verses 6 and 7. But then, not just the return of the exiles, but now the coming in of the Gentiles. Now this didn't happen in pre-Christian times. This looks forward to the Messianic age, the present age.

It was, you know, after Jesus came that the commission was going out to all the nations to bring them in, go and make disciples of all the nations. And they did, and it has happened to a very large extent, still going on now. The point here is that this is saying, you know, you were from Jerusalem before the Babylonian exile.

It had walls, you could measure them, you could say what its dimensions were and so forth. Jerusalem's kind of going through a transmogrification here. It's going to be something different than that.

It's not going to be a walled city that you could measure. It's going to be an interracial population of my people that you cannot measure. And this is very similar to some passages in Isaiah, a couple of places in the latter chapters of Isaiah, where it talks about how Judah's going to say, hey, who are all these new children I've got here? Where'd they come from? Most of my kids were carried off into Babylon.

Who are these ones here? And it says, well, the Gentiles are going to come in great numbers. You're going to have to expand the tent stakes of your tent for a bigger family. If you're living in a tent and you've just been thinking of the Jews being your family, well, you're going to have to have a lot of Gentiles coming in to make a bigger tent.

The idea being in both places, in the passages in Isaiah that talk like that and this passage, God is not thinking of Jerusalem anymore simply as a city that you can measure the circumference around. It is made up of people, not square feet. Now, you can sort of see that even in the language of verse 7, where he says, up Zion.

Now, in the Bible, Zion and Jerusalem are used as essentially interchangeable terms. Mount Zion is where Jerusalem was built. And therefore, the prophets speak of Zion and Jerusalem interchangeably in poetry.

They are parallel to each other and so forth. So, up Jerusalem, up Zion. Escape you who dwell in the daughter of Babylon.

Wait, Jerusalem is some of them, some of Jerusalem is in Babylon still and needs to come

back to the land? Jerusalem is people. I mean, before the exile, it was just a city. Now it's people.

And we know it's people because that's how the New Testament treats the entity. If you look at Hebrews, which those of you who have been regular in these meetings have looked at this passage many times because it's needed so often to explain what the prophets are saying. In Hebrews chapter 12, verses 22 and 23, the writer speaking to the Christians there says, You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn.

The church, the general assembly and church of the firstborn is the heavenly Jerusalem, is Mount Zion. It is God's people, Jews and Gentiles, who are the general assembly and church of the firstborn, who are the Zion, the Jerusalem that we have come to. And so we are now looking in Zechariah, not simply at his own time, but also the return of the exiles from Babylon is simply a portent of God building again his people, whom he calls Zion.

And by the way, Isaiah does this too. Isaiah has a number of places where he calls his people Zion. In fact, in one place he says, Say unto Zion, you are my people.

And Zion is the people. It's not the geography anymore, because there's many nations are part of it and are God's people now. So, this is what, this seems to be saying, he says, Now, if you're going to try to measure the city, and if you're going to build the temple and build the city like these people are going to do, you're going to want to take measurements, of course, to build the city.

He's not denying that there will, in fact, be walls around this particular city. Nehemiah later came and did build walls around the city. But the point he's making is, if you're thinking of Jerusalem as something limited to that, God's got a bigger vision than that.

His Jerusalem is going to include Gentiles too. Many nations, all nations. Now, when you come to the third chapter, we come to the fourth vision, which is, I'll just talk about it rather than read it, because we're running low on time here.

He sees the high priest Joshua in a vision, standing before God, and he's wearing filthy clothing. In fact, the word filthy, actually in the Hebrew means covered with excrement. So, this is about as foul a picture as can be depicted in his vision.

Now, Joshua the high priest, and every high priest in every generation, represents the people themselves. When the high priest goes into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he's offering sacraments on behalf of the people. He represents the people.

The fact that Joshua the high priest is depicted in filthy garments means he's defiled. The people are defiled. And there, in the vision, Satan is there.

In the Hebrew, it says, the Satan, which means the adversary. And I'm not sure to what degree the idea of Satan, as we think of him, was clear in the Old Testament, and to what degree the adversary is simply the Samaritan people who are trying to resist this project. But in any case, I'm going to take it as Satan.

It's the word satanis in the Greek, in Hebrew. It says, Satan was there, accusing him, pointing out, hey, he's filthy, he's defiled, he's unworthy. He's unworthy to stand before God.

And the angel of the Lord speaks to Satan, says, the Lord rebuked you, Satan. And they take off the high priest's dirty garments and put on clean garments and a turban. And that's what it's about.

It's basically saying, yeah, it's true, Israel represented in the personal high priest, they are defiled. They've been idolaters for hundreds of years. But God's given a new start.

He's taken away those filthy garments, and they're going to be white as snow. So their sins be as scarlet. They're going to be white like snow.

I'm going to put clean garments on them. And that's the message of that vision, that God is aware, as the Jews themselves are, that they have a long history of defilement and unworthiness to stand before God. But God's turning a corner with that right now.

Okay, let's just forget about that. Let's start fresh. I'm going to make you clean, and you can start over again as if none of that had ever happened.

That's what that vision is about. That's the clothing, the reclothing of Joshua the high priest. There is a strange prophecy at the end of chapter 3 that is about the Messiah, because Joshua the high priest is a type, as Zerubbabel will be seen to be a type of the Messiah too.

Jesus is our great high priest. And so this prophecy is uttered to Joshua, but it really speaks to him as if he's really representative of the Messiah. He says, Then the angel, verse 6, of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, If you will walk in my ways, and if you will keep my command, then you shall judge my house, and likewise have charge of my courts.

I will give you places to walk among those that stand here. Now, I believe that that is simply to Joshua. The Messiah is not in the picture until verse 8. Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you.

For they are all a wondrous sign. They foreshadow something as a sign. For behold, I am bringing forth my servant the branch.

Now, the branch is a Messianic title. It's found in Isaiah, it's found in Jeremiah 23.5, it's

found twice in Zechariah. The branch is the Messiah referred to.

In fact, when Matthew, in Matthew 2, records that Jesus came to settle in Nazareth, Matthew says, Then it might be fulfilled which was written in the prophets, he shall be called a Nazarene. Well, the prophets don't say anything about him being a Nazarene, but the word Nazareth means town of the branch. And the prophets did refer to the Messiah as the branch.

And here Jesus grew up in the town called the town of the branch, which implies that he's the branch is what Matthew is saying. The prophets never said he should be called a Nazarene. But it's interesting too, because in Matthew he quotes prophets four times in that chapter.

He always says, The prophets said this, the prophets said that, the prophets said that. But now the prophets, plural, said he should be called Nazarene. But none of them actually said that.

But many prophets said he'd be called the branch. And he grew up in the town of the branch, which Matthew apparently thinks is an interesting play on words, and more than a coincidence. So, My servant the branch, for behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua.

Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree.

Now, he says there's a stone laid before Joshua. I have no idea what this stone is except that it's Christ, because it has seven eyes. And we know that in Revelation chapter 5 verse 6, Jesus is depicted as a lamb having seven eyes and seven horns.

That's how he's described in Revelation 5, 6. He's got seven eyes. Later in Revelation, it says these seven eyes are the seven spirits of God that go out to view everything in the world. So he's omniscient.

Seven eyes refers to being omniscient. But why it's a stone here, I don't know. There's many stone prophecies about the Messiah in the Old Testament.

Lots of prophecies refer to him as the stone or the cornerstone, things like that. Isaiah, the Psalms, and other places speak that way. Even Jacob spoke that way in Genesis of the Messiah as the stone of Israel.

But, I mean, the image is strange. I mean, a stone with seven eyes sitting before the prophet. I mean, the priest.

I'm not sure why it's depicted this way, but we know who the stone is. We know who the

branch is. And he says, I'm going to engrave the inscription.

I'm going to remove the iniquity of the land in that one day. Now, the taking off of the filthy garments of Joshua and putting clean garments on represents removing the iniquity. And it was done to Joshua to represent two things.

One, that God was doing it for Israel, whom Joshua represented. But also that Joshua's antitype, the one that Joshua foreshadowed, the Messiah, would also, in his own way, remove the iniquity of the land in one day. And that was the day Jesus died.

Now, not the whole country was redeemed, but the remnant was. And they are the true Israel. They're the true Jerusalem, the true Zion, the church of the firstborn.

He removed their iniquity in the day that he died. And so this looks forward to the coming of Christ, the first coming. And it says, in that day everyone's going to sit under his vine and fig tree.

This expression occurs in Micah chapter 4, verses 1 through 4, about how when the Messiah would set up his kingdom, everyone will sit under his vine and fig tree. Actually, in 2 Kings, there's mention of a time when the Jews were at peace, as every man sat under his own vine and fig tree. In 2 Kings, I forget the reference.

But the point here is that just speaks of being at peace. That speaks of being secure. You've got your own vine.

You've got your own fig tree. You've got your own place. And you're sitting there enjoying it.

That's basically what sitting under a vine and fig tree is. So the idea is that he brings peace. It's an image of peace.

In Micah, it follows the idea that they'll beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations should not lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war anymore. And every man will sit under his vine and fig tree.

So a peaceable image is what's implied here. The Messiah will save his people and give them peace, so to speak. Now, that was the re-clothing of Joshua.

In chapter 4, the fifth vision is very famous, and it is the vision of the lamps and the olive trees. Now, I'll just describe this because it's lengthy and we don't have time to read it. He sees two olive trees, and he sees a lampstand, probably the menorah from the temple, the seven-branch lampstand.

Now, this lampstand was kept lit by oil. It was an oil lamp, and oil came from olive trees. Olive oil is what they used.

And so he sees two olive trees, one on each side of this lamp, and there are golden pipes, like, tapped into these trees as if they're maple, and you're getting maple syrup out of them. By the way, that's not how you get olive oil from an olive tree. You don't just poke a pipe into it, and out comes olive oil.

But that's the image. It's not a realistic image. But you've got these golden pipes coming from the olive trees into a golden bowl, and this bowl feeds the lamps and keeps it burning.

What's it mean? Well, it says the two olive trees represent the two sons of oil in Hebrew. It says anointed ones in our English translation, two anointed ones. Most commentators assume these are Zerubbabel and Joshua, the political and religious leaders of the country whom God was using to help the project of building the temple succeed, and that they are the two anointed ones.

I'm not sure, because they are not—the two anointed ones are not identified by name. I'm not sure they aren't Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets. They're anointed.

They're sons of oil. They're the spiritual spokespersons who were, in fact, encouraging Zerubbabel and Joshua even to do the project and the people. I don't know if it's talking about Zerubbabel and Joshua, as almost all commentators say, or if it might be a reference to the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who were there at that time doing it.

It doesn't matter. The point is the oil represents the Holy Spirit. And I know that because of that famous verse in this chapter, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord.

And he says, you know, what is this mountain before Zerubbabel? You know, it's going to be removed. I'm going to make it a plain. And the idea here is that there was tremendous opposition to the building of the temple.

The exiles had come back. They were opposed by the neighboring Samaritans. There was a lot of rubble to move around.

It was a big mess, very hard, but God's spirit was going to enable them to do it. And the lamp of Israel was going to continue to burn because there was a constant supply of oil from these anointed ones, these two olive trees. So that God was providing anointed leadership to provide spirit-empowered and spirit-inspired and spirit-led leadership to build the project and keep the fire burning, as it were.

Now, the lamp burning is important because there would be a time later in Israel's history where the temple was defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes, and they wouldn't use the temple anymore for a while, for three years, until they actually cleared the land of Syrians and the Maccabean revolt succeeded. And then they had to get oil for the lamps

for the temple, and that's what Hanukkah is about. It took them eight days to get enough oil to get the lamps, and that's why there's the eight days of Hanukkah.

But the idea is the temple was out of service until they could get the oil to make the lamps burn. Now, here the temple had been out of service for 70 years, but the lamps are going to burn again. The oil lamps are going to burn.

There's going to be plenty of oil because God is supplying this spiritual oil, as it were, spiritual anointing through these prophets or through the leaders to keep the project successfully burning. Now, I know we've got to take a break here, but let me just quickly say two visions in chapter 5 I can just mention very quickly. In chapter 5, verses 1 through 4, there's a vision of a flying scroll, and it has all kinds of wickedness of the people written on both sides of it.

And the prophecy is given that this scroll is going to go into the house of everyone who violates the covenant and destroy it. And now there's going to be still the Jews have come back, they're forgiven, but if they violate the covenant again and do the things that are written on this scroll, it'll be the end of them, not the whole country necessarily, but their house. And that's, I don't have time to go into that anymore, but then in verses 5 through 11, the seventh vision, almost the end of them, is of a woman who's in a basket, an ephah.

Now an ephah is like what, five gallons or something like that, half a bushel or something, I don't remember. Small. A woman inside a basket is going to be a little tiny woman.

It's not very realistic. The ephah basket this woman's in is covered with a lid of lead, and when the prophet sees it, the lid is lifted up so he can see inside the basket this little woman, and then the lid is put back on. And then two women with wings like storks on either side of the basket pick it up and fly away and disappear with the basket.

And here's what he's told. He said, okay, the woman in the basket, that's wickedness. And those who carried her back away to the north, they're taking it back to Babylon where it belongs.

Now this is simply meaning God's removing wickedness from the community of the returned exiles, and it's going back to Babylon. That's where it belongs. It doesn't belong among God's people.

So these visions have a lot of details that really the message is very simple. And if you try to get more message out of it, you're going to be inventing stuff out of sure speculation. But these are messages that God's given about, listen, you've been sinful.

I'm giving you a new chance. Here I'm taking the filthy garments, I'm going to put on clean garments. I'm going to, you know, of course, if you if wickedness comes into your

house in the form of these things on this scroll, it's going to destroy you and your house.

Wickedness is being taken away from Jerusalem and taken back to Babylon. So it's not in Jerusalem anymore. These are all symbolic pictures of God's giving them basically another chance to do it right this time.

Then the last of these visions is in chapter six, the first half of it. And basically it is simply a vision of the horses that we saw in the first vision. But now they are attached to chariots, which means they're going to war.

And it says, verse five, the angel answered and said to me, these are the four spirits of heaven who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth. The one with the black horse is going to the north country. Why? The white are going after them.

The dappled are going toward the south country. The strong steeds went out eager to go that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And he said, go walk through.

And they walked through the earth. And he says in verse eight, and he called me and said, folks, see, those that go toward the north country have given rest to my spirit in the north country. What's this about? Well, like I said, the first vision showed these horses with riders coming to report that the nations that had hurt Jerusalem were still at ease.

And God says, yeah, I'm very upset with them. That's what he said in chapter one. I'm really upset with those nations.

But now I'm not, because I've sent out my troops to these nations and they've given me rest now. Now I feel like the score has been settled. I can rest assured that they have been punished as they should be.

And so that's the cycle of visions that we have in chapters one through six. Now we need to take a break and we will take the rest of the book. And since I won't have to give an introduction to the book, I won't take any of the time for that.

We'll get through it. You might think we won't, but I'm pretty sure we will.