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Zechariah 1 - 2



Zechariah - Steve Gregg

This section of Zechariah is full of rapid, abrupt visions that can be difficult to comprehend without careful attention. However, Steve Gregg suggests that once the reader is able to see the visions clearly, the answers to any questions become simple and obvious. While it may be tempting to rush through these sections or look for deeper meanings, taking the time to fully understand the details can make all the difference.

Transcript

Well, now we come to chapter one of Zechariah. Last time we had an introduction to the book, and we had an outline of the book that I gave you, indicating that the first five and a half chapters are of one sort of material. They are visions.

Eight in number is the way I would number them. Some have numbered them fewer by combining what I would call two visions into one. And some have made them more by dividing what I consider to be one vision into two.

So there have been as few as six and as many as ten visions identified in this section by different persons. But to me, the most natural division makes eight, which means since that's in five and a half chapters, there are a number of chapters that have more than one in them, and they are short. They're not even long chapters.

It's very quick to read through this section. It's not so quick to necessarily grasp it, and we're going to linger a little more on some of these than on others, because their meaning may elude us. Now, to tell you the truth, if the meaning eludes us, it may be only because we're looking for more than is there.

These visions are, as I observed before, very strange. They are strange visions with strange images and so forth, some of them stranger than others. But the point is, I think the purpose of the strangeness is to retain them.

When you see something or have something described to you that's very peculiar and out of the ordinary, it sticks in your mind, because unusual things are more memorable than common, ordinary, routine things. As I said, if you're driving on the freeway, you

don't notice all the cars that drive by. You notice the car that rolled over on the side of the road, because that's unusual.

The other cars are routine. They're going by you, and you probably don't even know they're there most of the time, although you should pay attention. But the point I'm making is that whatever is abnormal, out of the ordinary, tends to get your attention, and it's what you remember afterwards.

And I believe that is why God gave such strange visions. There's almost an element of humor in his choice of imagery sometimes. And because they are strange, we might assume they're very mystical.

We might assume they have very hidden meanings. I believe this is a strong temptation in reading a book like Zechariah, or Revelation, for that matter. It's got strange images which we suspect are very deep and very profound.

The stranger they are, the more profound we suspect them to be. The more hidden the meaning we might suspect is. And I came to Zechariah that way initially, until I came to understand from the information and knowing the background and so forth, what they are actually talking about.

And it turns out the messages are often missed by us only because they are so simple, and we're looking for something deeper. Many times the vision is a very elaborate, detailed description of certain things, which when you say, well, what does it mean, the answer is summarized in a single sentence, and it's a very basic thing. And you almost feel like that can't be it.

Why would you have all this detail and all of this strangeness and all this mysteriousness, and the meaning is simply this real obvious meaning? Well, I suppose some of the detail is given simply because he's describing something he saw, rather than something he was told. A picture is worth a thousand words, and occasionally it takes a thousand words to describe what you could see in an instant if you were seeing it. Now, he saw it.

These are visions that he saw, but we didn't see them. And in order for him to sort of tell us his dream or his vision, he sets the stage. He describes things in certain details, and we begin to wonder, what is the meaning of that detail? What is the color of those horses about? Why is there a red one and a black one and a sorrel one? What do those colors represent? Now, frankly, the idea of these different colored horses does seem to parallel, in some respects, though not entirely, the four horses of Revelation chapter 6. I say in some respects, because they're not exactly the same color, and they don't mean the same things.

But we would say that the colors of the horses in Revelation, once you understand what

those horses mean, they do correspond to things. The white horse represents conquest. The red horse, bloodshed and war.

The black horse, famine. The pale horse, death. There's something of an appropriateness about the colors of the horses in Revelation that seem to go well with what their meaning is.

So we probably suspect that'll be true in Zechariah, where I think if we begin to look for that kind of meaning, we will be on a false scent. I think we will be missing the basic point, and the basic point is as basic as can be. And so the description of all the details, the myrtle trees and all these other things that are mentioned, I personally have come to think it's just him saying, this is what I saw, and he's describing the scene.

But everything in the scene isn't necessarily important. It's like when you go and see a stage play or something like that, there's all these props around, and if you were about to describe to somebody who didn't see the play what it was that you saw, you might describe the lamp in the corner, and there's a sofa over here, and a loveseat on the other side, and a fireplace about three-quarters of the way over to the right side, and you give all this description, but that's not anything really related to the story or what the play was about. But you're trying to get them to see what you saw.

And once you have seen what they saw, it's a separate question, what really is this about? And the answer may be much more simple and much more obvious, almost disappointingly so, because you were looking for something so much deeper. And I believe that you will find that I'm correct about this, that when we look at the visions, they come and go rapidly, abruptly. In most cases, they are not explained, although sometimes explanations are given, and when they are explained, it really is quite a simple thing after all.

So God is getting across some basic ideas to the prophet pictorially. Pictorially, because again, pictures are easy to remember. If you get a visual on it, it kind of burns itself in your mind, more than if you just hear a sermon about it in words.

So we begin. Now the visions don't actually begin to be described until verse seven. The first six verses are kind of an introduction.

It says, in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, or some might pronounce it Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Barakai, the son of Edo, the prophet, saying, the Lord has been very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, thus says the Lord of hosts, return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.

But they did not hear, nor heed me, says the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? Yet surely my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they returned and said, just as the Lord of hosts has determined to do to us, according to our ways and according to our deeds, so he has dealt with us. Now, this is really a pretty straightforward word, though, if you want to analyze it grammatically, it has its difficulties because I don't know what translation you're looking at, but a number of translations, including the one I'm looking at, at the very end of verse 6, you'll find a string of punctuation marks.

A half quotation mark followed by a quotation mark, followed by a half quotation mark, followed by a quotation mark. Do you see that in your Bible? You might have a Bible that doesn't have that because I've noticed punctuation in this section is different in different translations, but it's like there's a quote within a quote within a quote within a quote within a quote. At least that's the way these translators have understood it.

The quotations are, of course, punctuation marks that are not in the Hebrew. The Hebrew text does not have any punctuation marks, and therefore it is punctuated the way that translators believe it should be, and some translators do it more simply. You see, as soon as it says in verse 2, the Lord, or even before that, yeah, well, the word of the Lord came to the prophet saying, quotation mark, the Lord has been very angry with your fathers.

Therefore say to them, okay, now here's another quote. Say to them these words, which is in turn another quote within the quote. Thus says the Lord of hosts, and now he's going to get another quote within that one.

Return to me, unquote. That's the third tier quote in this, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says Lord of hosts. Do not be like your fathers to whom the former prophets preached, saying, now this is a quote, within that quoting what the prophets had said.

And so it gets deeper and deeper into a morass of subordinate quotations. Now, of course, that could be distracting, and it's not, in understanding the scripture, you don't want to get all wrapped up in technicalities like how many quotation marks there are, but the point is it gets a little difficult to know exactly what's going on by the time you're in the deepest part of it. For example, when it says in verse six, so they returned and said, who are they? Now, the Bible I'm using, because of the way the translators put the quotes, this is still within the quotes.

Remember, there's no quotation marks in the original Hebrew, and so I'm going to suggest a simpler way of understanding this is that they, who returned, are the people that Zechariah is talking to. But the way it's structured with the quotations in this particular translation, they are the fathers that the former prophets spoke to. And God is

still speaking, saying, and they, your fathers, returned and said, yes, the Lord has done what he said he would do to us.

Seen this way, the entire verses two through six are simply a quote. There's no response from Zechariah's hearers. It's entirely what God is saying to Zechariah's people, and we do not hear any further of any response or anything else at this point from the people.

In my opinion, verses one through five, actually one through four, is God's reminding the Israelites that their fathers, who had gone into Babylon, went there despite warnings that God had sent them by the former prophets. There were prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah and even Ezekiel, though he is a prophet of the exile, he still warned them before Jerusalem fell that they should still repent. And there were other prophets, minor prophets, who he sent.

So the point he's making in verses two through four is that I don't want you, that is Zechariah's generation who's being addressed by Zechariah, by this oracle from Zechariah, I don't want you to be like your ancestors were, the ones who went into Babylon. You are the ones who've come back. You are the ones whose ancestors went into Babylon by ignoring what the previous prophets said.

You, however, have come back from Babylon, and you need to learn a lesson from your fathers who suffered for their belligerent rejection of the previous prophets' message. And in my opinion, when you come to verse five, this is not a continuation of that oracle that God is speaking, but this is Zechariah's own application, having quoted God, who in which quote God was reminding them that their fathers had been warned and had not heeded the warning and God had brought things upon them. I think Zechariah says to the listeners today, his own day, your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? Yet surely my words, says the Lord, and my statutes, which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So he gives a warning to them from God that they should not ignore the prophets of their own generation as their fathers had ignored the former prophets.

And he says, listen, what happened to those people anyway? Do you remember? Did God fulfill his threats to them? Those prophets, they're gone, of course. They were mere mortal men and they lived a long time ago. They're gone.

They don't live forever. And your fathers, most of them, they're gone too. But what isn't gone is the truth of what God said.

The speakers are gone. The original hearers are gone. But my words came to pass and remain true.

They're not gone. God's attitude toward people who ignore the prophets and who rebel is the same, and his word is the same today. And when it says, so, in verse 6, so they

returned, I don't think that should be in quotation marks.

I think it's simply narration. The people who heard Zechariah say these things, I think, are the ones who returned and said, you're right. Just as the Lord of hosts determined to do to us, according to our ways or according to our deeds, so he has dealt with us.

So they're acknowledging that he is correct, that this happened to them, that is to say an earlier generation of them, the Jews, and that they take his meaning. I don't mean to complicate this more than it is. It's just that I think all those quotations complicate things.

Like who's talking to who? Where is this? How deep are we into this? I think it's quite simply God says, remember what I told your fathers, the prophets, and they didn't listen. And so Zechariah says, now, where are those people today? Where are the prophets who spoke to them? They're gone. But God's word, it overtook them, it is true, it's memorable.

God's word hasn't changed or been nullified. And then the people come back to Zechariah, I believe, and confirm that he has told the truth. Yes, this did happen to us, meaning our ancestors, an earlier generation of us, the Jews.

And so we see, if this is correct, that right at the outset, when Zechariah first begins to speak, he finds that the people are listening this time. The prophets of the past did not find their generation to be open to them. The earlier generations did not listen to their prophets.

But this is a new generation. This is a generation who has seen that God keeps his threats, that the prophets are not safely to be ignored. And so Zechariah, the new prophet, is being heard, which was quite out of character for the Jews generally in their history, to listen to their prophets.

And then that's it. That was in the eighth month of the second year. But when you come to verse 7, it's the eleventh month of the second year.

So we're like three months later, in a single night, Zechariah has this series of visions which he describes. So I'm assuming he did a lot more preaching than is recorded here. Otherwise, he gave an extremely short message, one month, and didn't do anything else for another three months.

So I'm thinking that the books of the prophets probably record only a smattering of their ministry, probably just a sampling of what they preached. But on this night, where he had all these visions, we begin reading in chapter 1, verse 7. On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shabbat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Edo, the prophet. He says, 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. Then 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 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, the earth is resting quietly. Then the angel of the Lord 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.

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 the surveyor's line shall be stretched over Jerusalem.

Again proclaim, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, My city shall again spread out through the prosperity. The Lord will again comfort Zion and will again choose Jerusalem. Now that's the end of that first vision.

The next three verses, the remainder of the chapter, is a second vision. So you can see how brief they can be. This one is actually one of the ones that gets a longer description than most.

And as I said, has a number of details that don't seem to be important to identify with anything in particular. There's a number of horses. Their colors are given, though there's no obvious significance to their colors.

He just sees a variety of colored horses, with riders, of course. And there's a young man standing among myrtle trees in the hollow. Now there's also the angel of the Lord.

I have to confess, I'm not 100% clear whether the young man is the same as the angel of the Lord or yet another character. Although Zechariah gives some detailed description, there remain some things that are not entirely unobscure. But it's not all that important that we know because the real issue is, he sees these horses and he says, what are these about? He is not told anything about their colors or the importance of the myrtle trees or anything like that.

Myrtle trees, by the way, are an evergreen tree that used to grow in abundance around Jerusalem. In the book of Nehemiah, we read that people during the Feast of Tabernacles would go out and they'd cut down the branches from the myrtle trees and make their

booths for the Feast of Sukkot. So, I mean, this is just a very common tree in the area.

The fact that he saw myrtle trees might simply mean he's just describing a very ordinary scene outside Jerusalem. There being, myrtle trees might be entirely without any significance to the meaning. What is the meaning? Well, the meaning seems to be that these horsemen are patrols that are sent out to survey what's going on throughout the earth.

Because in verse 90 says, My Lord, what are these? And the angel said, 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 has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth. Now, walking to and fro throughout the earth is not very descriptive of their activity.

Although we do read in Job chapter 1 that when God has an interview with Satan, he says, where have you been, Satan? He says, I've been walking to and fro in the earth. But this walking to and fro in the earth has a specific activity that is implied. In fact, I think the ESV translation brings it up fairly well.

Uses the word patrolling. These are the ones who are patrolling throughout the earth. In other words, they are a reconnaissance team.

Obviously, they're answering to the angel of the Lord. They have come there to congregate there among the myrtle trees because the angel of the Lord is there and they're giving their report in all likelihood. And the whole point of this is to point out that God is keeping tabs.

He's got his spies. He's got his patrols. He is not unaware of what's going on in the world.

Jerusalem might feel abandoned and forgotten by God. Well, the people who've come back from Babylon have been persecuted by the locals and even by the kings of Persia somewhat. They've been told to stop building the temple and they've been discouraged and they've stopped doing it.

And their enemies seem to be prevailing. The nations seem to be doing well and Jerusalem's not doing well. Jerusalem still seems to be the underdog.

Although they have returned from captivity, things are not going that well for them. And this basically is saying, you think God doesn't know what's going on in the nations? The report of the horsemen, of the patrols, is the nations are at ease, which is to say the nations are undisturbed. The nations are going, you know, the Jews aren't at ease.

The Jews are being persecuted. The Jews are disturbed. The Jews have anything but a peaceful situation, although they've returned from captivity.

But the nations who are not their friends, everything's going good for them. They're at

ease. They're at rest.

And of course, this no doubt would have been what Israel perceived to be the case without any special revelation. That is that, how come things are going so badly for us? We're God's people. Supposedly, he's fulfilling his promises to us and bringing us back to restore the nation.

And yet the way things look right now, it seems like the nations around us are more at ease than we are. Sounds like they're more under the blessing of God than we are. But the vision is saying, do you think God doesn't know that? Do you think God doesn't have his patrols everywhere reporting back? Now, of course, this is not literal.

These are not literal horses. God doesn't have literal patrols riding horses around the world to bring back information to him about what's going on. This is symbolic of the fact that God has an intelligence network, so to speak, that clues him in on everything that's going on globally.

Of course, God knows innately those things because he's omniscient. He doesn't need spies. He doesn't need patrols.

He doesn't need reports back. This is simply conveying in terms that people of that time would understand that a king who's keeping tabs on his empire would have, of course, he'd depend on reports from patrols and so forth. God doesn't depend on them, but the same idea is communicated by saying these are the ones that God has sent out to patrol things, and they're coming back and they're giving their reports.

So God is not ignorant of what's going on. He knows that the nations that hate you, that they are at ease and you are not. This is how the series of visions begins.

Now, there's going to be several more visions. They're all going to be quite related to each other, and in the final vision, which is going to be in the first part of chapter six, we're going to see colored horses again, but this time with chariots attached to them, which has a significant change in its meaning. Horses with riders alone may well be, as these are, simply patrols.

Horses with chariots are going to war, and so God is gathering information in this vision. In the final vision of the series in chapter six, he's doing something about it. He's sending out his troops to do something, and so there's going to be a full circle in the meaning of the visions that we see here in the first five and a half chapters that first Zechariah is being told and the people through the prophet are being told.

God is very actively paying attention to the things where you may feel forgotten, you may feel ignored, you feel like God is not aware of the problems you're going through. Trust me. He's got very adequate information about this.

He knows what's going on, and when the vision series is completed, he's going to do something about it right now, as a matter of fact. He's sending out his troops, his chariots, and in between those two visions are six other visions, each of which have some encouraging message. It's kind of unusual for prophets to write a book where everything is encouraging, because an awful lot of times the prophets were sent at times when Israel was in rebellion, and so they would come with rebukes and threats of judgment and things like that, but these visions don't contain such threats of judgment on Israel.

This has chastened Israel. This is the faithful remnant of Israel that has come back from captivity. These are the good guys, and therefore God's word to them is comforting words, and notice it says that the man spoke to the angel of the Lord and he spoke with comforting words.

So, the message that Zechariah is bringing is essentially a comforting message, and then we have some of the specific words that the Lord said in verses 14 and following. This is still part of the vision. The pictorial part is gone now, and we're now going to just really find out what the message is that God has for them associated with this vision.

The angel who spoke with me said to me, proclaimed, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal. In other words, I'm not only on your side, I'm enthusiastically on your side. I'm zealous for your well-being.

I realize you don't know that because it doesn't look like it, and that's why the prophet has to see a vision to let you know because you can't see it in the natural. Your natural eye cannot see evidence that God is zealous and on your side because things are not going in such a way as you would think they would if God is zealously on your side. So, that's why prophets have to see visions.

They see from the Lord, His perspective, things that you couldn't otherwise see. And so, God says, Yep, I am on your side. I'm zealously on your side.

I'm exceedingly angry with the nations who are at ease. It doesn't show because they're not being judged at the moment. They are at ease.

He says, don't worry. Don't think I'm happy with them. I'm real angry with them.

Your enemies are making me angry. So, if this is true, if God is zealous for Jerusalem and really angry at the nations, who are their enemies, why aren't things going better for Jerusalem? Why aren't things going so good for the nations? Well, one thing this tells us and certainly the Psalms tell us the same thing is that you cannot at all make a judgment about whether God is on someone's side or not by whether things are going well for them. The Psalmist, you know, complained about this in Psalm 73.

He said, I almost backslid when I saw the plight of the righteous compared to the

prosperity of the wicked. I thought, hey, what good is it for us to serve God when those of us who are serving God were being trampled under people's feet and we're poor and we're hungry and the people who hate God, they're fat and sassy and rich and comfortable and they live and die at ease and he said, that just doesn't make any sense. Well, it may not make sense to us.

God's ways are sometimes very much the opposite of ours. But one thing that it does tell us is that you'd be very mistaken to make an assessment of whether God is happy or angry with someone simply by looking at whether things are going well for them or not. It might seem intuitive that if things are going well for somebody, that means God likes them, God's favor, God's blessing them.

And if things just keep going wrong for somebody, that means God's really upset with them and he's not letting anything go right for them. That is the way people think. That's what Job's counselors thought.

When Job had everything go wrong for him, his counselors, who were wise men, they were philosophers of their day, but they couldn't see past the fact that things are going so badly for Job, certainly God must be upset with you about something. Because when we judge whether God is happy or angry by the temporal circumstance that's passing, we cannot really know from that information alone but for the simple reason that God sometimes seeks to accomplish something in the people that he's pleased with through their trials and seeks to forestall the judgment on the people he's angry with in order to give them a chance to repent. As it says in 2 Peter 3, where Peter said, In the last days, scoffers will come along and they'll say, Where's the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the world without change.

What he's saying is people will say, I thought you Christians said Jesus was coming, but look, nothing's any different than it was back years ago when you were saying the same thing. Our fathers said those same things and they've fallen asleep, they've gone on to their next life and he still hasn't come. You Christians have been saying Jesus is coming and they've been saying it for generations and he hasn't come.

The fathers have fallen asleep, the fathers have died, generations have come and gone and things still continue unchanged. And Peter says, don't think that God is slack concerning his promise. The scoffers think he is.

They think he made a promise and didn't keep it, that he's a slacker. And Peter says, no, he's not a slacker. The reason he has not done it yet is because it says, He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

That's what Peter says in 2 Peter 3. The reason Jesus didn't come back sooner and judge the wicked is because he still would hope for them to repent. He's given them another

chance. As soon as he comes back, their chances are done.

He's merciful. He's not happy with the wicked and he wants them to repent. But you see, that's just it.

And when providence seems favorable towards someone, he may be angry at them. But it's as Paul says in Romans 2, Do you despise the riches of the mercy of God, not knowing that it's the goodness of God that leads to repentance? In other words, God has been good to you, not because he thinks you're good, but he knows you're not good and he's hoping by his kindness to you to induce you to want to turn around and be better. He's hoping to win you over by his goodness.

So I guess what I'm saying is, there may be many reasons why things go well for someone. It may be because they're good and God has blessed them. It may be because they're bad and God is hoping to induce them to soften their hearts and repent.

There are more than one reasons things could be going bad for people. It may be that God is angry at them and judging them. It may be that he's not angry at them and he's testing them.

Or that he's working some good thing through their trials. The main thing that's commonly a theme of all these passages of scripture that I've been alluding to is, and circumstances that we know in real life too, is that circumstantial blessing or circumstantial misfortune are in no sense any gauge or any indicator by themselves of whether God is happy with you or not. And this is the point that's being made here.

God knows, and he knows the nations are at rest and you're not, and he's not happy with them. You didn't know it until I told you. That's why I had to tell you.

That's why I had to give you this vision. So that you would know what is not obvious otherwise. God is pleased with Jerusalem.

God is zealous for Jerusalem. And he's angry at the nations. Well, you could have fooled me.

It seemed like it was the other way around. Yeah, that's right. That's why I had to reveal it to you.

That's why there's a prophecy here instead of none. He says, I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease, for I was a little angry and they helped, but with evil intent. That is, they helped carry out the judgment he intended, but they didn't do it as a favor to God.

What he's saying is, yes, the captivity was my idea, because Jerusalem had become utterly corrupt. I warned them through Jeremiah, and even before that, through Isaiah, to

repent or else they'd go into Babylon. They paid no attention, so I had to smack them.

I had to send them off into Babylon. It was my intention to judge them, but the nations that I utilized to do it and that were the tools I used, they didn't do it with good intentions. In some respects, they were a little overzealous in their anger and in their cruelty, and so I'm angry at those nations.

Even though I used them, I don't appreciate their attitude. I don't appreciate their motives. We see the very same thing with reference to another nation.

That is, when the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria, and Isaiah is talking about that in Isaiah 10. Just as the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C., so earlier, in 722 B.C., the Assyrians, which was powerful before the Babylonians were, the Assyrians came and they destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel. In both cases, Babylon destroying Judah and Assyria destroying Israel, in both cases, these are seen by the prophets as specifically judgment acts of God, utilizing pagan nations to bring about a judgment on his rebellious people.

But here, if you look at Isaiah 10, this is anticipating Assyria doing this to the northern kingdom. Isaiah 10.5, he says, Woe to Assyria, the rod of my anger. Now, the rod of my anger means I'm striking my people, I'm disciplining my children with a rod, and Assyria is the rod I'm using.

Assyria is the implement that I am using to strike and to discipline my own people. Assyria, the rod of my anger, and the staff in whose hand is my indignation, I will send him against an ungodly nation. That is, God sent Assyria against Israel because they were ungodly.

I will give him a charge to seize the spoil, to take the prey, to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Now, verse 7, Yet he does not mean so. In other words, as far as I'm concerned, God says Assyria is just my tool, my implement, the rod in my hand that I'm using to discipline my people.

But that's not how Assyria sees it. Assyria has their own agendas. Assyria is acting out their own evil hearts and evil plans.

This is not how Assyria sees it. Nor does his heart think so. But it is in his heart to destroy and to cut off not a few nations.

In other words, Assyria didn't say, I'm going to serve Yahweh and bring in disciplinary action on the nation of Israel that's rebelled against him. No, they just want to kill as many nations as they can. They want to conquer them all.

They're just greedy. They're just cruel. They're just aggressive.

And they are not, therefore, although they are used of God, they're not used of God because he likes them or because they like him. It says in verse 8 of Isaiah 10, For he says, as Assyria says, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno like Carchemish? Is not Hamath like Arpad? Is not Samaria like Damascus? These are all cities that equally succumb. Although Samaria is certainly, as the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, not the same as the others on the list just because Samaria was specifically under God's judgment.

Assyria was just after them all. Assyria didn't care who Samaria was. He just wanted to conquer everybody.

And the Assyrian says, As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols, whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, shall I not also do to Jerusalem and her idols? The Assyrians tried to conquer Jerusalem after that, but did not succeed. So it says in verse 13, Assyria says, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I am prudent. I also have removed the boundaries of the people and have robbed their treasuries.

And God says by way of rebuke to Assyria in verse 15, Shall the axe boast against, boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him who saws with it? As if a rod could wield itself against those who lift it up? Or as if the staff could lift up as it were not wood? So the point he's making here is Assyria thinks that they're the ones exerting their power and their prominent superiority and so forth. But God says, That's like a tool boasting against the workman who's using it. The tool doesn't have any expertise.

It's the workman. And he says, Assyria is just a tool in my hand. I am in fact using them, but they don't know that and they don't appreciate that.

They're not doing it to glorify me. They're not doing that to be obedient to me. Therefore, they too will be judged.

You see, God can actually use a nation that he's angry with because God is just that sovereign. He can do anything. He could use Judas.

He could use Caiaphas, and he did. The Bible says God can make even the wrath of man to praise him. He can exploit that.

Okay? So also, in Zechariah 1, the message is that God is angry at the Babylonians. He did use them. It was in fact his idea for Judah to go into Babylon.

But it says, I was angry at, a little angry at Jerusalem, but they, the Babylonians, helped but with evil intent. Therefore, thus says the Lord, I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it.

That is the temple, says the Lord of hosts. And the surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Now, you remember that those who came back under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest had come back for that very purpose, to reestablish Jerusalem, to be rebuilt again, and especially to rebuild the temple.

They had begun rebuilding the temple, but it hadn't gotten very far. In the year 5, what, 520? They had not gotten very far. And they had laid the foundation.

But they had stopped because of discouraging opposition that they had received. And these prophets, Zechariah and Haggai, had arisen in order to get them back on the job. So, you can see right away that the first vision that he has is encouraging them that God is going to see this done.

He's going to see Jerusalem with a temple in it. When he says, I'm going to see the surveyor's line over Jerusalem, what he means is, that's where the temple's going to be. The surveyor's going to do the site preparation, and they're going to survey for a building.

So, in other words, this is predicting that the temple will be rebuilt there. And verse 17, again, proclaims, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, My cities, which would be not only Jerusalem, but the Judean cities around, shall again spread out through prosperity. The Lord again will comfort Zion, and again will choose Jerusalem.

Now, I want to remind you that Zion and Jerusalem are simply interchangeable terms here. Zion is the mountain. The city of Jerusalem was built on Mount Zion.

And the prophets and poets and so forth, they always referred to Zion in exactly the manner that they refer to Jerusalem. It's like just a synonym. So, as this is poetry, we have the same thought repeated in different words.

So, he's promising prosperity. The vision that the prophets saw of the horses is simply conveying in a visual sort of a way that God is, you know, collecting information worldwide. These scouts, these patrols, are answering to him about what's going on.

And God knows the nations, what condition they're in. And you don't know what he thinks about it. You assume you know what he thinks about it.

But this prophecy is there to tell you what he thinks about it. He's unhappy with the nations who are at ease. He is actually zealous in favor of Jerusalem, which is not currently at ease.

This is a good sign. This is an encouragement to those who are, in fact, suffering persecution to know that God is saying, Hey, I'm telling you something. I'm on your side.

I'm zealously on your side. And therefore, things are looking up. The future is bright.

Be encouraged. I'm going to act. And you will see that my cities of Judea will spread out and prosper over the land as they once did before the Babylonians had come and wiped everything out 70 years ago.

Now that's that first vision. The second one is very brief. He says, Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns.

And I said to the angel who talked with me, What are these? So he answered me, These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. 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, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah and scattered it. Now the reference to four horns, I believe we're supposed to picture something akin to the horn of an ox or of a bull. The fact there's four of them suggests the altar.

In the temple, the altar had four horns, bull-like horns, one at each corner. And these were used as actually attachment points to tie down animals that were going to be sacrificed and that might wiggle free. They bind them to the horns of the altar.

Now these four horns represent what? Apparently nations. He refers to the horns of the nations in the last line. And a horn in Hebrew poetry refers to strength.

David often spoke in the Psalms about how God exalted his horn. That is David's horn. Meaning he elevated David to a place of power among the kingdoms.

In one of the visions that Daniel saw in Daniel chapter 8, he saw a ram with two horns. And as the vision goes on, it becomes clear that one of them is the kingdom of Persia and the other is the kingdom of Media. And the ram was Media Persia who was attacked by a goat with a notable horn, which happened to be Alexander the Great.

In any case, the horns represent political power in most cases. Now in Revelation, Jesus is seen in one place in Revelation 5-6 as a lamb that has seven horns and seven eyes. The number seven being the number of completeness or perfection.

Seven horns would mean he's all powerful. Seven eyes means he's all-knowing. He sees everything and knows everything.

So his omniscience and his omnipotence are represented in these ways. Horns represent power, usually political power. Of course, Christ's power is political in the sense that he's a king.

He doesn't rule some kind of earthly nation. His kingdom is not of this world, but he's a king nonetheless. And horns, therefore, are usually symbolic of power and in this case,

powerful nations that have scattered Judah and Israel and Jerusalem, it says.

Now, do these represent specifically four nations that have done this or is it just generic? After all, four is also the number that speaks of the four compass points. It could just mean nations from every direction if it's not literal. It could be literal, though, because Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Medo-Persia all were nations that had, in some way or another, troubled Israel.

Egypt, of course, in the days after Joseph had died, in the days of Moses. Egypt was the troubler of Israel. After that, Assyria is the one that had conquered the northern kingdom.

Then Babylon had conquered the southern kingdom. And now the Persian Empire, although generally friendly to Israel more than the others, was also forbidding them and discouraging them from building the temple at this particular time. He could actually be referring to those particular four powers.

It's not necessary to assume that he is being literal, though, because four, as I said, does seem to always be an emblem of the four compass points and, therefore, just mean powers around Israel on every side, nations that have troubled her historically. And she had been troubled by many. If you actually read the book of Judges, almost every time she was oppressed, it was by a different nation than any of the others before, surrounding nations.

In any case, the four horns represent persecution. Persecutors are nations that persecute Israel. In that respect, it is somewhat connected to the previous vision, where the horses and their patrolling riders are bringing about information from the hostile nations.

The hostile nations are fat and sassy. They're comfortable. They're at ease.

They have scattered Israel, according to this vision. But things are going to change. The change is emblemized by the fact he sees four of something else now.

The new King James calls them craftsmen. I think the King James called them smiths. The horns of the altar were made of metal.

And so a metalsmith, a coppersmith, silversmith, a goldsmith, or something like that, would be a man who has power over them because, obviously, a blacksmith can shape metal. He can beat it to another shape. He's in control over it.

A smith is somebody that is in control over metal. And these horns are presumably metal. And therefore, the smiths are those who have those horns at their mercy and terrify the horns.

The horns realize that they are not as powerful as these craftsmen are. And specifically,

it says these craftsmen terrify those horns. And cast them out.

They cast out the horns of the nations that lift up their horn against the land of Judah and scattered it. So what is this saying? It is saying, first of all, that Israel and Judah have suffered humiliation where no man could lift up his head. That suggests being humiliated by defeat.

And, of course, persecution from various nations, pagan nations, those that are currently at ease at Israel's expense. But God has more than a match for them. He's got craftsmen who can come and terrify those horns.

If the horns are the enemy, then the craftsmen end up being the friends of Jerusalem. At least, tools in God's hands to punish the previous persecutors. Now, there's more than one way to see this.

The craftsmen could be supernatural powers. They could be angelic powers. More than once in the Old Testament, we find that enemies of Israel were routed or defeated because of God's supernatural intervention.

Once David was coming against the Philistines, and God told him, just wait here among the myrtle trees. And when you hear the rustling in the myrtle trees, you march because you'll know I'm with you. And eventually he heard the sound of troops rustling in the myrtle trees.

No doubt, intended to be a reference to the angels. The armies of the angels had joined him. And then he went out and defeated the enemy.

Similarly, when Syria besieged the Jewish town, the Israeli town of Dothan, where Elisha was living. And the armies of Syria surrounded the town. Elisha's servant was terrified in 2 Kings chapter 6. The servant said, oh, Master Elijah, Elisha, what are we going to do? And Elisha said, oh Lord, open his eyes.

And he opened his eyes and he saw around the Syrians on the mountains chariots of fire surrounding them. That is, protecting them. That is, angelic armies protecting them.

So also in the days of Hezekiah, Hezekiah was surrounded by the Assyrians. And his response was to pray and ask God for deliverance. And God sent an angel of the Lord out one night and it smote 185,000 of the Assyrian troops.

And that was the end of that. That was the end of that siege. So, I mean, more than once we've seen that God has agents that are more than a match for the nations that come against Israel.

And in some cases, these are supernatural agents. They're angelic armies. And that could be what these craftsmen refer to.

These craftsmen are terrifying the horns. Now, there's another possible interpretation. It doesn't really matter which one is true.

But another alternative is that it's not talking about angelic but other human nations. Because whereas Assyria was one of the horns that scattered Israel, Babylon came and scattered Assyria. That is, defeated Assyria.

Persia came and defeated Babylon. Later on, Greece under Alexander would defeat Persia. Later, the Romans would defeat them.

So, each successive nation could be a craftsman that terrifies and scatters the previous horn. That is, what is a craftsman at one point becomes the next horn. But there's another craftsman afterwards that defeats it.

So, it could simply be saying those nations that are hurting you, they'll have their turn. They'll each have their own oppressor that will come and defeat them. Like I said, it really doesn't matter which of these is true because the basic message is the same.

And that is that God has these craftsmen and they are going to terrify the people who are terrifying you. Whether the craftsmen are angelic, whether they are the next empire that comes to defeat the previous empire is somewhat immaterial because, frankly, both may be true but that neither of them are at the core of what's being communicated. What's being communicated is, don't worry, I've got this under control.

I'm angry at the nations and as powerful as they seem like mighty horns scattering you, I've got something that'll terrify them. Which means, of course, that those horns that are defeating you or seeking to do so, they don't really have all the cards in their hand. They don't have the final say about things.

So it kind of builds on the previous vision which simply said God's aware and he's not at ease about this situation. The nations are at ease but God's not. He's angry.

And now we find that these nations that are troubling Israel, they themselves will be troubled due to God's turning of the tables on them. Now chapter 2 and it has only one of the visions in it. I particularly like this one.

In Zechariah 2 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? Now what's interesting about Zechariah is he asks questions. Ezekiel didn't ask questions and John in Revelation didn't ask questions.

Not usually. They were asked questions. Ezekiel said to, I mean the angel said to Ezekiel, Son of man, can these bones live? And Ezekiel said, Maybe you'd better tell me.

I think you know the answer to that. This is a trick question, right? I mean, he says, can

these bones live? Well they certainly don't look like it to me but I've got a reason to believe you're asking that question because I'm going to be surprised here. Maybe you should tell me whether these bones can live.

It's like the angel asked Ezekiel. Same thing, you know, when John saw this innumerable company in Revelation chapter 7 with the white robes and the palm branches and the elder, one of the elders said to John, who are these people, John? And just like Ezekiel, John said, I think you know that. You tell me.

And so the angel did. Zechariah initiates the questions. He sees the horses.

He says, what are these about? And now he sees a man running out and I said, where are you going? Zechariah kind of takes the initiative here. He doesn't wait for angels to initiate the conversation. He's curious.

He says, I'm going to take my opportunity here to get the information I want. So he says, where are you going? This man with the measuring line comes out. And the man said to me, to measure Jerusalem and see what its width and what is its length.

Now the measuring line would be, of course, to survey the boundaries of the city. What is the length? What is the width of the city? Now that's an important thing because this man is going to be interrupted. Verse 3, and there was the angel who talked with me going out and another angel was coming out 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 men and livestock in it.

For I, says the Lord, will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst. That's pretty much the end of the vision, but there's an oracle that follows that's still connected to it, we'll look at. But let's just say, what are we finding here? Well, there's a young man with a measuring line and he goes out and he says he's going to measure the boundaries of the city of Jerusalem.

So he goes out, but an angel comes out and tells the angel who's talking to Zechariah, Go chase that guy down and tell him don't do it. Don't measure Jerusalem, is basically what he's saying, because the city's going to be wall-less, borderless. Any measurement you make will be inaccurate because Jerusalem in the future is not going to be a walled city.

It's going to be a city without walls. I, the Lord, am going to be the wall of fire around it. Now here we find something very interesting because that's not actually true of the physical city of Jerusalem.

It did have walls. They did rebuild the walls in Nehemiah's day, and they had walls in the days of Jesus later on. So here we're talking about another Jerusalem, not earthly Jerusalem, but the spiritual Jerusalem.

It doesn't have physical walls, it has God as its walls. And this is not the only place in the Bible that speaks of such a thing. In fact, Isaiah, much earlier, had made essentially the same prediction.

In Isaiah chapter 60 and verse 18, it says, violence, he's speaking to Jerusalem, it says, violence will no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls salvation, and your gates praise. That is, God's salvation will be the walls of the spiritual Jerusalem. It doesn't need stone walls.

The church is the spiritual Jerusalem. It doesn't have stone walls around it. Its walls are God himself.

He's a wall of fire around the new Jerusalem. He is salvation. His deliverance is our defense.

Our gates are praise. We enter by praising God. We enter into his courts with praise.

The city is a spiritual city here described, not physical. Now, lest you think I'm playing fast and loose with the passage, look over in Hebrews chapter 11. In verse 13, these all died in faith, and in particular, these all refer to the previous verses referring to Abram, Isaac, and Jacob.

It says, Abram, Isaac, and Jacob all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were assured of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. This was actually Abraham's own statement when he was negotiating to buy the cave of Machpelah from the Hittites. He said, I'm a stranger and a pilgrim in this land.

And so, the writer of Hebrews says, they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Not permanent residents here. For those who say such things declare plainly that they are seeking a homeland.

And truly, if they had called to mind the country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. Verse 16, but now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to call them their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Now, a city, a country, a homeland. These are terms this passage uses, and it says, Abraham, although God promised him an earthly land, he was really looking for something beyond that. The real hope of Abraham was not a physical land, but a spiritual, heavenly land, a city that God had prepared.

Not made with human hands, but prepared by God. Now, there's more on this in Hebrews 12, the next chapter. In Hebrews 12, 18, the writer says, for you have not come to the mountain, meaning Mount Sinai, which may be touched and burned with fire, and

to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, so that no one who heard, excuse me, those who heard, begged that the words should not be spoken to them anymore.

So terrifying it was, even Moses said, I'm afraid and trembling, verse 21. But verse 22 says, but you have come to Mount Zion. These Christians are not coming to Mount Sinai to be put under the law again.

They've come to another mountain. They have come. This is something, when we became Christians, this is where we've come.

We have come, he says, 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 first born, who are registered in heaven. Notice, we have come to this entity, which he eventually calls the general assembly and church. The general church, the body of Christ is what we've come to.

He calls this the spiritual Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God. So the writer of Hebrews, along with other New Testament writers, sees the church as the true Jerusalem, as the new Jerusalem. Look over at Galatians 4, because this is what Zechariah and Isaiah and certain other Old Testament prophets mention.

When they said Jerusalem, they didn't always mean the earthly city of Jerusalem. They were looking at the Messianic age Jerusalem, which is the heavenly Jerusalem. In Galatians chapter 4, Paul is comparing the Old Covenant, or contrasting the Old Covenant with the New.

And the Old Covenant is that which identifies and defines the lives of those who are in the earthly Jerusalem. He says, for example, in verse 25, for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, that is the earthly physical Jerusalem. It had not yet been destroyed, as it would shortly after this, by the Romans.

Jerusalem was still standing, but not for much longer at the time this was written. The Mount Sinai and the bondage and the legalism and the law, that was associated with the earthly Jerusalem. The Jerusalem he says that now is, because when he wrote this it now was, in fact, and is in bondage with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. The Jerusalem above is not the Jerusalem that now is. There's two Jerusalems in the mind of the Apostles and in the mind of the Prophets.

Very important that we get this down now, because it's going to be important when we try to understand that difficult chapter 14 of Zechariah, which is going to tell us things about Zion and Jerusalem too. Sometimes referring to the Jerusalem that the writer of Hebrews says is the Jerusalem that now is, and other times referring to the Jerusalem

that's the mother of us all. The mother of us all, meaning the church.

You see, the church is the bride of Christ, and he brings forth his children through the church. That is through the body of Christ, the bride of Christ. And if you'll look over, if you would, at Revelation chapter 21.

I just want to get this settled before we come to later passages where I'm going to take this information for granted. Revelation 21-2, Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for a husband. Now we got some strange mixing of metaphors here.

A city dressed in a bridal gown? How do you dress a city in a bridal gown? Especially when you read the description of the city, which is like a cube 1,500 miles each dimension. What size is that for a bridal dress? Well, of course, this is not literal. This is spiritual.

This is symbolic, and it is mixing the identity of the city, new Jerusalem, with the bride of Christ. And it's done more clearly so in verse 9. Revelation 21-9, One of the seven angels, who had the seven horns filled with the seven last plagues, came to me and talked with me, saying, Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife. Well, there can hardly be any question who the Lamb's wife is.

The Lamb is Christ. Who's His bride? The church. And so He goes out to see the church, the bride of Christ.

And in verse 10 it says, He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and He showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. And we're already told in verse 2 that He was dressed like a bride. You see, there's no question but that the Jerusalem in Revelation 21 is the church, is the bride of Christ.

It's the Jerusalem that Paul said is the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all, or which the writer of Hebrews said is the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. The church is the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem. And, of course, Christ and His body and His kingdom are the ultimate fulfillment of what all the prophets anticipated.

And what we find in Zechariah, and not only there, but you'll find it in Isaiah, you'll find it in Jeremiah, you'll find it in many of the prophets, is that they'll be talking about Jerusalem. And initially they're talking about earthly Jerusalem, but when the vision carries them forward into the Messianic Age, Jerusalem suddenly is not the earthly Jerusalem anymore. The remnant of the Jews who are part of the earthly Jerusalem come into the kingdom of God as followers of Christ and become part of the heavenly Jerusalem.

And they become the ones who lead us to Christ, so they become the mother of us all.

The Jerusalem above initially was the faithful remnant of the Jerusalem below. Those in Jerusalem, the Jews who came to Christ became the church, became the Jerusalem which is now above.

And good thing it's above because the one below came under a terrible, crushing defeat from the Romans shortly afterwards, and only the Jerusalem above survived. But it did so because it has God as a wall of fire around it. And the church has survived every kind of attack from every kind of oppressor, every kind of persecution, through 2,000 years, the most powerful nations in the world and most powerful people in the world have sought to stamp it out, and they might as well be attacking a pyramid or the tack hammer as far as their success goes.

They're not going to put the church out because God is a wall of fire around it. Jerusalem's walls today are called salvation and gates are called praise according to Isaiah. And that's what Zechariah is talking about here.

He is talking to people in the old Jerusalem who are in the process of building the old Jerusalem. But his vision carries forward to the ultimate glory of Jerusalem when the faithful remnant of the later generation come into the Messiah and become the glorious new Jerusalem. And that's what's being said by the imagery of this vision.

A man is going out to measure Jerusalem. Well, that's exactly an appropriate thing to do in Zerubbabel's day because Zerubbabel is restoring the city with the exiles returning to build the physical city again. So they're going to measure it.

Of course, they're going to have boundaries. They're going to have walls even. But this gives occasion for God to communicate something about the ultimate further out identity of Jerusalem and the glory that God has in mind for Jerusalem, which will not be altogether unrelated to the earthly Jerusalem because it is the faithful remnant of the earthly Jerusalem that become the heavenly Jerusalem.

So he's not changing the subject. He's looking at the future of Jerusalem to the point where even though the earthly Jerusalem will come again under judgment, as it did under Babylon, so under Rome it will come again. But the Jerusalem that is above is free and will be untouched and will be glorified.

And so you don't want to send a man with a measuring line out to measure the new Jerusalem because it's going to be wall-less. You don't need to find boundaries. You better not anyway because you would not be able to anticipate its eventual size.

It's not going to be restricted to the size restrictions of the earthly Jerusalem. Look at Isaiah, a couple more passages related to this since Zechariah was not writing in a vacuum. He was not writing in a land that had lacked Isaiah's prophecies earlier.

He's using some of the same imagery Isaiah had used. Isaiah 26.1 says, In that day, this

song will be sung in the land of Judah. We have a strong city.

God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in. Notice it doesn't say the nation that keeps the law, the Torah, the nation that keeps the truth.

That's the church. We are a chosen generation of royal priesthood, a holy nation, Peter said, 1 Peter 2 9. We, the church, are a holy nation. Open those gates of this city because the righteous nation, the holy nation that keeps the truth, they're going to live here.

This is the new Jerusalem. This is the church of Jesus Christ, the bride of the Lamb. This is a glorious Jerusalem, not the earthly one.

It's the one that has God appointing for walls salvation. The same thing he said in chapter 60 in verse 18 about the walls of the city. But look at Isaiah 49 now.

Verses 19 through 23. This is speaking to Jerusalem, but again, looking beyond the days of the mere earthly Jerusalem. Remember, Abraham looked for a city and a land, a heavenly land, and God has prepared a city for him.

It's this spiritual Jerusalem. In Isaiah 49 23, it says, Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. They shall bow down to you with their faces to the ground, lick up the dust from your feet, and you will know that I am the Lord, for they shall not be ashamed who wait for me.

Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of the righteous be delivered? But thus says the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away. The prey of the terrible shall be delivered. For I will contend with him who contends with you.

I will save your children. I will feed those who oppress you with their flesh, their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

Now, essentially, this is language that sounds like God is talking about delivering them. And we want to look back earlier. Look at verse 19.

For your waste and desolate places, the land of your destruction will even now be too small for its inhabitants. Why? Because, we'll find, the inhabitants of the new Jerusalem will be too numerous to fit in the old Jerusalem. Why? Because Gentiles from all over the world are becoming the predominant population of the new Jerusalem.

He says there in verse 19, the land of your destruction, which is the natural Israel, which was destroyed by Babylon, will even now be too small for the inhabitants that are coming in the future. And he says, those who swallowed you up will be far away. The

children you will have after you've lost the others will say again in your ears, the place is too small for me.

Give me a place where I may dwell. Then you will say in your heart, who has begotten these for me? Since I have lost my children and am desolate, where did these children come from? I was a captive wandering to and fro, and who has brought these up? There I was left alone, but these, where were they? And he answers the question, thus says the Lord God, behold, I will lift up my hand in an oath to the Gentiles, the nations, and set up my standard for the peoples, and they shall bring your sons in their arms, and your daughters shall be carried in their shoulders, and so forth. So we see Jerusalem is being personified as a woman who's lost her children.

When did that happen? Well, it happened on one occasion when they were carried away to Babylon. Jerusalem was left without any of her children there. It happened again in 70 AD by the way, when the Romans carried them off, and it was desolated permanently.

It never was restored after that, but he says, even after your original children are taken away, God's going to surprise you with some new children that you weren't anticipating. And you say, where'd they come from? He's going to say, well, the Gentiles. I'm going to lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and I'm going to call them in.

And it's talking about the church, the new Jerusalem, being repopulated with the Gentiles who believe and who keep the truth and come in. Now, let me finish real quickly chapter 2 of Zechariah. Verse 6 now moves back to the time of Zechariah himself.

Jerusalem, which now is. There's been a brief vision in Oracle about what the future Jerusalem will be like, but now we're back to Zechariah's own time. Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the Lord, for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven, says the Lord.

That is when he sent them off into Babylon, they were scattered from the land. Up, Zion, escape you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. So there were still a lot of Jews who stayed in Babylon, didn't come back, and he's saying you should come back.

Jerusalem is waiting for you to come back, you who have been scattered to Babylon. For thus says the Lord of hosts, he sent me after the glory. This line I've looked up in about six different translations, none of them know what it means.

He sent me after the glory. It may mean that God, or Jesus, is sent in order to obtain God's glory, that is to glorify God. It's a very strange wording, but no matter how many translations you look at, they do different things with it, but they never make it sound extremely clear what it means.

But it seems to say that Jesus, or God, is going after his own glory. He's going to glorify himself, is another way of saying that. He says, he sent me after the glory to the nations

which plunder you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye.

Now we use the term apple of my eye to mean someone dear to us. She's the apple of my eye, means I only have eyes for her, I'm enamored with her, totally taken with her. She's the apple of my eye.

And so we think of the apple of the eye as something, maybe having some romantic or some special fondness attached to it, and no doubt God does have special fondness for Israel, but that's not the meaning of the phrase in the ancient Hebrew. The word the apple of the eye was simply the idiom for the pupil of the eye. A part of your eye, an actual part of your eye.

Your pupil. And you'll see if you have marginal notes, your Bible should tell you that. And if you look in modern translations, it usually will say the pupil.

This is not saying I'm just so fond of her, you better not touch her. Although that would be not an invalid thing for God to say. He's not saying that specific thing.

He says, you touch me, you're poking me in the eye. You're touching my eyeball when you touch Israel. And I'm going to not take what you, people don't take well to have their eyes poked, and God does neither.

You lay your finger on them, you might as well poke me in the eye. That's a very provocative thing you're doing. And you're going to get something back from me if you do that.

And that's what the apple of the eye is referring to. It's talking about you've poked me in the eye if you touch them. For surely I will shake my hand against them, and they shall become spoiled for their servants.

That's against the Babylonians. And they'll become spoiled for their servants. For one thing, Babylon had ruled over the Medes and the Persians.

But the Medes and the Persians rose up and conquered Babylon. So Babylon became the servants of her own servants. She was spoiled by those who had been under her previously.

So Babylon's going to fall and experience their own judgment after they had judged or been the agent of judgment of the Jews. He says, Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion.

For behold, I'm coming, and I will dwell in your midst, says the Lord. Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day. Now the expression, in that day, is very common in the prophets, and it doesn't always seem to refer to the same day.

It's just a phrase that says, in the day I'm thinking of right now, the day I'm seeing, I'm

picturing in my mind this day. And it's not always the same day, but very often it's the day or the age of the Messiah. And I believe in this case, it has that meaning.

Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day. Certainly, this would be true if it's the age of the Messiah, because Christ has come, and the Gentiles, many nations have been drawn to him. There's never been a time prior to the coming of Christ where many nations were drawn to Jerusalem.

And there's no reason to believe that this is forestalled until some eschatological event. It's been happening for 2,000 years. Nations, people from every nation have been drawn to God through the Messiah.

This is the age of the church. Nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become my people. And I will dwell in your midst.

Then, and of course the church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. He dwells among us. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

In other words, the prophet says, when this happens, you'll really know this was a word from the Lord. Of course, it wouldn't happen in their lifetime. But it happened to a later generation, and it does confirm to us, in retrospect, that Zechariah really was the real deal.

He really did receive and deliver the word of the Lord. And the Lord will take possession of Judah as his inheritance in the Holy Land and will again choose Jerusalem. Now, this passage, of course, sounds like it's talking about some future for Israel.

But remember, Jerusalem, in this prophecy, ultimately is a reference to the church. This is a spiritual land. Remember, Abraham was looking for a heavenly country.

The language of the earthly country and the earthly city is frequently used, but referring to the antitype, the spiritual. And you'll find this is often true. For example, in Isaiah 28, 16, it says, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a precious cornerstone.

Well, where's this foundation laid? It's in Zion. It's the foundation of Jerusalem. Zion is literally the mountain of Zion and the city of Jerusalem.

And yet, the foundation stone is Jesus. He's not the foundation of the city of Jerusalem. He's the foundation of the church.

No other foundation can lay than that which is laid, Paul said, which is Jesus. Jesus is the foundation stone of the church, yet it's called Zion in Isaiah 28, 16. So, in the prophets, it's frequently the case, and the New Testament writers identify it as such, that prophecy is about Zion, about Israel, about the Holy Land, about Judah, about Jerusalem.

These are all references which the Jews, of course, and those who whom God has not

opened their understanding like he did the apostles to understand the scriptures, they would just take this in the natural sense. And that's apparently what dispensationalists do. They take all this in the natural sense.

This is talking about a future for the nation of Israel. The apostles didn't think so. The apostles thought it was fulfilled spiritually in the spiritual Jerusalem.

And he says, Be silent all flesh before the Lord, for he is aroused from his holy habitation. So, this passage, unlike the previous two visions, the previous two visions say God knows what's happening, God's angry at what's happening, and he's got the workmen who are going to come and terrify these horns that bother you. And now he's making a positive statement about Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is going to be growing in ways you cannot anticipate. Even the Jews cannot anticipate the Gentiles are coming. Where did these children come from? I didn't have these children before.

My regular children are gone. But look who these are. They've been replaced here.

Like a replacement theology. My old children are gone. Where did these ones come from? Oh, they came from the nations, from the Gentiles.

That's the new Jerusalem. That's the spiritual Jerusalem. And this prophecy, therefore, speaks of God going beyond the restoration project that Zerubbabel and Joshua were currently engaged in, in which Zechariah and Haggai were encouraging, and saying, you know, you've got to lift your eyes to see a bigger vision than that.

And Haggai, Zechariah's contemporary prophet, said something similar. He was talking about the house of the Lord that Zerubbabel built, and he said, I'm going to glorify this house more than the former house. And, of course, he's talking about not so much Zerubbabel's temple becoming more glorious than Solomon's temple.

That never happened. But rather that the house that Zerubbabel was building was a type and a shadow of the house of God, which is the church built on the foundation of Christ, which is more glorious than anything Solomon ever built. You see, all these things built in the Old Testament were temporary, and they were built as a type and a shadow of things that are not temporary.

Things that are permanent. And that's why Paul said, don't let anyone judge you about whether you're keeping these laws of meat and drink and festivals. These are a shadow, he said.

The substance is Christ. Christ is the fulfillment of all these shadows. And lots of times the prophets don't indicate that they're talking about shadows, or that they're talking about the substance.

They just use the language that applies to both, and it's up to the New Testament writers to identify for us what they meant in which cases. And we do find them doing that. So, in these first three visions, we see encouragement to the Jews of his time, and we'll see five more visions in the next few chapters as well, but it's time for us to quit.