

OpenTheo

Zechariah 5 - 6



Zechariah - Steve Gregg

Zechariah 5-6 features five visions that communicate God's involvement in the affairs of Israel and the nations. In this message, Steve Gregg explains that these visions include rebuking Satan, announcing the removal of iniquity from the high priest, and warning against sin and covenant violation. Gregg also discusses the merging of the offices of king and priest and how this points to Christ as the perpetual king and priest. Finally, he notes that the physical temple serves as a shadow of something greater, and that Christians are now the living temple of the Lord.

Transcript

We have looked at five visions in the beginning of Zechariah. These have taken the first four chapters, which means that one of the chapters had two visions, and then three of them have had three, and so we've got four out of eight visions. The remaining four visions are shorter.

I have reason to hope that we can cover them fairly quickly without doing any injustice to them. In many cases, the thoughts that are behind these visions, what is being said, is not hard to grasp. I won't tell you how many chapters I'm hoping to get through tonight, because I rarely, I almost always jinx myself when I say I hope to get through this many chapters.

Usually it means I get through half as many, so I'll just keep that to myself as to how far I hope to get tonight, and maybe we will. But we're now in chapter five, and the sixth vision begins. There will be two short visions in this chapter, the sixth and the seventh in the series.

He says, Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he said to me, What do you see? So I answered, I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits, and its width is ten cubits.

Then he said to me, This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth. Every thief shall be expelled according to what is on this side of the scroll, and every perjurer shall be expelled according to what is on that side of it. I will send out the curse,

says the Lord of hosts.

It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it with its timber and stones. And it just occurred to me I should read this second vision too, because there will be some comparisons to make between them before I make comments on the first one.

So we now come to the seventh vision. Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, Lift your eyes now and see what this is that goes forth. And I asked, What is it? And he said, It's a basket.

Literally, it is an ephah in the Hebrew. It is a basket whose size was an ephah. An ephah was a dry measure of volume.

We'll talk about that later on. It is a basket that is going forth. He also said, This is the resemblance throughout the earth.

Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket. Then he said, This is wickedness. And he thrust her down into the basket and threw the lead cover over the mouth of the basket.

Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women coming with the wind in their wings, for they had wings like the wings of a stork. And they lifted up the basket between the earth and heaven. And I said to the angel who talked with me, Where are they carrying the basket? And he said to me, To build a house for it in the land of Shinar.

When it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base. Now, the reason I decided to read both of these before commenting is because they have something in common that was not brought out in the earlier visions. Do you remember the earlier visions? The first one was simply of some horses among the myrtle trees, which were said to be patrols, who apparently are reconnaissance surveyors, patrols, getting information throughout the whole earth and bringing it back, reporting to the angel of the Lord, conveying the idea that God has intelligence network throughout the entire world.

He knows what's going on. And at that time it was said that God's not pleased with the fact that the nations which were hostile to Israel were themselves at rest and at ease, whereas Israel was not yet at ease. So the first vision basically communicates to Judah, Israel, that God is aware that things have not turned out real well for them yet, that things seem to be going better for their enemies than for them.

But God is not happy about this, and if God is not happy about something, it can't stay the same for very long. It is implied. In the second vision, which was also in the same chapter, chapter one, there were four horns representing those powers that afflicted and scattered Israel, and there were four craftsmen or smiths that came and terrified those horns, which I said were either angelic powers or else maybe new political powers

coming in to conquer the previous ones.

In any case, the horns that were bothering Israel were short-lived themselves. They were not permanent. They would each have their own day to be terrified, to fall, and so forth.

And therefore, those nations that seemed to be at rest and happy and doing well, they will have their time also to be terrified by those forces that God will bring against them. And then in chapter two, there was this man who had a measuring line running out to measure Jerusalem, but he was told Jerusalem is going to be a wall-less city. No sense trying to measure its boundaries.

There will be no boundaries. It won't have actual walls defining its circumference. It's going to be a city without walls.

God himself will be the walls of this city, and this is obviously referring to the fact that God would eventually establish a new Jerusalem that was spiritual. Obviously, if it has walls that are salvation and walls that are God, then it's a spiritual city having spiritual defenses. And therefore, the rebuilding of Jerusalem that was taking place at the time of this book being written was only a type and a shadow of an ultimate destiny for Jerusalem, which we'll have more to say about as we go further on.

And then in the third chapter, we have the fourth vision, and there it was the high priest Joshua was seen wearing filthy clothing, Satan standing there accusing him. God rebukes Satan, changes the high priest's clothing, announces that he's taken away the iniquity of the high priest. And in the course of explaining this before the end of chapter three, he points out that there will be another time of God removing iniquity.

He's going to remove the iniquity from the land in a single day through another who will be called the branch. And we're going to encounter the branch again before we finish chapter six, because the branch, I believe, is a messianic title. And so we have this business here with the high priest Joshua representing the people is cleansed of his bad clothing and given better clothing, made more presentable to God.

And this represents God having made Israel more presentable. They had recently suffered very publicly in the Babylonian exile for their sins. They were mindful of their guilt, but God was wanting them to be mindful of the fact that that was then, this is now.

I've changed your clothes, I've taken away your iniquity, let's go on with it and not wallow in the guilt of the past. I'm giving you a new start here. And speaking of new starts, God's going to give the world a new start someday by sending the Messiah who will cleanse the world of its iniquity as well.

And then in chapter four, as the previous vision had been an encouragement to Joshua, chapter four is an encouragement to Zerubbabel, the other national leader. He had the task of restoring this discouraged batch of returned exiles and shaping them into a

community that would have tenacity and could survive the troubles they were facing. And build the temple and do all these things that were difficult under low budget and with low manpower and all kinds of other challenges.

It's as if there was a great mountain before this man and God's announcement is I'm going to remove that mountain or it's going to be as if it was a plane because my spirit is going to empower you. This was depicted by seeing a lamp with seven lamps, a golden lamp stand like the one in the temple and two olive trees with pipes running directly from the trees to the lamp signifying that the olive oil necessary to keep the lamp burning was being supplied directly, incessantly, directly from the source, the trees, the olive trees that produce the oil. And these olive trees are said to be, in the final verse of chapter four, the two sons of oil or the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord.

And clearly, if they are the ones through whom the oil or the Holy Spirit is being supplied to the project of keeping the testimony of Israel burning, the lamp burning, they must be somebody who was in some ministering in some spiritual way, the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the community. And I suggested that while most commentators agree in identifying these two olive trees as Joshua and Zerubbabel, it seems to my mind, perhaps more likely, it's referring to the two anointed prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, through whom the Holy Spirit was ministering encouragement to the community. In any case, the announcement was included that as Zerubbabel had started the project, he would see it to its finish.

He would put the capstone on the building when it was done. He had laid the foundation. He's going to be on the roof with holding the plumb line to see if the walls are plumb after the thing is already standing.

So the encouragement to Zerubbabel is as difficult and overwhelming as his responsibilities may seem at the present time. God is going to make sure that this is done. It will not be through the limited resources, might or power of Zerubbabel or Israel at all.

It'll be through the spirit of God. This is God's project and God's going to sustain it. And so both Joshua, the priest who carries the sins of the people into the Holy of Holies as a general career assignment, is encouraged to know that God has forgiven the people.

And Zerubbabel, whose job it is to provide civil leadership in the community, is told that the obstacles he faces are going to be removed supernaturally by God, or at least he'll be sustained until they are overcome by the spirit of God, which is at that time being supplied through the encouraging words of the prophets and the spirit of God. So that's what we have behind us. Now these two visions are about something that none of those visions were, and it has to do with the role of sin in the community of the returned exiles.

Now we saw when Joshua was reclothed that God had taken away their iniquity, but that

is suggesting their past sins. They are now a new, renewed community of God, and they are expected to live like it now. They did go into captivity because they never really did live like that.

They never really did obey God. They did tolerate sin. They were compromisers.

They were unfaithful to God. They were filthy before God. Now he's giving them a fresh start, taking away the filthy clothes.

Let's give you some good clothes. Don't get these so dirty. And so he's talking now about the role of sin in the future of this community.

Now the two visions each have something individually to say about that subject. One, the first one has to do with the intolerance of sin on an individual basis. The person who violates God's law is going to come under God's curse.

The second one has to do with the fact that iniquity is going to be removed this way from the community and sent back where it came from. Now remember when Israel came out of Egypt, God got them out of Egypt, but he didn't get Egypt out of them. They brought with them an adoration for golden calves and such things as the Egyptians worship.

God got them physically out of Egypt, but Egypt was still in their heart. Now he's gotten them physically out of Babylon, something quite parallel. The real question now is, is Babylon still in their heart? Have they brought with them the sinful attitudes and compromises in their hearts that Ezekiel was told they had? Remember when Ezekiel received the message that God said to him about the exiles that were with him in Babylon? Because he was in exile in Babylon, his friends were there.

And God said, these people have set up idols in their hearts. Now they weren't worshipping idols outwardly in Babylon, they were cured of that by the captivity, but they still had their hearts unchanged. There was still idolatry there.

Now there's the real possibility that the exiles who've come back from Babylon may have brought some of those idols in their hearts. Babylon may be coming with them back to Jerusalem. And so what we have here is two pictures.

One is that the communities, the households that are there among the returned exiles in Jerusalem are going to be, there's going to be enforcement of obedience. And the second thing is that iniquity as a whole has got to be carried away and a good place to take it is Babylon. That's its natural home anyway.

You know, the Babylonians, they're wicked people. That's the iniquity that may have come back to the community has got to be carried away, represented by a woman in a basket being carried by two women who have stork wings. Now, the first of these talks about a scroll.

The scroll is quite huge. In fact, it's about the size of a billboard up in the sky. It's 20 cubits, would be 30 feet long.

That'd be like 10 meters approximately long. The size of it is irrelevant, except that it's an enormous thing. Like this is a big sign.

God's writing it in neon, so no one should be able to miss it. No one could say, I didn't see the sign. I didn't get the memo.

You see, it's, it's this huge scroll and on it, it's got written curses on both sides. Now, specifically, there's two particular sins that are named that are related to this scroll. It says in verse three, at the end of verse three, on this side of the scroll, every thief is going to be expelled or cursed or whatever.

And then the latter part of verse three, it says, and every perjurer shall be expelled. Also, that's according to the other side. Apparently, we're to understand the scroll has curses on one side written against thieves and on the other side, curses written against perjurers.

Now, why thieves and perjurers? This also is confirmed in verse four. He says, I will send out a curse, says the Lord of hosts. It shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely.

That's perjury. So these two sins are named. Why these ones? The great sin that Israel was always, um, you know, guilty of in the past.

And the very reason they went into Babylon was, was not thievery or perjury per se, but idolatry. Idolatry was the great offense, but they weren't doing that anymore. They weren't making statues anymore.

And they never did again. After we went to Babylon, they were permanently cured of outward idolatry. Furthermore, there are many crimes worse than thievery.

Not that thievery isn't, isn't bad, but thievery is only hurting people's property. Murdering somebody or committing adultery is much more harmful than taking someone's property. So why name sins that don't, are not the greatest sins? Why not name idolatry, murder, adultery? All these things were practiced in the Jewish community prior to the Babylonian exile.

Why not name them? Why, why stealing somebody's goods or swearing falsely, which is essentially just lying. Lying isn't a small matter. Neither is thievery, but there are certainly crimes that can be seen to be more heinous.

And yet these ones are named. I think it may well be simply this, that despite the fact that Israel had foresworn idolatry and were done with that, there weren't going to be

idols appearing anymore in the new community in Jerusalem. And maybe even the bigger sins like murder and adultery would be rare.

Maybe they wouldn't exist at all anymore. But lesser sins, infractions of the law that are not small, but are not the greatest either, are the ones that are mentioned. God's going to be upholding a standard that requires more than just that they abstain from idols.

Remember I said about the kings of Israel that they were usually considered good kings despite their bad deeds. David himself is considered to be the paragon of a good king who all the other good kings were compared to. Their heart followed the Lord completely, as did David.

Or this man's heart was not holy, like David his father's was. I mean David is like the standard of a good king. But David committed murder and adultery.

He just never was an idolater. He never worshipped any other god. When he committed murder and adultery, he returned to God and not to some other deity.

And therefore, what I'm saying is in times before the captivity, it was almost enough to be called a decent person as long as you didn't commit idolatry. Even if you did some really other bad things, God would like perfection, but he can overlook some things as long as you're still being essentially faithful to him personally as opposed to some other deity. That's not true anymore.

The Israelites will not worship idols, but he's not going to tolerate even lesser sins. Theft, perjury, the kinds of things that frankly happen in small ways very frequently. Whenever someone makes an oath and says I'll do such and such a thing and then kind of reneges on it.

Whenever someone cheats somebody else a little bit out of some of the money in a transaction or something like this, this is theft and perjury. And he says this is not going to be tolerated. The bar is being raised higher now.

I can expect more of you. You've been purged of your sins. You've been forgiven of those sins.

You're not ignorant. You're not naive. You've just spent 70 years paying the penalty for your sins.

I'm expecting a high standard now. And this scroll is full of curses that will go to these sins like these. And it's not only these two.

No doubt these two sins are chosen and most commentators would agree with this because they represent the two tablets of the covenant in the Ten Commandments. The first tablet is understood to be sins against God. The second sins against man as well as

God.

The first tablet, you know, don't have other gods before God. Don't take the name of the Lord in vain. Honor the Sabbath and so forth are sins that would affect God directly and only God.

Others like honoring your parents or murdering, stealing, committing adultery, these others affect, they're also sins against God but against man. The two tablets of stone are often represented as having two aspects. One is you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength and the other is you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Well, these two sins, perjury and theft, are representative of those two because perjury in Israel means you swore by God but you lied. You took his name in vain. That's a violation of the Third Commandment on the first tablet of the stone.

Theft is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments on the other tablet of stone. In neither case are they the highest ranking commandments of their category but they are in both categories. The whole law, even its lesser heinous crimes are not to be tolerated and this scroll is going into the house of those who commit these crimes as those who are in the Jewish community that has returned to and they're going to, you know, there's going to be enforcement.

God is going to curse them if they don't uphold the law in a much better way than they did before. And so there's like a zero tolerance policy towards sin that he's announcing. And it's interesting because he says at the end of verse 4, the person who does those things, this curse will go into their house and remain in the midst of the man's house and consume it with its timber and stones.

The reference to consuming the house with timber and stones is a reference back to Leviticus, interestingly enough, chapter 14, which is part of the law about leprosy. And when you study Leviticus and you read about leprosy, of course, the original laws are how the leper, the person who has leprosy is to be ostracized, put out away from society unless and until such a time as their leprosy can be shown to be no longer there. But to our surprise, when we read Leviticus 14, after it's given certain scenarios of people having leprosy, it goes on to talk about the house having leprosy, which is really strange.

And of course, houses don't have leprosy. So the leprosy is being used somewhat of a general term for most people think mold or some other kind of outbreak of some unhealthy growth on the walls. And there are laws in Leviticus 14 about how to deal with that.

You wash it off, scrape it off. You remove the stones and the plaster that where the problem is. You put in fresh stones, fresh plaster.

If it doesn't come back, it's all good. If it does come back, you got to do something

worse. You got to tear the whole house down.

And here's how it's worded in Leviticus 14, verse 43. It says, and if the plague comes back and breaks out in the house after he has taken away the stones, after he has scraped the house and after it has been replastered, then the priest shall come and look. And if indeed, indeed, if the plague has spread in the house, it is an active leprosy and the house is unclean and he shall break down the house.

It stones, it's timber and all the plaster of the house and he shall carry them outside the city to an unclean place. Now, what's interesting about this is in the symbolism of the law, I believe this house that has leprosy, I mean, would literally be applied to any house that has some kind of mold or something like that, that they can't get rid of. But it's symbolic, I believe, of the house of Israel and leprosy is symbolic of sin.

There's very little reason to question that sin in the Old Testament is a ceremonial representation. I mean, leprosy is a ceremonial representation of sin. The healing of Naaman the Syrian of leprosy through baptism, dipping three times in the Jordan and coming up like a new man with baby skin, like being born again.

The whole story seems to speak of spiritual rebirth and cleansing from sin and so forth. So, it's like Zechariah alludes to what happens to a house when leprosy breaks out again after it's been cleansed, after it's had new stones. You've taken away bad stones, you replace them with good stones.

It has every reason to have a new start, but if the leprosy breaks out again, it's the end for that house. You tear it down the house, stones and timber, and they get hauled off to an unclean place. I believe that what he's saying here is if sin breaks out in this community again, after God has taken away the old stones, they've gone into Babylon, he's taken away the sinners, he's punished them, he's scrubbed it up, he's put a new garment on Joshua the high priest, they've got a new start.

If this kind of sin breaks out again, then he's going to have to declare it unclean and tear it down. The house is going to go down, stones and timber, carried off into an unclean place. Now I personally think that what he's saying is as you went to an unclean place 70 years ago, namely Babylon, Israel can go back into an unclean place if the plague of sin breaks out in the house of Israel again.

And so there needs to be zero tolerance policy for sin because if it breaks out again, God's not going to give you another trial separation. It's going to be the end. The house is coming down.

And of course, that's what we find to be the case in later generations as Jesus comes and Israel is in sin again. Not the same sins, they haven't actually gone back to idolatry and maybe even not so much murder and adultery as at other times, but violation of the law

nonetheless, disrespect for God and for their fellow man. Jesus comes and said, listen, you need to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

You need to love your neighbors yourself and they're not listening. And so what happens? The house gets torn down. When the Romans come, they dismantle even the temple itself, every stone, not one stone left standing on another.

And the nation, the house of Israel is carried away into the unclean world and there they remain for the most part to this day. And so I believe this vision is saying you have gone into an unclean place as a judgment of God upon you in the past. This scroll is my declaration that it'll happen again.

If your houses begin to tolerate sinful behavior and covenant violation and violation of my laws again. And so then in this other picture, which has the woman in the basket, the basket is specifically in Hebrew said to be an ephah. An ephah is not really very big.

An ephah is a unit of dry measure, usually a grain or something like that. Like we would say a bushel, although it's not the same as a bushel, it's about half a bushel or it's about five gallons by American measures. 22 liters metrically, but five gallons.

How many of you ever had a fish tank that was a five gallon tank? Pretty small. You know, if you ever had a aquarium and you couldn't afford one of those nice big tanks, you know, you got a five gallon tank. That's not very big or five gallons of milk.

Put them all together. That's not a very big basket and it's got a woman, a live woman in it. So you've got to be a pretty small woman.

It's obvious that this is kind of a ridiculous image. And there's a lead disc as a cover on this basket. And he sees the basket first and then the disc is lifted to let him see what's in there.

So it's this little woman. And so now this woman, that's wickedness. Their lid goes back on.

Wickedness is in this basket. And then these two other women with stork-like wings come and take it away. And Zechariah says, where is it going? He says, they're going to Babylon.

And you know what? Just as I will tear down any house in Jerusalem that succumbs to sin again. This wickedness is going to have a house built for it in Babylon. God's not going to be holding that same standard for Babylon as he does for Jerusalem.

Go ahead and build a house for wickedness in Babylon. That's where its home is. That's where it comes from.

That's where it belongs. Babylon is not under God's discipline because they're not his

chosen people. Jerusalem is.

He'll build a house for wickedness as it were in Babylon. Let it live there, not here. Let it be carried away from here back to where it came from and let it live there permanently.

Build it a house, but the houses here are torn down if there's that kind of compromise. And so I think these two visions are addressing the issue of God's attitude towards sin in the new community. In the vision of Joshua's clothing being changed, it's clear that God was showing great mercy toward their past sins.

But he's talking about the future now. Okay, you've got a fresh start. And let's not ruin it again.

Let's not make the same mistakes again because there will be the same kind of punishment again. Let the iniquity go where it belongs. Let it be in Babylon.

Here, our houses have to remain obedient to God. We have to keep the law and not think that we can just kind of slip back into this kind of compromise that led to our exile before. If so, I believe there will be another exile.

And that's easy for me to say in hindsight because we can see that there actually was. In 70 AD, there was another exile like the one in Babylon, except it wasn't 70 years. It's been 2000 years now.

It's looking pretty permanent. It looks like the Babylonian exile was a shot over the bow, a warning shot. You know, this is what could happen to you.

Surrender now and do the right thing or else the next one's going right into the ship and it's going to sink. And so it's like a trial separation. God had with the Babylonian exile, but there'll be a permanent divorce.

If this behavior re-emerges like cancer or like a leprosy in the house of Israel. All right, then we have one more vision and that's in chapter 6. And it only occupies about half of chapter 6, but says, Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains. And the mountains were mountains of bronze.

Now, this is the kind of thing where I mentioned that, you know, when you read these descriptions, you're tempted to look for meaning in everything. Bronze, why are the mountains bronze? What does that signify? What do the color of the horses signify? What does the number of horses signify? I got a feeling, although there may be deep, deep, deep meanings I've never dreamed of. My understanding of the function of these visions is that they don't signify anything.

He's just describing what he saw. Why they were bronze, we don't know, but that's what

they were. So he describes them, but not meaning to say, and you look for a hidden meaning in this bronze business stuff.

That's the temptation with these kinds of things. There's a bunch of detail that is just stage props and can distract you from what's the basic thing that's being communicated here. And he says, with the first chariot were red horses, the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses.

Dappled would be gray with spots of some other color than gray. Strong steeds. Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, what are these, my Lord? And the angel answered and said to me, these are four spirits of heaven.

Now the word spirits, Ruach in Hebrew can mean winds. So it could be the four winds, but it needn't be. But there are four winds, the east wind, the west wind, the north wind and the south wind.

And it could be referring to them because the winds and the four winds in particular are in the book of Revelation, representative of those winds of judgment that blow. Revelation 7, 1 and following it talks about how John said he saw that the angels at the four winds were told to not blow the wind and don't hurt any tree or grass until he sealed the servants of God on their foreheads. Before you let loose with the judgment, which is represented by the four winds being unleashed and the spirits or the angels at the four winds, God's got to identify those that he's protecting first.

So Revelation has this image also of the four winds or the four spirits, or in Revelation 7 it's usually translated the four angels of the four winds. But the idea here is the four is the compass points. And in any case, these chariots, they are the spirits of the four spirits of the four winds who go out from their station before the Lord of all the earth.

Now in Revelation, those four winds, when released, bring God's judgment. These are those four winds and therefore they are apparently God's judgment. That's why they are chariots and not mere horses.

We saw horses in the first vision, they were just information gathering. They were just patrols. Now they reappear, although it's not the same horses necessarily because the colors don't correspond exactly with those in chapter one, but nonetheless we see horses again.

And these times they're attached to chariots, which is always a war vehicle. Chariots weren't just for joyriding. They probably had wagons or something for something like that, for pleasure riding.

But chariots were specifically a military vehicle. And so the horses attached to chariots means God's, okay, he's done gathering information. He's dispatching the troops.

And what was he upset about? He was upset in chapter one about the fact that the nations who oppressed Israel were at ease. And God was not at ease. He was very angry at them.

Well, this is going to change as we shall see. It says these are the four winds, God's agents of judgment, being sent out to all the earth. He says the one with the black horses is going to the north country.

The white are going after them and the dappled are going toward the south country. Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. Now it's not entirely clear how many horses and chariots we're talking about here.

We're told a certain number of colors, but we're not told exactly how many horses there were or chariots. I'm sorry, there were four, but we're not told how many went to specific places. One apparently went north, the black.

The white ones followed, so it seems like two chariots went one direction. Another went south. And then the other one seemed to go to and fro, presumably east and west.

There's like they're going all these different directions. But the ones going north are the significant ones. It says, then the strong steeds went out eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth.

And he said, go, walk to and fro throughout the earth. So they walked to and fro throughout the earth. And he called to me and spoke to me saying, see, those who go toward the north country, and that was the black horses and followed by the white ones, have given rest to my spirit in the north country.

So you see, in the first vision, God's spirit was not at rest. He was very angry. The nations were at rest.

Well, now there's a turning of the tables. God's going to relieve his anger by taking away the north country's tranquility. As long as the wicked are at ease, God is ill at ease.

Because there's always some kind of an injustice that has to be redressed, and he's ill at ease until it's done. He's going to ease his spirit by sending out these judgments to the north country. Now, the north country is typically a reference to where the invaders came from Babylon initially, and that nation had now succumbed to Persia, but it was still the same region in general.

To a certain extent, they could be referred to as east, because they were north and east, perhaps more east than north. But the point here is that when invaders came to Israel, they rarely came directly from the east, even if that's the direction they came from, because the Jordan River was an effective barrier to ancient limited technologies. Today,

we'd have amphibious craft or just airplanes or something to get over them.

But old armies with horses and chariots and things like that found crossing rivers to be somewhat inconvenient. And a river was a natural barrier to invasion. And the eastern border of Israel was the Jordan River from north to south.

But above the headwaters of the Jordan, there was nothing to stop invaders. So even if the invaders came largely from the east, they came up northward and then came down from the north into the country. So they were always regarded to be the northern invaders, regardless where their home was.

And it seems to be saying here that those nations that have oppressed Israel historically, that have been currently not bothered, you know, they're prospering, they're at rest, they're now going to have their turn. Remember those craftsmen that frightened the horns. There was some implication this was going to happen, beginning with simply God acknowledging that he knew about it in the first vision.

And then the horns and the craftsmen suggest he has the capacity to do something about it. And now we see he is doing something about it. So the full cycle is here.

First we just see horsemen that are gathering information. Now there are horsemen pulling chariots, horses pulling chariots to settle the score, as it were. Now how this actually was fulfilled, I'm not 100% sure.

It might not even be saying that this is happening really literally right now. After all, all the visions happened in one night. It's not likely that by the time he had the eighth vision, that the destruction of the nations was any more than a few hours closer than when he had the first vision.

It's a whole cycle communicating God's involvement in the affairs of Israel and of the nations. Beginning with his assuring them that he is quite aware of things and that he is quite capable of addressing them. And finally, with the fact that he intends to judge them.

Whether he is going to do it at this point in time or some other time is not the relevant point. The relevant point is that God is sovereign over the affairs of the nations and Israel is very much in his sights and his attention is upon them. He knows their plight.

He is on their side. And therefore their enemies cannot hope to go along without suffering judgment from him. Now that's the end of the series of visions.

But chapter 6 has something more. And that is the one acted parable in the book of Zechariah. And this also involves Joshua in a sense and also involves the branch.

In this case Joshua is not going to be representative of the nation, but representative of

Christ. Because Joshua is the high priest, well the high priest did represent the nation in one sense, but because Christ is the ultimate high priest, the Jewish high priest was a type in a shadow of him as well. And that's how he functions in this particular case.

It says, And it says, But they still felt some kind of responsibility to help support what was going on there in Jerusalem. So they sent a gift, silver and gold and such. And these men were the carriers of that gift from the exiles to the city of Jerusalem to help support what's going on there.

And Zechariah is told to take that, the silver and the gold that they brought, and make an elaborate crown and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Then speak to him saying, Actually literally in Hebrew it should say will sprout up, but plain on the word branch, I guess the new King James wanted to say branch out. And the council of peace shall be between them both, presumably between the throne and the priesthood.

There will be sort of emerging a reconciliation of two offices that could never be reconciled in one person previously, because under the Jewish law, the priesthood had to be a Levite representative, and the king, a son of David, had to be a Judahite, a member of the tribe of Judah. So a man who was a Judahite could be king, but he couldn't be priest. A man who was a Levite could be priest, but he couldn't be king.

You wouldn't have the merging of these offices. But there will be a reconciliation of these two offices in one man. There will be a priest on the throne.

The throne is where kings sit, and a priest is not usually sitting there. Now this priest on the throne is the branch, Jesus, who is both king and priest. The offices of king and priest are merged in one man in Christ, and no other place.

There is no other possible fulfillment of this, but in Christ. Now Christ is a king. He is of the tribe of Judah, descended from David.

But how is it that he is a priest? How do we overcome the problem there? It has to be a Levite. Well, in the New Covenant, the writer of Hebrews argues in Hebrews 7, that Jesus is indeed a priest, but not of the old order, because the law has been changed, and therefore the priesthood ordained by the law is defunct, and a new priesthood has replaced it. It is a priesthood not of the order of Aaron, but of the order of Melchizedek.

And the writer of Hebrews can actually cite Scripture for that, from the Old Testament. Psalm 110, verse 4, speaking to the Messiah, says, You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Now the order of Melchizedek is entirely unrelated to Aaron and the Levites.

So if the Messiah is a priest of the order of Melchizedek, he obviously is not a Levite. And he does not have to be. What the writer of Hebrews points out is that the Scripture itself

predicted the end of the Levitical priesthood, and its replacement by a kind of priesthood that would be forever, which the Levites' priesthood is not forever.

And so Jesus doesn't have to be a Levite to be of the priesthood of the order of Melchizedek. And so he is a king and a priest, as no other person in Israel ever had the opportunity to be legitimately. Now the acted parable is simply this, that there are two things Zechariah is supposed to do.

He's supposed to go to these men's house, because that's where the gifts were brought to Josiah. And he's supposed to take at least some of the silver and gold, perhaps not all of it, and make a crown out of it, a royal-looking crown. And then ceremonially place it on the head of Joshua, the priest.

Now this was not like, for example, when Samuel the prophet anointed David, and David actually became the king. This is not a real coronation. This is not turning Joshua into a king.

It's an emblem representing the fact that he, as a priest, is a type of Christ who will be a priest. And having a crown ceremonially placed on his head, which was only temporary, not permanent, was simply to argue that the priesthood would also be the kingship, the crown. There would be a priest on the throne.

It also says in verse 12, he'll build the temple of the Lord. You might remember in 2 Samuel 7, when David wanted to build the temple, Nathan the prophet came to him, I guess it was, and said, no, that's not going to happen, but you'll have a son who God will establish his kingdom forever, and he will build a house to the Lord. Now, in a sense, Solomon was the fulfillment of that.

He was David's son who ruled, had a kingdom, and he did build a house to the Lord, he built the temple. But there are elements in the prophecy of Nathan that are quoted in the New Testament as being about Christ. For example, when Nathan said, God says I will be to him a father, and he will be to me a son.

That's part of the prophecy Nathan gave to David about his son who would build the house of the Lord. Hebrews 1.5 quotes that. It says that's about Jesus.

So Solomon, a son of David who sat on his throne and built the temple, is a type and a shadow of Christ, also a son of David, who would sit on the throne and also build a temple, the temple of the Holy Spirit, of course, which is made of us. Jesus said, upon this rock I will build my church, and the church is a temple, the temple of the Holy Spirit, made of living stones. It is a different kind of temple, but he's building the house of the Lord.

Ephesians 2 says that, that we are built, we Christians are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole

building grows into a holy temple in the Lord and a habitation of God through the Spirit, Paul said, in the closing verses of Ephesians 2. And there are other references, of course. 1 Peter 2.5 mentions that we are living stones built into a spiritual house, a temple, 1 Peter 2.5. So Jesus is building a temple, building a house of the Lord. He is reigning on the throne of David.

This prophecy about the branch is about him. And the mixture of the priesthood and the kingship also is perhaps hinted at, though not clarified, in a pre-exilic prophet, Jeremiah, which also is a prophecy about the branch. In Jeremiah 33, which is one of two places where Jeremiah speaks of the Messiah as the branch, Jeremiah 33, in verse 15, and read beyond, Jeremiah said, In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a branch of righteousness.

He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called.

In Jeremiah 23, it says he, the branch, we call this. So there may be a textual problem here, but the name is Yahweh Tzidkanu, the Lord, our righteousness. And then it says, For thus says the Lord God, David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel, nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before me, to kindle grain offerings and to sacrifice continually.

Now, what's interesting here is in the context of a reference to Christ, the branch, the Messiah, it says David will have a perpetual king and there will be a perpetual priest. Now, true, it does say the priests will be perpetually of the tribe of Levi, and Jesus is not. However, there's scriptures that account for that being changed.

For one thing, if you look at 1 Samuel 2, a prophet came to Eli, who was a Levitical priest. He was a high priest, a son of Aaron, many generations removed, but he was a wicked man and his sons were wicked and his sons got killed in battle and he himself died the same day. But a prophet came to him before that to rebuke him.

And in verse 30, 1 Samuel 2, 30, the prophet said, Therefore the Lord God of Israel says, I said indeed that your house, meaning Eli's house, the house of Aaron and so forth, and the house of your father would walk before me, that means be a priest, forever. Okay, same kind of thing we're reading about in Jeremiah, that Levi will never lack a man to walk before me, says the Lord, to offer sacrifices. Well, God said that to Aaron and to Eli about their house.

I said it. He says, But now the Lord says, Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed. In other words, I made such a promise, but hey, it's contingent on you honoring me.

If you don't honor me, I'm not going to honor you. In other words, I make promises, but

they're not unconditional, certainly. These promises are the way it can be for you, but the way it will not be if you don't honor me.

You don't honor me, I won't honor you. Now, here in Jeremiah, the same thing, the Levites will never lack a man to stand before me and be a priest. Well, they do today lack such a man.

There is no Levitical priesthood, but there was something that happened. It was the priests, the chief priests, who condemned Jesus in the court. Caiaphas and Annas and the priests, they're the ones who condemned Jesus and turned him over to Pilate.

That's not exactly honoring God, and so he ended their tenure and, of course, replaced them with a priest of the order of Melchizedek. Nonetheless, the prophecy in Jeremiah suggests there will always be a priest and a king in the context of the branch, the Messiah coming, and these are the terms that are also found in Zechariah. Now, there's one other thing I would point out with reference to this prophecy about the Levites always having a man to walk before God in the priesthood.

Another scripture is in Isaiah 66, which has to be taken into account also. Isaiah 66, 20. This is a prophecy about the New Testament era, the present era, the church age.

You're going to just have to trust me about that right now because you may not know that to be true. It can be demonstrated, but it can't without great length of discussion. So, I mean, you can doubt me, but if you do, you'll just have to do the research and find out there was no reason to doubt me about this.

But in Isaiah 66, 20 and 21, it says, then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all the nations. This is talking about the Gentiles being brought into the church, and one reason I know it is because Paul alludes to this verse in Romans 15. In the passage in Romans 15, most Bibles have a marginal note referring back to this verse.

Paul doesn't quote it, but he alludes to it when he says, you know, that I pray that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable to God, meaning he's seen his evangelization of the Gentiles is they are an offering to God that he's offering, and the language comes from here, that they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of the nations. That's what Paul was doing. He's evangelizing Gentiles from all the nations and offering them to God as his offering to them.

And he says, on horses and chariots and in litters and mules, just using language of the time, not literal, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, which is, of course, Mount Zion, the church, because it says in Hebrews 12, 22, we have not come to a mountain that might be touched, but we have come to Mount Zion. Who's we? We Christians. We've come to Mount Zion, the church of the living, the general assembly and church of the firstborn, it

says.

So bringing all these Gentiles to Mount Zion is what has happened. We have come to Mount Zion. We are part of the church.

And it says in verse 21, and I will also take some of them for priests and Levites, says the Lord. In other words, some of these Gentiles that are brought into the church, he says, I'm going to replace the Levites with them. So even though Jeremiah's prophecy says that Levi will never lack a man to be a priest, well, that's conditional.

Those who honor me, I will honor. He already says in Isaiah, some of those Levites will be replaced by Gentiles. I will take some of those Gentiles to be priests and Levites.

So we can't stand as if there's some unconditional promise here, but God is saying he's offering the Levites on condition of their honoring him, the possibility of being a permanent priesthood. But of course they weren't. The point here is though, that the prophecy of Jeremiah as well as Zechariah speaks of the priesthood and the kingship being permanent and related both to the branch in some way.

In Zechariah, the crowning of the priest suggests that the same man will be the king and the priest, and he is, Jesus is. And so back in Zechariah 6, verse 14, it says, now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the Lord for Helam, Tobijah, Jediah, and Hen, the son of Zephaniah. Now you might say, wait a minute, who's Hen? Who's Helam? Where'd these guys come from? You'll notice there are four names given in verse 10 and four names in verse 14.

Two of the names are the same in both verses, namely Tobijah and Jediah. They are in both. But the first name in the listing in verse 10 is Heldi.

And the first in verse 14 is Helam. It's understood by most that this is just another name for the same guy. Why both of his names are used, I don't know.

But why Peter is sometimes called Peter and sometimes called Simon, I don't know either. They are both names of the same man. And there is a man who is apparently named Heldi and also named Helam, and both of his names are given, as you can tell by comparing.

And then, of course, in verse 10, there's someone who's Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, but in verse 14, it's Hen, the son of Zephaniah. Clearly, Hen is another name for Josiah, too. I don't know why the names are changed four verses from each other, but the same four men are no doubt in view here.

So, he goes and meets these men, takes from them some of the silver and gold brought for a gift, makes a crown, puts it on Joshua's head, then he puts it away on display, perhaps. It will be for memorial in the temple of the Lord for these men who are

witnesses of this act. Even those who are far away shall come and build the temple of the Lord.

Now, since we're now talking about the Messianic age and the branch, the temple of the Lord is the church, the body of Christ, the living stones being built up. And those who build it will include people from many other lands than Israel. There are many Gentile ministers who are helped to build up the body of Christ.

Those from far away shall come and build the temple of the Lord. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3 that he and others were building the temple, the church, in Corinth. He said, I have laid the foundation, another will build upon it.

He had in mind primarily Apollos, who had come after him and built on the foundation that he had laid. But when he planted the church, Apollos contributed through his ministry to the building up of it. But he just said others will come, too.

And they better be careful, he says, how they build. If they use wood, hay, and stubble, their work won't last. If they build with gold, silver, and precious stones, it will.

And therefore, those who build the church are the ministers who come into this situation where the church has already been, the foundation has been laid already. The foundation of the church was laid 2,000 years ago. People like you and me living today may have a role in building on it by up-building other Christians, by bringing others into the faith, by contributing more living stones to the project, and even doing something to shape them and to assemble them, perhaps.

There's all kinds of ministries, but all the ministries that build up the body of Christ, which is what the word edify means, build up, is what Christian ministers of all descriptions are supposed to be doing. And they're building up the temple of the Lord. And the prediction here is those who are far away, meaning not just Israelites, Gentiles, too, will come and build the temple of the Lord.

Then you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you, Zechariah says, and this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. So even here we have the condition stated. Levi and others who have promises made to them never have unconditional promises made to them.

Everything he says is conditioned by this will happen if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. By the way, we do have this blueprint given to us in Ezekiel 40 through 48, but it too is conditional. In Ezekiel chapter 40, in the midst of a description, an elaborate description of a temple that was a post-exilic blueprint for a post-exilic temple, but which never ended up being built.

The reason seems to be given in Ezekiel chapter 43, verses 10 and 11, which says, Son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed of their

iniquities and let them measure the pattern. And if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known to them the design of the temple. Now there's nine chapters given to describe the temple.

It's a big description. He says, show them that if they are ashamed, if they are broken, if they are repentant, if they are of a different heart than they were before, then show them this pattern. In other words, this temple will apply if they qualify spiritually.

It doesn't apply otherwise, presumably, so that may be why that temple was never built. The described temple in Ezekiel never was built. Instead, Zerubbabel's temple was built, which is much smaller, architecturally much inferior.

And there are people who are dispensationists who say, well, this temple of Ezekiel has to be built in the future then because it wasn't built by Zerubbabel, and here's a prediction of it. It's not a prediction. It's an offer.

If they are repentant, then we can show them these plans. But we can easily argue that they weren't, when only 50,000 of them came back, of all the Jews who were carried into Babylon, that's a very half-hearted return to the Lord on the part of the nation. And this temple that they could have had apparently never did materialize and probably never will.

There's no reason to expect it. So, this crowning of Joshua ends up being a prediction of Jesus being king and priest in the new order and building a new temple. Interestingly, this is given at a time when the physical temple was being built in Jerusalem, but of course, that's a very good time to talk about what it is a shadow of.

You're building this temple. You'll be using this. The Levites will be ministering here.

You'll be offering sacrifices. This will be your religious center. But it serves only as a shadow of something greater, just as Joshua himself, the high priest, serves only as a shadow of someone greater, a greater priest and a greater king who will be found in the Messiah, who will build a superior temple to this and even employ people from all over the world, nations, Gentiles will come and help build this spiritual temple.

So, again, the prophecies look beyond the present thing. Each of these prophecies encourages the present project. But part of the way of encouraging it is to point out that it actually is a precursor of something far greater still, which these people would not live to see, but someone would.

And someday God would send this person, the branch, the Messiah, who would build a great temple and who would be king and priest, something Israel never had before in one person.