

Zechariah Explained & Applied 38

Ger de Koning



The Book of Zechariah

The Book of Zechariah

The City

Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of General Format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS** * are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The Book of Zechariah

Introduction

The book of Zechariah occupies a special place among the so-called 'minor prophets'. This special place is because of the length of his book which contains no less than fourteen chapters, but also because it contains extensive prophecies about the Messiah, world empires and the respective judgments about them and about Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.

The time in which Zechariah lives and prophesies is after the exile, like Haggai and Malachi. Zechariah and Haggai prophesy quite shortly after the return of a handful of Israelites from Babylon to the land and place where the LORD dwelled. When this small group of God's people is back in the land, they start rebuilding the temple, but stop under the pressure of their enemies. They manage to persuade King Artaxerxes to issue an order to stop the rebuilding. As a result, the rebuilding stops for about sixteen years, until the second year of Darius – which is not the same as that of Daniel, but a later one (Ezra 4:23-24).

The people had become languid. Then God calls two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1). Both prophets have written down their message. What Haggai and Zechariah prophesied is also important to us. That is why it is written down and included in God's Word.

Haggai speaks of "the desire of all nations will come" (Hag 2:7) – as this part of the verse also can be translated. This is the Messiah Who comes to His temple. Zechariah also speaks about this, and about the restoration of the two and the ten tribes in the land, so that there will again be one people living in the land.

The revival under Zechariah is limited, because after his performance the people sink back into unbelief. This unbelief finds its climax in the days of the Lord Jesus when His people reject Him. Yet His coming is the clearest proof of the meaning of the name Zechariah. Zechariah means 'the LORD remembers'.

The result of the rejection is that the people have been suffering for many centuries and will experience unprecedented suffering in the great tribulation that is yet to come. They will think that God has forgotten them, but they will also notice that He remembers and will give relief at the appointed time to finally bless them. Then the prophecy of Zechariah will be entirely fulfilled.

Zechariah was born in Babylon into a priestly family taking the opportunity offered by Cyrus to return to Israel (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh 12:4,16). Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, he is both priest and prophet. He is priest by birth and prophet by vocation. Like Jeremiah he is called as a young man (Zec 2:4; Jer 1:6). He performs two months after Haggai started his prophecy (Hag 1:1). The duration of his service is unknown.

Zechariah is a young man. He must have returned from Babylon as a child and knows nothing about the exile and the reason for it. Yet God chooses him as His messenger and not one of the elders. A young man represents youthful energy needed for a faithful service in 'remnant times'.

Division of the book

Part I: Introduction and night visions (Zechariah 1-6)

A. Introduction to the book (Zechariah 1:1-6)

1. Date and name of the writer (Zechariah 1:1)

2. Call to repentance (Zechariah 1:2-6)

B. Series of eight night visions (Zechariah 1:7-6:8)

1. First night vision: The Man on the red horse among the myrtle trees (Zechariah 1:7-17)

2. Second night vision: The four horns and the four craftsmen (Zechariah 1:18-21)

3. Third night vision: The man with the measuring line (Zechariah 2:1-13)

4. Fourth night vision: Purification and restoration of Israel as a priestly nation (Zechariah 3:1-10)

5. Fifth night vision: The golden lampstand and the two olive trees (Zechariah 4:1-14)

6. Sixth night vision: The flying scroll (Zechariah 5:1-4)
7. Seventh night vision: The woman in the ephah (Zechariah 5:5-11)
8. Eighth night vision: The four chariots (Zechariah 6:1-8)

C. The symbolic coronation of Joshua the high priest (Zechariah 6:9-15)

Part II: The problem of fasting and the promises of the future (Zechariah 7-8)

1. The question of the delegation from Bethel (Zechariah 7:1-3)
2. The reproach of the LORD (Zechariah 7:4-7)
3. The order to repent (Zechariah 7:8-14)
4. Ten promises about the restoration of Israel in God's favor (Zechariah 8:1-23)

Part III: Two burdens: the Messiah and His kingdom (Zechariah 9-14)

A. The first burden: the coming and rejection of the Messiah (Zechariah 9-11)

1. The coming of the messianic King (Zechariah 9:1-10:12)
 - a. The destruction of the nations and the preservation of Zion (Zechariah 9:1-8)
 - b. The coming of Zion's King (Zechariah 9:9-10)
 - c. The deliverance and blessing of Zion's people (Zechariah 9:11-10:1)
 - d. Warning and encouragement (Zechariah 10:2-4)
 - e. Israel's victory over his enemies (Zechariah 10:5-7)
 - f. Israel's complete deliverance and restoration (Zechariah 10:8-12)
2. The Rejection of the messianic Shepherd-King (Zechariah 11:1-17)
 - a. Introduction (Zechariah 11:1-3)
 - b. The prophecy of the rejection of the good Shepherd (Zechariah 11:4-14)
 - c. The worthless shepherd (Zechariah 11:15-17)

B. The second burden: the coming and receiving of the Messiah (Zechariah 12-14)

1. The deliverance and conversion of Israel (Zechariah 12:1-13:9)
 - a. The siege of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-3)
 - b. Divine deliverance (Zechariah 12:4-9)
 - c. Israel's complete deliverance from sin (Zechariah 12:10-13:9)
2. The return of the Messiah and establishment of His kingdom (Zechariah 14:1-21)
 - a. The siege of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-2)
 - b. The signs of the return of the Messiah (Zechariah 14:3-8)
 - c. The establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah (Zechariah 14:9-11)
 - d. The punishment of Israel's enemies (Zechariah 14:12-15)
 - e. The general worship of the King (Zechariah 14:16-19)
 - f. HOLY TO THE LORD (Zechariah 14:20-21)

Zechariah 1

Zec 1:1 | Dating and Sender

1 In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,

As with Haggai, the dating of the prophecy of Zechariah is done according to the reign of a heathen monarch. This indicates, as already noted in Haggai 1 (Hag 1:1), that the times of the nations have come (Lk 21:24; Dan 7:1; 8:1). Through the failure of the people, God has moved His throne from Jerusalem to Babylon and its successors. Babylon has fallen, the Medes and Persians now rule Israel with Darius at the head. That's why his name is mentioned.

Zechariah begins prophesying two months after Haggai began. It may be seen as a special blessing that God sends a second prophet to His people after Haggai. It is the word of the prophecy that comes from the LORD, emanates from Him and is given to Zechariah. How that word of the LORD came to him is not mentioned. It may be in a vision or in his heart or in a dream.

The name Zechariah means 'the LORD remembers'; Berechiah means 'the LORD blesses'; Iddo means 'the appointed time'. We can see from the meaning of the names that the LORD remembers and has not forgotten His people, as it sometimes seems because of all the suffering that has come upon the people, and blesses at the time determined by him.

In Ezra 5 Zechariah is called the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1), while here it appears that Berechiah is his father. It may indicate that Iddo is his grandfather and that his father died in his youth.

Zec 1:2 | The Anger of the LORD

2 "The LORD was very angry with your fathers.

The prophet cuts right to the chase. He wants to strike his fellow citizens in their conscience. They are no better than their fathers. Because of the guilt of the fathers the temple is destroyed. But they are also negligent in

rebuilding it. It is easy to get used to our circumstances, without paying attention to the hand of the Lord Who put us in those circumstances because of our unfaithfulness.

The prophet does not elaborate on the cause of the anger. By speaking about it in this way, he asks them, as it were, to examine in their memories the occasions on which that anger has become visible. This should lead them to discover what caused it. That will stop them in their unfaithfulness to the LORD. The prophet warns in a clear way that God does not allow Himself to be mocked.

They have returned to the land of God, but not to God Himself. Their exile and the destruction of the city and the temple are clear proof of God's anger. But there is a way back and that is the way of conversion to the LORD with their whole heart. That is why in the following verse the offer of grace follows after the anger.

Zec 1:3 | Return to Me

3 Therefore say to them, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Return to Me," declares the LORD of hosts, "that I may return to you," says the LORD of hosts.

Because they no longer give priority to the rebuilding of the temple, "therefore" Zechariah must now call them to repent. It is a command of the LORD to Zechariah.

Three times Zechariah speaks about conversion, or returning, in his introductory verses: verses 3,4,6. He does this precisely to those who may think that they have repented because they have returned from Babylon. Conversion is usually seen as something that belongs only to a gospel message to unbelievers. But that is not correct. Here we hear about the need for conversion for the people of God. It is the call to God's people to turn from the way they go and return to the LORD with repentance. Then He will return to them with blessing and not with curse. First the people must return to the LORD, then He will turn to them (Mal 3:7; Jam 4:7; 2Chr 15:2; Jer 3:12; Eze 18:30; Mic 7:19).

Even as believers, we sometimes have to convert. That does not mean a 'daily conversion', as if we should come to God every day as penitent sinners, as if we had never become children of God. But the New Testament

does speak about conversion of believers. We see this in the messages of John to the seven churches in Asia Minor. In most of them the recipients are called to repent because there are sins present in those churches (Rev 2:5,16,22; 3:3,19). We also hear it when the Lord Jesus says to Peter, who is already converted: “When once you have turned again” (Lk 22:32).

It is clear that believers also must confess if something is not right. He must get down on his knees before God, and also before his neighbor, if he has sinned against that neighbor. There is always a way back, both for the individual believer and for a group of believers, a way that always goes via repentance and confession. That this way is there, is the result of the work of Christ.

The refusal to confess is the cause of the misery. Nobody can hide behind the misleading idea that he cannot repent. When God calls for repentance, it also means that He gives the strength to do so. He makes that power available in the call. It is up to man to make use of it.

The name “LORD of hosts” is characteristic of the last three prophets and is used more than eighty times by them together. In this verse alone this name is used three times.

Zec 1:4 | Do Not Follow the Evil

4 *“Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.”’ But they did not listen or give heed to Me,” declares the LORD.*

Their fathers did not listen to the former prophets (Zec 7:12), who were the prophets before exile, and did not repent (Jer 25:3-8; 2Kgs 17:13). A bad example creates bad followers and that is what the prophet warns against. God identifies Himself here with the prophets who have spoken in His Name. He does not say that they did not listen to the prophets, but that they did not listen to Him. Not listening to God’s prophets equals not listening to God (cf. Mt 10:40).

Zec 1:5 | Two Questions

5 *“Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?*

It is as if, with these two questions, Zechariah wants to disprove the expected objections to his call. In the following verse the answer to these questions comes.

Both the fathers and the prophets are gone. For Zechariah and his contemporaries it is important to learn the lesson of the past. In general there is little knowledge of history. One does not take into account the lessons that can be found in (church) history. History must be seen in the light of the Word of God. God's hand in history can only be tested against this Word. This is how it happens in this first chapter.

What God has warned of has also literally been fulfilled. Judgment has taken away the fathers and the prophets have been killed. But they are no better than their fathers. The prophets live on in their words, for God's Word will never perish. The words of the prophets are fulfilled to the fathers. They must acknowledge that God has done what He has warned for and that He has carried out His judgment on them (Deu 28:45; Jos 23:15-16; Lam 2:17).

Zec 1:6 | Purpose of What God Says

6 But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'""

The truth of God who has been preached remains undiminished (Isa 14:24). God's "words" and "statutes" always have purpose. This is what the fathers experienced when they were not converted. Evidence of this has been provided, not in the least by the way they were led into exile. They will also experience this if they do not repent. The Word of God is alive and everlasting (1Pet 1:23-25). What God says happens, whether it is a blessing or a curse.

In days of the greatest unfaithfulness in the church, it remains our support. The acknowledgment of the truth of God's Word is the first step on the way to blessing.

Zec 1:7 | A New Word From the LORD

7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows:

Zechariah gets his first night vision three months after his introductory words. He must speak only when the LORD commands him to do so. After three months that command comes. Each night vision contributes to the total picture of the future glory of Israel. The night visions serve as an encouragement for the people to continue with the rebuilding of the temple. We can say that the importance of the vision is this: although Israel is not yet in its promised position, God is already thinking about it.

The series of visions takes us through the time of God's dealings with Israel. That time runs from the time of their discipline by God among the heathen powers until the time they are restored to their land with their rebuilt city and temple under their Messiah-King. The first vision gives the general theme of the whole series; the other visions add details. While the world is engaged in its own work, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah are focused on the humble condition of Israel and on the Temple in Jerusalem.

Zec 1:8 | The Man on the Red Horse

8 I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him.

What Zechariah sees takes place at night. He does not sleep, he does not see in a dream, but is in a waking state. He sees a Man. This is the Lord Jesus (verse 11), Who is mentioned here for the first time in the book. He sits on a red horse. Behind Him are other horses, each with a different color. At the beginning of all visions stands the Lord Jesus. It is about Him, He determines the future and is its center.

The call to "behold" is to emphasize the wondrous and also importance of what can be seen. It is also meant to make him to look attentively.

Red is the color of blood, of bloodshed (Isa 63:2-4). But the Man does not fight. It is as if He is preparing Himself for it. The horses represent powers,

empires yet to come. They stand behind the Man on the red horse. Without Him they cannot move a foot. All power in heaven and earth is given to Him (Mt 28:18).

He stands “among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine”. The myrtle trees in the ravine, that means down deep, are a representation of the remnant of Israel with which the LORD connects Himself. He stands between them. The ravine indicates a state of humiliation. Myrtle trees are always mentioned in connection with the realm of peace. They seem to point to that time. Now it is not like that yet, they are still in the depths and not on a height.

Myrtle trees are evergreen trees and belong to the Feast of Booths (Neh 8:15-16) and in the Messianic realm (Isa 41:19; 55:13). They announce a time of blessing in the realm of peace. Restoration will begin in the depths, through humiliation and penance.

Israel is still humiliated by the peoples and is still the tail and not the head of the peoples. Yet God can already work this peace in the hearts of those who take their place in the depths, in humility, under the message of the prophet, who wants to reach the heart and conscience.

The horses are angelic powers – or winds or spirits (Zec 6:5) – that control the history of the world powers after Babylon. They are given the freedom to cross the earth. As said, they stand behind the Man. There is nothing in our lives or in history that happens without His permission (Pro 21:1).

The horses with the three different colors represent the three empires after Babylon, which have already fallen. The red horses represent the Medo-Persian empire. That empire has the same color as the horse on which the Man sits, possibly because at that time the Medo-Persian empire favored the Israelites (Ezra 6:1-15).

Zec 1:9 | The Question for Explanation

9 Then I said, “My lord, what are these?” And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, “I will show you what these are.”

Zechariah asks for an explanation. He gets it from an angel. His questioning attitude is a good one for a young man. This angel is probably the one

by whom the LORD makes His announcements to Zechariah, and not the angel of the LORD (cf. Rev 1:1; 22:6). The angel does not give the answer himself, but indicates what Zechariah must look for to get the answer.

Zec 1:10 | The Answer

10 And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth."

The answer to Zechariah's question is given by the Man, that is the Lord Jesus. He is the Source to Whom all answers, by whoever given, must be traced back. In His answer He shows His great interest in everything that happens on earth, especially in connection with His people Israel and His own (cf. Job 1:7; 2:2). Government power has been given to the nations for a time, but they are accountable to Him (verse 11).

Zec 1:11 | Accountability Rendered

11 So they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet."

The Man on the red horse (verse 8) turns out to be here, in contrast to verse 9, the Angel of the LORD. This is a special manifestation of the LORD Himself (cf. Gen 16:7-13; 22:11-22; Exo 3:2-6; Jdg 6:14,22; 13:9-18,22). It is a manifestation of the Lord Jesus before He became Man. He represents God and is God Himself. All the (angelic) powers, represented in the different horses, are accountable to Him. He leads the history, He has everything under control.

All powers feel at peace, peace reigns internationally. In one place there is no such peace, and that is in Jerusalem. If there is no peace there, how can there be peace in the world? This must also appeal to the conscience of the people, for they too are quiet. Heaven is busy with Jerusalem and Judah, but the heathen people and also the people of God are busy with their own interests, they are looking for their own prosperity and ease.

Zec 1:12 | How Long Is There No Compassion?

12 Then the angel of the LORD said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?"

The answer of “the Angel of the LORD” is much like a prayer to the “LORD of hosts”. Here we see the Son of God praying on earth to His God in heaven. When He receives the messages, the reports, from the riders on the horses, it brings Him to pray and beg, to intercession. For although everything seems quiet, the reality is that God’s house and city are not quiet.

What follows in the whole book from now on can be seen as the result of the intercession of the Lord Jesus. A revival is often the answer to the prayer of faithful people, but here it is the answer to the prayer of the Lord Jesus.

“These seventy years” are those of exile (Jer 25:11-12; Dan 9:2). The exile is over, but people wonder why God is still angry with them when the appointed time of their punishment has passed. The answer comes in the following verses.

With regard to the church, God worked in the nineteenth century in a number of countries in believers interest in the church as His house, where the Lord Jesus wants to be in the midst of the two or three who want to come together as a church to His Name (Mt 18:20). This working of God’s Spirit is a response to the intercession of the Lord Jesus. His care for the church is greater than ours ever can be.

Zec 1:13 | Gracious Words, Comforting Words

13 The LORD answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words.

The answer to prayer is given in “gracious words, comforting words” (cf. Isa 40:1-2; 57:18; Jos 23:14; Jer 29:10). “Gracious [literally: good] words” are words that express what is good for someone. “Comforting words” are words a person needs because he is in misery.

Offering perspective gives comfort. Someone who sincerely cares for the people of God gets comfort. He makes the requested compassion known. The comfort takes shape in what God says to do with the people. The comfort of God is compared to the comfort of a child by his mother (Isa 66:13). Fear and restlessness are gone, there is security.

This also applies to us, personally and collectively. Suffering makes God come into the circumstances and makes Himself known to us as “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2Cor 1:3). God gives comfort through the Scriptures. The Scriptures testify of the Lord Jesus (Jn 5:39), He is their content. God also consoles through the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). He is the Advocate or Comforter. God’s Spirit takes from the Scriptures in a special way to comfort.

God also wants to use us to comfort others (2Cor 1:4; 7:13). True comfort is speaking to one’s heart (Rth 2:13).

Zec 1:14 | The LORD Commits Himself to His city

14 So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.”

The prophet must preach or proclaim what the LORD has said to him. It is not only for him, but the whole people must hear it and be encouraged by it.

Jerusalem is the place of God’s dwelling and throne, the center of His government. He will not abandon that city permanently. Zion is the name of Jerusalem in view of the blessings the city will receive in the realm of peace. Zion means ‘sunny’ because there the “the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wing” (Mal 4:2). Zion, that is Mount Zion, is mentioned together with Jerusalem as the location of the temple. This determines and confirms that only Jerusalem qualifies as the capital of the kingdom of the Son of Man.

Zec 1:15 | God’s Anger With the Nations

15 But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster.”

God is “very angry” with the nations He has used as a disciplinary rod for His people. He is very angry because they did not measure up, because they were so audacious to want to destroy Israel (Isa 47:6; Jer 50:11-18; 51:24; Eze 25:3,8,12,15; 26:2; Oba 1:10-14). They were unaware that they were only a disciplinary rod in God’s hand, but wanted to take advantage

of the opportunity God had given to attack His people (Isa 10:5,7). Here it also becomes clear that despite the ease that exists at that moment, God is still angry with them and therefore this ease can only be a limited ease with a limited duration.

That God “was only a little angry” is in relation to the duration of the anger (Isa 54:8), God’s anger is only for a short time. In verse 2 it is about the intensity of His anger.

Zec 1:16 | The LORD Returns to Jerusalem

16 Therefore thus says the LORD, “I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.”’

The LORD returns with compassion to His people from whom He first had to withdraw because of their sins (Hos 5:15). He remembers in His “in wrath ... mercy” (Hab 3:2). Just as He first came to Jerusalem with judgment, so now He comes with compassion.

There is no greater encouragement than to join hands in a work that has God’s complete interest and promotes His purpose. This is how the rebuilding of the temple is presented here. It is a privilege to be able to participate in it. First the house is built, then Jerusalem. God’s dwelling place comes first.

The one to whom “a measuring line” belongs, is entitled to what is measured (Zec 2:1; Job 38:5; Eze 41:3; 45:6). The measuring line indicates God’s interest in observing the right situation of the city and to bless it according to His own wise plan at the right time. The measuring line here is a symbol of restoration (cf. Zec 2:1; Jer 31:38-40), whereas it used to be a symbol of judgment (2Kgs 21:13; Isa 34:11).

Zec 1:17 | Overflow, Comfort and Choice

17 Again, proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.”’

Zechariah must proclaim again by order of “the LORD of hosts”. He must proclaim that not only will there be rebuilding, but also that the cities will overflow with prosperity. Not only Jerusalem, but also the other cities will be restored. God is a God of abundance and He will overflow the cities with prosperity (cf. Pro 5:16).

The fulfillment of this verse lies in a future that even today still awaits its fulfillment. Never has the people known a time of such prosperity. The blessing that God has prepared for His people is yet to come.

The Persian empire will exist for some time. Then come the Greek and the Roman empire. How His people will have to suffer from them. In the year 70 AD Jerusalem was trampled by the nations and that is still the case today. But we do see in our days that God is busy making His words to Zechariah come true. Jerusalem has been in Jewish hands again since 1948.

We ourselves, as members of God’s church, have to deal with “the Jerusalem above” (Gal 4:26). God also speaks good words and comforting words about this. It is our task as a church to show on earth the truth of God about the church.

Zec 1:18-19 | Four Horns

*18 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, [there were] four horns.
19 So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these?” And he answered me, “These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.”*

Then Zechariah sees “four horns”. It is about the ‘horns’ and the number ‘four’. The four horns refer to the four empires. Now Babylon is also involved because it concerns an overview of the whole history (cf. Dan 7:4-7). All four of them banged Israel with their horns, i.e. in their power, in order to destroy the people. The inhabitants of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem as the capital of both empires have all been carried away and scattered by the nations.

God places Himself behind history by talking about a scattering that has already taken place by all four empires. That includes the kingdoms yet to come, for at this moment the power belongs to the Medes and Persians, the second empire.

Zec 1:20-21 | Four Craftsmen

20 Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. 21 I said, "What are these coming to do?" And he said, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man lifts up his head; but these [craftsmen] have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up [their] horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it."

The vision of the four craftsmen contains a message of comfort. God says He has His own instruments to destroy the four horns, namely His craftsmen. They are His workmen, they are artists.

We see here the picture that all enemies of Israel will be killed in turn. They may be the different empires, each of which, in turn, will first conquer the previous empire and then be conquered by the next. Thus Babylon has subdued Assyria and Babylon has been conquered by the Medes and Persians.

The Lord Jesus will then conquer the last empire (Dan 2:34,44-45). This is a comfort for the remnant in the days of Zechariah. God shows that He has the answer to every evil power that attacks His people. In doing so, the Lord Jesus brings the final blow to the enemies of His people. Then all the world empires will be destroyed.

Because of the weight of their sins, Judah has been surrendered by God to the horns, the world empires. As a result, they are so depressed that they are unable to raise their heads (Job 10:15). But this situation will come to an end. God has prepared His craftsmen who will throw down the horns (Psa 75:10). Whoever touches the city, however in ruins, touches the "apple of God's eye". That is why God's judgment will come on the nations.

Also for us, God has His tools. He uses them in revivals. Every revival is a revelation of the power of God through His Spirit. Then evil is overcome. At the same time it results in a renewed attack by the devil. We already live in the kingdom of God, but it is still a kingdom in hidden form. We need tools that are used in God's hand to build up His people. They also defend themselves against the enemy who never stops attacking what is of God. What builds up in the church will always overcome what breaks down.

Zechariah 2

Introduction

This chapter speaks of the glory God will bring over His city.

Zec 2:1 | A Man With a Measuring Line

1 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, [there was] a man with a measuring line in his hand.

Zechariah lifts up his eyes again (Zec 1:18). The first time he has seen judgment. Now he sees “a man with a measuring line”. It is the same Man as in the previous chapter (Zec 1:8), but in a different capacity. Here He is the One Who alone can measure Jerusalem and Who alone can work restoration. With this the Jewish people are encouraged to continue with the rebuilding of the temple.

We have here the explanation and confirmation of the promise made in the previous chapter (Zec 1:16). A measuring line is used in building. Using the measuring line is symbolic of God’s claiming the city as His property (cf. Ps 78:55; Eze 40:3-15; Rev 11:1-2). This has not yet been fulfilled. Again Zechariah takes the questioning position. The Man is the Lord Jesus Who alone is able to comprise the scope of God’s counsel in view of the future blessings of the earthly Jerusalem.

Zec 2:2 | The Sizes of Jerusalem

2 So I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.”

Zechariah wants to know where the Man is going. He gets an answer. The Man is going to measure the city of Jerusalem, because He wants to see how wide and how long it is. The city is measured with a view to a complete restoration. This restoration did not take place in the days of Zechariah and is still the future. In the future there will be room for many (Isa 54:2; 60:4; cf. Lk 14:22; Jn 14:2).

In the application to the church as the city where God dwells, we see that the church is also a city in decay. Yet it must be measured by God's measure. That measure is the origin of the church, how she is when she comes into being, as described in Acts, and how she will be in the future, when she is with Christ in perfection. How she will be in the future we read in Revelation 21. Of the earthly Jerusalem only width and length are measured; of the heavenly Jerusalem also height is measured (Rev 21:15-16).

Zec 2:3-4 | A Message for Zechariah

3 And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, 4 and said to him, "Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.

Zechariah asked a question in the previous verse and received an answer. He knows what the Man is going to do. Then suddenly the Angel of the LORD appears. The word "behold" indicates that it is a sudden event. On that initiative another angel approaches Him. That angel receives a commission from the Angel of the LORD, that is the Lord Jesus. He must run to Zechariah and tell him something.

Zechariah is called "that young man" here. The LORD knows the age of His servant. It may be that Zechariah feels the burden of the ministry of prophecy heavy (cf. 1Tim 4:12). In any case, he receives a quick encouragement from the LORD, Who commands an angel to do so. The encouragement is that there will come a time when Jerusalem will be a city without walls. Living without walls speaks of peace and security, without fear of enemies. The LORD Himself will protect the city (Eze 38:10-11). All this will be fulfilled at the return of the Lord Jesus (Eze 43:1-12; Hos 1:10).

Jerusalem has not yet known what is described here. Only a handful returned from Babylon to Judea in the days of Zechariah. The glory of the LORD has not yet returned and does not yet dwell in the city. It is also not yet possible to be without a protective wall.

This scene also has something to say to us. God will fully realize His plan for the church in the future. It is important for us to trust only in the Lord and not to seek salvation from organizations or the world. What it will be

like in the future is an encouragement to build the church now in a way that we build with the right materials (1Cor 3:10-13).

Zec 2:5 | What the LORD Is to Jerusalem

5 For I, declares the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

There is Divine protection and Divine presence in the city of God. The emphasis is on "I". The safety of the city lies in the protection by God Himself. He is that wall around the city that consumes all the enemies that want to harm the city. He is also the wall around the city in view of what is happening in the city. Also in the city the fire of His judgment does its work when sin happens in the city. He dwells in the midst of the city, so His glory rests on it. Therefore no sin can be tolerated. He and sin do not tolerate each other.

Just like Jerusalem then, the church today also needs a wall to separate it from the world. If this does not happen, a mixture will take place with unbelievers. In heaven that wall is no longer necessary. But God desires now to have a place where He can dwell in the midst of His people. His glory is the center there. The wall is necessary to keep the church free from sin.

The fiery wall recalls the pillar of fire that separated the Israelites from the Egyptians (Exo 14:24; cf. Isa 4:5; Zec 9:8; 2Kgs 6:17; Isa 26:1). This fiery wall is an inward protection and outwardly an extermination of the enemy.

Zec 2:6-7 | Call to Flee

6 "Ho there! Flee from the land of the north," declares the LORD, "for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens," declares the LORD. 7 "Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon."

The call to flee from Babylon (verse 6) connects to the third night vision as far as its content is concerned, for it is about the dwelling of God in the midst of His people. After the third night vision there is now direct prophecy again. It is a call from the prophet himself to all the Israelites who are still in "the land of the north", which is Babylon (Jer 6:22; 16:15). The main group is in Babylon, but the people are scattered to all sides.

Only a small number of Jews has returned from Babylon under Ezra and later some with Nehemiah. Those who stayed in Babylon are at risk of being killed, for the enemies who come will make no distinction between the inhabitants of Babylon and the prisoners of Babylon (Isa 48:20; 52:11; Jer 50:8-9; 51:6,45). Zechariah has the spiritual power to summon them to break their stay in that foreign land. They still live there because of the attractiveness that that country has got for them. They have come to feel at home there.

The prophecy comes to people who have fully equipped their lives for a long stay in Babylon. Unbelief, laziness, the uncertain future of Israel, the desolation of land, city and temple, all these things keep them in Babylon. The seriousness of the situation makes that God gives them a second chance to flee from the certain judgment that will strike Babylon and to go to Jerusalem. Each member of God's people belongs in Jerusalem.

The call also applies spiritually to us today. Just as when the majority of Judah remained in Babylon, so today the majority of God's people are in the slavery of an ecclesiastical, clerical, system. The Babylon of that time also has its meaning in church history. In Revelation we see the true church (Rev 21:9-11) versus the false church (Rev 17:1-6). The false church is the roman-catholic church that enslaves her members with her false teachings. The call sounds to flee that slavery (Rev 18:4; cf. 2Cor 6:17). Whoever does so, gets the opportunity to look for a place where God's Spirit and God's Word have the space to give substance to being in the church.

Many know the truth of the one body of Christ, but few want to use grace to put that truth into practice. In this way they resemble the Jews who remain in Babylon, who appreciate living in Jerusalem but prefer to keep the comforts of Babylon.

The call comes to "Zion" (verse 7), which is so addressed by God to make clear the contrast between on the one hand what they mean to God and where they therefore belong, in Israel, and on the other hand where they actually live, in Babylon. It is not that they belong to Zion, but they are Zion. That is why the contrast is so great with their living in Babylon and the call comes to flee and save themselves. As said, the call is made in view of the judgment that comes on Babylon (Jer 51:6).

Zec 2:8 | The Apple of God's Eye

8 For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.

The words "after glory, He has sent me" has to do with the sign of the Son of Man appearing in His glory. If He appears in His glory, He will kill His enemies and those of His people (Mt 24:30-31; 25:31-32; cf. Psa 73:24). His return takes place because He is sent. He is sent as a Man by God from the glory and takes that glory with Him. In the remainder of this section that glory is seen, both in the judgment of the enemies and in the deliverance of His people.

God calls His people "the apple of his eye" (cf. Deu 32:10; Psa 17:8; Pro 7:2). The apple of the eye is a particularly sensitive spot. He who attacks Israel touches the most sensitive spot of the LORD. The same goes for the church, which is connected with the Lord Jesus in the most intimate way. When Paul persecutes the church, the Lord Jesus says that he persecutes Him (Acts 9:4).

Zec 2:9 | The Tables Will Be Turned

9 For behold, I will wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.

When the LORD waves His hand, it is a movement full of menace (Isa 19:16). A simple movement of God's hand causes all His enemies to fall down before Him. His enemies become the spoils of the servants of His people. That situation gives the believing remnant the certainty that their Messiah is present, as sent by "the LORD of hosts".

God will ensure that the tables will be turned. Those who have submitted His people will be submitted to His people (Isa 14:2; cf. Est 7:10; 2Thes 1:6-7). This is the proof that their Messiah will have been sent by the LORD. If what is foretold happens, they will know by experience that God has sent His Messiah (Isa 48:16; 61:1).

The prophet easily moves back and forth between the present situation and the future, between the immediate fulfilment and the future ultimate

fulfilment at the government of the Messiah. All previous events end in that glorious time.

Zec 2:10-11 | The LORD Dwells in Their Midst

10 Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. 11 "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

This call to the daughter of Zion to rejoice and be glad (verse 10) will sound when the Lord Jesus has returned to earth. Those expressions of joy will be heard as the cloud of the glory in which the LORD dwells will dwell again in the temple. Again and again the presence of the Messiah in the midst of His people in the prophets is the reason for rejoicing. That does not refer to His first coming to earth, but to His second.

The source of all blessing lies in the dwelling of God in the midst of His people. From the beginning, this has been the sign that they are His redeemed people (Exo 15:8). The blessing of the new earth will be that God will dwell with the people in His tabernacle, which is the church (Rev 21:3). The local church may already know this blessing (Mt 18:20).

In verse 11, for the third time, after verses 5,10, the dwelling of the LORD in the midst of His people is mentioned. Here speaks a Man Who says that the LORD has sent him. That Man is the LORD Himself. He dwells as the LORD Yahweh in the midst of His people and also says that Yahweh has sent Him. His presence in His people will attract many nations because they also want to enjoy the blessing of His presence.

The Lord Jesus is the Sent One of the Father. His presence in the midst of the church is proof of His mission.

Zec 2:12 | Portion and Choice of the LORD

12 The LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

The coming of the nations (verse 11) shall not diminish the place that Judah and Jerusalem then shall have before the LORD. Judah is His possession. Judah is the royal tribe from which Christ as King came forth. Judah means ‘praise’.

The expression “the holy land” appears only here in Scripture as an indication for the land. We also read about the “holy mountain” (Psa 2:6; Zec 8:3), the “holy city” (Isa 48:2; 52:1) and a “holy people” (Exo 19:6; 1Pet 2:9). There can be talk of “the holy land” because then the iniquity is removed from the land, by which it is cleansed of all its stain. The land will be set apart – that is the meaning of the word “holy” – for Him.

Zec 2:13 | Be Silent

13 *“Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”*

Respectful silence suits us when the LORD is about to judge and take His place in the midst of His people (Hab 2:20; Zep 1:7). Zechariah herewith points to the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

The message for us is that we have to get to work, realizing that it will only be perfect when the Lord comes to rapture His church. We need to work to build up the church, to ask how the church should come together, where the place of worship is where she is allowed to come together, how she should cleanse herself from ‘Babylonian’ and worldly influences. God calls us to dedicate ourselves to His house in the midst of the ruins of Christianity.

Zechariah 3

Introduction

Zechariah 2 shows the intention of the LORD in grace in the future restoration of Jerusalem and His people. Zechariah 3 explains how He fulfills this intention in accordance with His righteousness. Zechariah 3 is a special message for the high priest Joshua, while Zechariah 4 contains a special message for Zerubbabel. Together with Zerubbabel, Joshua is the leader and together they represent the two sides of the Messiah, who is King and Priest. The perfect picture is Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God (Heb 7:1-2).

With the Lord Jesus everything is perfect, but the practice of the people as a people of priests is very miserable. Zechariah 3 is about the priestly condition of the people. Here we see the restoration of Israel as a priestly nation, according to God's intention (Exo 19:6). For us, the question is how the situation with the priesthood of God's people now is.

This fourth vision is different from the three previous visions. There are no questions asked by the prophet here and there is no explanation by an angel. The reasons for this are that Joshua's identity is known from the beginning and that the actions are explained as the vision unfolds. No one doubts that Joshua is a true priest.

Zec 3:1 | The High Priest and Satan

1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

After the encouraging night visions in Zechariah 1-2 we see in the fourth night vision what it really looks like in practice. In the one priest, the high priest, the state of the people is shown that is predestined by God to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" for Him (Exo 19:6). However, their condition is not in accordance with the position given to them by God. Before the glorious things of the previous night visions can become

reality, something must first happen with the people themselves. It has to undergo a spiritual change.

The LORD Himself shows this night vision to Zechariah. Zechariah sees in it a lawsuit with a judge, an accused and an accuser. The Angel of the LORD – that is the LORD Himself (verse 2) – is the Judge; the high priest Joshua – he represents the people – is the accused; Satan is the accuser. Satan does not accuse unbelievers, he accuses believers. He is called “the accuser of our brethren” (Rev 12:10). The “right hand” is both the place of the accuser (Psa 109:6) and the place of the defender (Psa 109:31).

Here we get an impression of what is happening outside our field of vision. We also have that in the history of Balaam who wants to curse God’s people (Numbers 22-24). The accuser wants to paralyze us by pointing out everything that is not right. And he doesn’t make that up. It is right. But there is a solution. The accuser is completely proved to be wrong. We see how that is possible in the rest of the vision.

Zec 3:2 | The LORD Rebukes Satan

2 The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

Here it appears that the Angel of the LORD of verse 1 is the LORD Himself. Satan has gained access to the presence of God to accuse Joshua. But before he can open his mouth to express his accusation and bring the LORD to judgment, the LORD rebukes him for his evil plan. We also hear no defense from the mouth of Joshua. The LORD defends him against the accusation of Satan. How is this possible? Is the accusation not justified? The answer is yes and no.

There is enough unfaithfulness and there are enough sins that demand condemnation. God cannot simply ignore them. But there is also a perfectly adequate solution, a solution provided by God Himself. That solution is the sacrificial blood of His Son Jesus Christ. In this way God has been able to pass over the sins committed by His people in a completely righteous way (Rom 3:25). He looks forward here to the sacrifice of His Son.

God has been able to choose Jerusalem by grace (Rom 11:5) because He has seen the work of His Son ahead. Every election is always connected to the Lord Jesus. Therefore, every accusation has no chance of success. Through Christ the full right of God is fulfilled. With that proof, every accusation can be refuted, because through Him the guilt has been fulfilled.

If Satan is interested in us, that is a favorable sign. The evil one always tries to accuse. But “God is the one who justifies” (Rom 8:33). The supreme court acquits us. We have the proof in our pocket. Any accusation can be refuted with that evidence. The basis is: “Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us” (Rom 8:34).

The picture of the “brand plucked from the fire”, indicates that the salvation barely happened, at the last minute (cf. Amos 4:11). He who has been taken from the fire is saved from total destruction. This has happened for a certain purpose. God’s people would almost have been completely destroyed. God has punished Israel with the exile to Babylon. But He saved a remnant from that exile and thus prevented the total disappearance of the people. The fire here represents Babylon.

Zec 3:3-4 | Filthy Garments – Festal Robes

*3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.
4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”*

God’s Spirit does not hide the fact that Joshua is “clothed with filthy garments” (verse 3). The word for “filth” in Hebrew is a word that indicates filth of the most filthy and disgusting kind (Pro 30:12; Isa 4:4; 64:6). As mentioned before, God cannot condone the sins of His people. Joshua, however, does not stand before Satan in those dirty clothes, but before God. It is, as it were, an acknowledgment of his filth, that is, the people acknowledge the guilt of the dirty state of the priesthood.

Israel was saved from exile, but as a priestly nation it is an unclean people. The priesthood has been tainted by a long stay in a foreign country, the after-effects of which can still be seen, or again be seen. The priesthood is

not exercised in the way God wants it to be exercised. Heathen elements have made it unclean.

Joshua is not told to take off those filthy garments himself (verse 4). The LORD takes the word and commands His angels to take off Joshua's filthy garments. It is a symbol of getting rid of iniquity. In it forgiveness is suggested (cf. 2Sam 12:13b).

In Paul's letters we see how in a spiritual sense the filthy garments have been taken away from us. In every letter those garments have become filthy by something else. This can be the filthiness of legalism, about which is spoken of in the letter to the Galatians. It also can be about the filthiness of philosophy, spoken of in the letter to the Colossians. The ultimate goal of Paul's service is to "present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28). This means that every person who has come to repentance sees his new position in Christ, which is represented here by the "festal robes".

Such a work can only be done by those who live in God's presence, and whose lives are in accordance with it. God's mercy provides new robes. He commands to bring out "the best robe" and put it on the repentant man (Lk 15:20-24). For everyone who belongs to the church, this means that he may know that he is favored by God "in the Beloved" (Eph 1:6).

This is presented in the adoption and restoration in the position of the high priest Joshua. In this way God takes away the iniquities of His people and gives them festal robes. Festal robes – a word found only here and in Isaiah 3 (Isa 3:22) – speak of purity, joy, and glory. Here they symbolize the restoration of Israel to its original calling (Isa 61:10).

Zec 3:5 | A Clean Turban and Garments

5 Then I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the LORD was standing by.

The prophet – 'I' here is not the LORD, but Zechariah – is so involved in this scene and so aware of God's thoughts, that he makes a request to which the angels respond. He says that they must put on a clean turban on the high priest's head. Is there also a willingness with us to help, so that our brother or sister can return to the holy fellowship with the Lord?

The Angel of the LORD is standing by. All this takes place in His presence as proof that He is in complete agreement with it. The clean turban on the head suggests that Joshua – and in him the people – have new thoughts about the priesthood, thoughts that are in accordance with God’s intent of it.

Zec 3:6-7 | Conditions to Govern the House of God

6 And the angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, 7 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing [here].

A renewed priesthood needs a new command. There is talk of ‘admonish’ which refers to solemnly declare, a term also used for the affirmation of an oath. God solemnly declares here that He restores the priesthood for the people and the conditions that go with it. The conditions come from “the LORD of hosts”. He is the same as “the Angel of the LORD”, but the emphasis is here on His authority over all things.

Here we speak of ‘if’, which indicates a condition. This is not an issue with cleansing. There everything is grace. But when it comes to service, conditions must be met. There are first two conditions – twice ‘if you’ – and then three results – ‘then you ... and ... and’. The first thing that is important in this new position is personal Godliness and obedience in a walk in the ways of the LORD. If that is good, Joshua will be assigned a service. For us it also applies that the Lord gives us a task when we have been given the new state and when injustice in practice no longer clings to us and we remain faithful in that way.

If the conditions are met, the people will

1. govern the house of God, that is to say, that He gives insight to supervise how the service is done;
2. have charge of the courts of God’s house, that is to say, supervise those who may do service;
3. be granted free access given by the LORD among the company of priests.

Zec 3:8 | The Promise of the Branch

8 Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you —indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.

After the command comes another promise. With the call “now listen”, the special attention of Joshua is asked for this. It also underlines the importance of what follows. The friends of Joshua, his fellow priests, must also listen carefully, because the promise is also for them. They sit “in front of” him, that is, in his presence, before his face (cf. Eze 8:1). We can see here in Joshua a type of the Lord Jesus in the company of His disciples, whom He calls “friends”, because He has revealed to them everything He has heard from His Father (Jn 15:15).

The friends are “a symbol” –or: men to be observed as a sign (foot note Darby Translation) – which means that in their priestly function they are meant to be a symbol or sign of God, Who made the priesthood possible again. They are also a sign that refers to the great Priest, Jesus Christ. They are signs with a prophetic meaning, signs of a future event (cf. Isa 8:18). Joshua and his friends also refer to something else and that is that God, through cleansing, will always maintain a priestly generation. God is a God of wonders, of which the maintenance of the priesthood is one. This may be an encouragement to us.

God points Joshua and his friends to His Servant Whom He will send. That Servant is presented as an encouragement of the cleansed Joshua and his fellow priests. A God-cleansed priesthood always rejoices over the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is the Branch or Sprout, the Servant, Whom God is going to bring in (Zec 6:12; Isa 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Lk 1:78). He is the Branch or Sprout from the stem of Jesse. The kingship seemed dead, but it lives in Him.

His Name Branch or Sprout shows the humility, the tenderness of the coming Messiah and that He is Man. There is also the thought of freshness and the power of a life that sprouts. It speaks of Christ with Whose coming something totally new arises. That Christ is introduced here is because God wants us to understand that nothing is right if it is not introduced by

Christ. Something is only right if it is connected to Him and that is only the case if it has been processed by Him.

He is also the source of all future blessings. In the future, God will restore these conditions among His people when the priestly service will take place again before the Antichrist will stop it. Their hearts will be turned toward the coming Branch or Sprout. Also for us, the priesthood only functions well when our eye is focused on the Lord Jesus.

Zec 3:9 | The Stone

9 For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

After Knecht and Branch or Sprout, “stone” is the third name for the Messiah (Psa 118:22; Isa 28:16; Mt 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1Pet 2:6). Christ is the foundation of a building that bears His mark. Whoever sees Him knows that the foundation is in order, even though everything is still so weak. The “seven eyes” are the “seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5) and point to His omniscience, His complete understanding of all things. Through God’s Spirit the work will be accomplished.

Through the engraving that God Himself does, it is a beautiful Stone, a splendor that becomes visible in His whole life, His whole Person, in everything He has done and still does and will do. There is infinitely more inscribed on this Stone than on the two stone tablets of the Law. It contains the names of all those who belong to His people (cf. Exo 28:9,11,21).

In one day the iniquity will be removed, that is at the coming of Christ. It is symbolically represented in the removal of the filthy garments in verse 4. By the power of the Spirit of God all this will already be realized. Here we can see a reference to the Day of Atonement which is held once a year. But the annual repetition makes it clear that the blood sacrificed on that day cannot take away sins.

Getting rid of iniquity is connected with the Stone, Christ, the foundation. That foundation is what He did on the cross. Through Him the iniquity of the people is taken away. This happened on the cross, on that one, unique day that is central to eternity, when He died there. Getting rid of the sins is

not a process. He has accomplished it in His work. It is finished once and for all, repetition is not necessary (Heb 10:10,12,14).

Zec 3:10 | Every One Under His Vine and His Fig Tree

10 'In that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to [sit] under [his] vine and under [his] fig tree.'"

When to Israel the full result of Christ's work will be attributed, it will also have an effect on their relationship with each other. This will be fully the case in the realm of peace, where peace, freedom and security will be enjoyed (1Kgs 4:25; Mic 4:4). The result will be enjoyed in fellowship with each other. The vine speaks of joy and the fig tree speaks of righteousness.

We can also invite others to enjoy what we have received ourselves. It is a part of the joy (1Jn 1:3). This joy is based on righteousness. This joy is given to us by the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God, which will be established on earth under the reign of the Lord Jesus, is already a spiritual reality for believers. What will soon apply to Israel and the whole earth already applies to the believers of the church. For them "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

Zechariah 4

Introduction

In Zechariah 3 it is about the religious head, the high priest. In Zechariah 4 it is about the political head, the prince.

First, God's ideal is presented, that Israel will be a testimony to Him in the world. Then we also see the power God gives to respond to it.

Zec 4:1 | Zechariah Awakened

1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.

It seems that Zechariah has entered a sleep state because of what he saw (cf. Dan 8:18; 10:9-10). He must be awakened because there is more to see and pass on. It is not over yet.

The awakening of Zechariah presupposes that this night vision is particularly meant for a time of spiritual awakening. This prophecy is given to encourage those who build the house of God in a "remnant time" that is, in a period when the people of God are characterized by great weakness. This awakening is done by God or on His behalf, not through human intervention. Only the Spirit of God can effect an awakening, enabling God to make His communications in a way that they are also understood and accepted.

Zec 4:2-3 | The Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees

2 He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; 3 also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."

Zechariah is roused. He is awakened. Then the LORD asks him what he sees. The question forces Zechariah to look closely. He is summoned to give the greatest attention to what he sees. Then he can describe in detail

what he sees. He sees “a lampstand all of gold”. There has been one like that in the tabernacle (Exo 25:31-40).

Zechariah also sees how the oil, through which the seven lamps of the lampstand can burn, is going to those lamps. At the top of the lampstand is a bowl drum. From this bowl, seven spouts go to each of the seven lamps. Through these spouts the oil flows to the lamps. The oil in the bowl is supplied by two olive trees. From the olive trees, the oil is transported through two spouts to the bowl at the top of the lampstand. In this way the lampstand can burn continuously. Of the two trees there is one on the right side and one on the left side of the lampstand.

This picture shows the constant, unlimited and God-governed supply for the light He wants to spread through His people. There is no human help involved in this, as there has been in the care of the light in the tabernacle and the temple. Only if God’s Spirit – the oil is a picture of Him (1Jn 2:20,27) – controls every detail, can the service be for the glory of God.

The lampstand is a picture of the Lord Jesus. He is the light of the world. In it we see the power of the Holy Spirit, which emanates from Christ, the Anointed. Just as the lampstand carries the lamps, so the Lord Jesus carries the believers. It is said to us, the followers of Christ, that we are the light of the world (Mt 5:14). We must let our lamps burn and let our light shine in the world (Lk 12:35; Phil 2:15; Rev 1:20). For this we need the power of the Holy Spirit.

Zec 4:4-5 | Question About the Meaning of the Vision

4 Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, “What are these, my lord?” 5 So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.”

The prophet does not remain silent after telling what he sees. He also wants to know the meaning of it and asks for it. He does not ask his question because he does not know the meaning of the lampstand. He is well aware of it. He asks about the meaning of “these”, that is the whole of the night vision. He wants to know what the lampstand and the olive trees have to say, what their application is for him and for his people and for their circumstances.

The reaction of the LORD gives the impression that He supposes that Zechariah should have known the meaning after all. But Zechariah must admit that he does not know it. He does so with great respect and reverence for the LORD whom he addresses with “Lord”, Adonai, which means the sovereign Lord.

Zec 4:6 | Not by Force, but by God’s Spirit

6 Then he said to me, *“This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.*

The LORD then answers the question of Zechariah. He begins by saying that the answer is “the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel”. The word of the LORD is with regard to future events with a view to the rebuilding of the temple. Zerubbabel is discouraged by the opposition to the rebuilding. Now he is encouraged that he does not have to expect it from human might, from his own effort, but that the Spirit of God guarantees that the work will be done.

With “might” and “power” we can think of a mighty individual and the power of a crowd, both of which involve human input. Even though someone is still so strong and even though there are so many people together, God cannot use any of them to do His work.

This is what the One says Who cannot and does not have to use human might, since He is “the LORD of hosts”. All earthly and heavenly hosts are subject to Him and available to Him.

With this explanation the LORD declares that the vision speaks of God’s Spirit through whom Zerubbabel can do God’s work. The result of that work is the testimony of God’s glory in the world.

How important this word is also for our days full of committees, schedules, organizations, budgets, sponsor actions and so on. Because a work for God is a spiritual work through and through, it can never be done by human effort, not by one’s own might or the authority of others (cf. Hos 1:7). God’s work can only succeed in the power of the almighty, infallible Spirit of God.

Just as the lamps are supplied with oil, coming from a source not of human manufacture, and also without human intervention, God's work is not done through a crowd or by energetic and persuasive people. Weakness is not an impediment, but on the contrary a necessity for God to be able to do His work (2Cor 12:9a; 1Sam 14:6b; 2Chr 14:11; Heb 11:34).

Zec 4:7 | Grace, Grace

7 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [you will become] a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

If there is a conviction that God's Spirit works and is truly sufficient to do God's work, the challenging question can be asked: "What are you, O great mountain?" These challenging sounding words are not pride, but an expression of the full confidence that the "great mountain," the impressive empire that dominates, cannot prevent the work of God (cf. Jer 51:25; Rev 8:8). In the "great mountain," in a general sense, we can also see the colossal difficulties and obstacles that arise as a mountain in doing a work for God (Mt 21:21; Isa 40:3-5; Ezra 4:1-4,23-24; 5:1-5).

Zerubbabel will see with his own eyes that by God's Spirit will be removed what stands in the way of his work to complete the rebuilding. Faith may know that by the power of God's Spirit the mountains of trouble will become "a plain" or a highway.

The top stone still needs to be placed and then the work is done. Christ is the foundation and He is the Accomplisher of the work. The temple, the sanctuary has to be there to put the lampstand in it.

The last words of this verse can be understood as a praying wish that God's blessing will rest continually on this work. Perseverance, by the grace of God, crowns the life of the Christian. The enduring presence of our Lord in grace in His church on earth until His coming is the testimony that He Who founded it also sustains it.

The repetition "grace, grace" emphasizes that from the beginning to the end everything is grace. Obstacles disappear for the faith, the work is finished, everything is grace.

Zec 4:8-9 | Promise of Completion

8 Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 9 “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish [it]. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

The word of the LORD comes to the prophet (verse 8). The word is about Zerubbabel. Here Zerubbabel receives a confirmation that he himself will complete the work. It means for him an extra encouragement (verse 9). This promise is literally fulfilled (Ezra 6:15).

The ‘Me’ Who is sent, at the end of verse 9, is not Zechariah, but the Messiah (Zec 6:15; cf. Zec 2:9,11; 3:2). When the prophecies are fully fulfilled and the new temple is built, the Messiah will come to His temple. Then everyone will acknowledge that it is He Who has been sent by God to His people.

Zec 4:10 | The Day of Small Things

10 For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel —[these are] the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.”

“The day of small things” is the day when He can accomplish the working of His might in and through the weakness of His people. We also see here the seven Spirits of God (Rev 4:5) that are there in the day of small things. They can be with few people to do God’s work. The masses have stayed in Babylon. Only the rest of them start the work to restore the priestly service. They cannot force anyone, but through the full activity of God’s Spirit – the number seven speaks of fullness – a number of people have woken up and started building.

From the church in Philadelphia the Lord Jesus says that she has “little power” (Rev 3:8). But He immediately lets follow: “And have kept My word, and have not denied My name.” Therefore, He gives the promise that they will be a pillar in the temple of His God (Rev 3:12). This may already be realized by us in faith in the power of the Spirit.

The small and weak remnant is promised joy when they will see how Zerubbabel will measure the end result and it will turn out to be in order

according to God's standards. He does so with "the plumb line" as a lead in his hand. It shows his close, personal involvement with the work.

"These seven" who are "glad", are "the eyes of the LORD" which see all that is happening on earth (2Chr 16:9a; Pro 15:3). The LORD perceives both the opposition to His work and those who work for Him. These eyes now see with pleasure Zerubbabel who is building. Zerubbabel is a type of the Messiah Who will build the temple in the realm of peace (Ezekiel 40-43). This is how God looks to us with pleasure when we build for Him, even if it is the day of small things. But the power of the Holy Spirit is present.

Zec 4:11-12 | Question About the Olive Trees

11 Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?" 12 And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden [oil] from themselves?"

The night vision is not quite clear yet for Zechariah. That is why he asks further (verse 11). He even asks the question again, adding something to the question of which he would like to know the meaning (verse 12).

In his repetition of the question, the prophet speaks of oil as "golden [oil]". In the picture it is thus indicated that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, just as Christ – represented in the golden lampstand – is. The two golden pipes through which the oil runs can be seen as the means which God uses to let run the flow of the Spirit.

We can think of precepts, but also of servants of the Word. The oil does not come from a dead reservoir, but from living olive trees nourished by God (cf. Psalms 52:8; Hosea 14:7; Romans 12:1). The golden stream of oil is available to us in the work that the Lord commands us to do. Both the oil and the pipes are made of gold, which means that in this case there is no distinction between the means the Lord uses and what He gives. Here, so to speak, there is no distinction between the weakness of the vessel, the servant, and the treasure in the vessel, the Spirit.

Zec 4:13-14 | What the Olive Trees Represent

13 So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." 14 Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth."

The Lord answers the questions of Zechariah first with a counter-question (verse 13). In the counter-question the assumption sounds again that he might know the meaning of these things (verse 5). Again he has to acknowledge that he does not know the meaning and again he does so with great respect and reverence for the LORD, whom he addresses again with "Lord", Adonai, that is the sovereign Lord.

Then he gets the explanation (verse 14). The two olive trees "are the two anointed ones" (literally "sons of oil"). They are standing "by the Lord [Adonai] of the whole earth". They are standing in a position where servants wait for orders from their Lord. They represent Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two anointed ones. In the Old Testament we see that kings – Zerubbabel stands in the royal line – and priests – Joshua is high priest – are anointed in view of their service.

The two olive trees, a picture of the King and the Priest, Christ, provide the oil for the LORD's testimony concerning the Messiah. The Lord Jesus always does everything through the Holy Spirit. We see that during His life on earth before the cross, His work on the cross and His life after the cross in the resurrection. Also later in the realm of peace He will do everything in the power of the Holy Spirit, as shown in this vision (cf. Isa 11:2).

In Revelation 11 we also read about two witnesses called "the two olive trees and the two lampstands" and that they "stand before the Lord of the earth" (Rev 11:4). Their testimony has the character of Moses and Elijah. Moses was king and Elijah sacrificed for Israel as a priest. The Lord Jesus is the King-Priest. The two witnesses bear witness to this. In those difficult times they do so by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 5

Introduction

In Zechariah 4 the people are shown after the ideal of God. Zechariah 5 shows the people as they really are. Therefore, it deals with judgment, as well as the last night vision in Zechariah 6 (Zec 6:1-8). So far encouragement has been heard, but now the judgment is announced because of the true condition of the people.

In the sixth night vision, with the flying scroll (verses 1-4), the transgressors of the law are judged and thus sinners are removed. In the seventh night vision, with the woman in the ephah (verses 5-11) the land is cleansed by removing wickedness, the principle of sin. In this way the land will truly become the “holy land” (Zec 2:12).

Zec 5:1 | A Flying Scroll

1 Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, [there was] a flying scroll.

Zechariah lifts up his eyes again in a vision. In the vision he sees “a flying scroll”. The flying scroll represents the active power of the Word of God, working in judgment, a judgment that is quickly carried out.

The scroll plays an important role in Scripture. It contains the councils of God regarding Christ (Psa 40:7), His grace which He reveals in the Lord Jesus. The scroll also contains God’s intentions with the earth. That scroll is in the hand of God and is given to the Lord Jesus, the Lamb (Rev 5:7; cf. Eze 2:1,2,9,10). The main idea in Revelation is, on the one hand, God’s grace in salvation for His people, the believers, and on the other hand, the judgment of the wicked. Here in Zechariah it is the judgment of His unfaithful people.

Zec 5:2 | The Sizes of the Scroll

2 And he said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.”

The LORD asks Zechariah what he sees. Zechariah answers with an accurate description of the scroll. He sees it flying. He also gives its length size and width size because they are striking sizes.

The sizes of the scroll are the sizes of God's sanctuary, the holy place of the temple (1Kgs 6:3). This indicates that the Word of God does not differ in anything from what is appropriate for God's presence, but is fully in accordance with it. It is a great book, because it contains many curses because of the many sins of the people. It is a completely unrolled book, it can be read by everyone, and also long and wide, by all to see and perceive. The message of judgment is hidden from no one.

We can learn from this that God applies judgment to the spiritual state of the people according to the measure of the sanctuary. The relationship between this book of curses and the sanctuary also tells us that judgment begins with the house of God (Eze 9:6; 1Pet 4:17). With this measure all sinners will be measured. This means that they are not part of the church of God and that they will be and remain removed from the holy place where God dwells.

Zec 5:3 | The Twofold, General Curse

3 Then he said to me, "This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side.

It is a book of curses for "the whole land", because the whole land is full of sin. The curse particularly affects the members of God's people who are thieves and who swear falsely. Not all sins are enumerated. They are summarized in stealing, that is sin against one's neighbor, and swearing a false oath, that is sin against God. We see this division also in the ten commandments on the two stone tables of the law (Lk 10:27). He who is guilty of one commandment is guilty of all (Jam 2:10).

Stealing is the violation of the eighth commandment (Exo 20:15). It is a sin against one's neighbor, but also against God, because with every sin is stolen from Him what He is entitled to. Every little Christian confession that is not the work of God is stolen. For example, we steal from Him when we

use time due to Him for ourselves and when we spend money due to Him for ourselves. In this way we have to apply to ourselves what is written on the scroll.

False swearing is the violation of the third commandment (Exo 20:7). It is a sin against God in which His Name is wrongfully used and connected to our own affairs. This sin occurs when a wrong thing is approved by attaching the Name of God to it. Thus, God's Name is connected to many things in Christianity that He hates and about which He will bring judgment, the curse.

Abuse of the Lord's Name can also be related to coming together in the Lord's Name or expressing prophecies in His Name, like 'so says the Lord' in charismatic circles. If we profess to come together in the Name of the Lord, but we do so on a sectarian basis, it means that we abuse His Name, swearing false.

Zec 5:4 | The Curse Goes Forth

4 I will make it go forth," declares the LORD of hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones."

The LORD Himself makes the curse go forth, that is to send it from His presence. He says this as "the LORD of hosts". If he makes the curse go forth, it can be stopped by nothing and nobody. The curse goes forth and is sent straight to the house of both the thief and him who swears falsely. God knows where to find every evildoer (Jer 23:24) to give him his righteous punishment. Though they think no one sees their sins, nothing is hidden from God (Psa 94:7,9).

The curse enters the house of the lawbreaker and takes its place there, "within that house". He cannot be expelled from it, there is no spell against it. The curse spends the night there and does its destructive work from within. The whole house is destroyed (cf. Lev 14:45). There is nothing left of their own house for which they have worked so hard, while they have neglected God's house.

Zec 5:5-6 | The Ephah

5 Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth." 6 I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land

It seems that the Angel has withdrawn after the vision of the scroll and now comes forward again with a new statement in a new vision (verse 5). He tells Zechariah to lift up his eyes to see what is going forth.

This night vision, the seventh, is about "the ephah", which is a size of probably between twenty and forty-five liters. The ephah symbolizes a profession and trade that must be done fairly (Eze 45:9-11; Amos 8:5). God has measured sin precisely and also under control. Here the ephah represents the sinful system, while the previous vision is about sinful deeds. This sinful system is found and maintained throughout the land. Care is taken that this ruling system is not affected. It controls the entire spiritual climate.

Zec 5:7-8 | The Woman Inside the Ephah

7 (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah." 8 Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.

On the ephah there is a lead cover (verse 7), which emphasizes the absoluteness of the prevailing wickedness, but at the same time prevents full revelation. This is how God indicates it here. The cover is not a hindrance for God to reveal what hidden power is at work behind the wickedness, which controls the wickedness. The cover is lifted up to let Zechariah and us look into it.

In the ephah is a woman sitting. The woman or the female as a symbol often represents a certain position that someone or something occupies. This woman symbolizes the position that idolatry has received in God's people. Idolatry has been given a fixed place there. That the woman sits, means that she is in complete rest and that she controls the situation.

The woman is called "wickedness". She represents wickedness (cf. Rev 17:3-5). This corresponds to what Paul calls "the mystery of lawlessness"

(2Thes 2:7). The Septuagint – the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament – uses the same words here in Zechariah as Paul uses in the second letter to the Thessalonians.

“Sin is lawlessness” (1Jn 3:5b), i.e. not recognizing any authority. In our days we see the forerunners of the great apostacy. The presence of the Holy Spirit still holds back the full development. Our moral norms are imperceptibly lowered to those prevailing in the world. This lowering has an effect on our service to the Lord.

This vision shows that in the people of God idolatrous principles are at work. This is not hidden from God, but many of God’s people do not see this. Zechariah gains insight into it, just as every believer who lives with the Lord gains this insight when he reads God’s Word.

Evil is here present in the bud. It is still restrained by the lead cover. God does not yet allow the full revelation of wickedness (2Thes 2:6-8).

Zec 5:9 | Two Women and the Ephah

9 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.

When Zechariah lifts up his eyes once more, he sees two women coming out. We can consider them as twin sisters. They represent civil and spiritual authority, or superstition and unbelief, or Pharisees and Sadducees. We can consider them as the demonic counterparts of Zerubbabel and Joshua. The idolatry has pushed Zerubbabel and Joshua from their God-given place as leaders of God’s people and has taken their place.

They are carried and propelled by the wind, a picture of demonic powers – ‘wind’ and ‘spirit’ are the same word – and lead the people to total apostacy. They have, so to speak, the wind in their sails and have prosperity in their evil enterprise. We often see that wicked people live in prosperity (Psa 73:2-5).

The women have “wings like the wings of a stork”. A stork is an unclean bird (Lev 11:19). Through these depraved powers, the ephah with the woman in it – the apostate Israel – is lifted up “between the earth and the

heavens". In that position no earthly power can reach it and do something with it. God can, but He allows evil to develop until the measure is full. The stork is a strong bird capable of covering a long distance.

Zec 5:10-11 | The Ephah Taken to Shinar

10 I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?" 11 Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal."

The prophet does not ask what the ephah means, neither does he ask the meaning of the women who carry it, but only wants to know where the ephah is taken (verse 10).

The answer goes beyond the question (verse 11). The Angel answers the question of where the women take the ephah, and adds a few more details. The ephah is taken to the land of Shinar. In Shinar lies Babylon (Gen 10:10; 11:2,9). It is the land where man unites for the first time in rebellion against God. That is where the woman in the ephah belongs. The principles of idolatry belong in Babylon, but they are found under the remnant.

In the – now near – future these idolatrous principles will regain their true place, "her own pedestal". In faith we must give them that place now. The building of a house presupposes a permanent dwelling place. That is where ungodliness came from. Wickedness is traced back to its origins.

Babylon does not deny God, but wants to make itself equal to God in its pride. It is a religious system that is always in rebellion against God. This system has great appeal to the people of God (Jos 7:21). How much of 'Babylon', the nominal Christian world, has been taken over by us in our service to God? It is idolatry and must be removed from the land.

Zechariah 6

Zec 6:1 | Four Chariots and Two Bronze Mountains

1 Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains [were] bronze mountains.

After the seven previous night visions, follows the eighth and last night vision. Zechariah sees four chariots. They represent the four world empires, while we see that God is completely in control of them. In Daniel 2 the empires are also represented, but then Nebuchadnezzar sees them, namely as a great statue (Dan 2:31-33). In Daniel 7 they appear again, but then Daniel sees them, namely as senseless beasts (Dan 7:1-7). Zechariah also sees them in verses 2-3 as senseless beasts.

Kingdoms are nothing in themselves and can only do what pleases God. We see this in the two mountains, probably Mount Moria (or Zion) and Mount of Olives. Both mountains play an important role in the history of Jerusalem and in prophecy. Between the two mountains is the valley of Jehoshaphat – meaning “Yahweh judges” – where the nations will be judged (Joel 3:12). The mountains are said to be made of bronze (cf. Psa 36:7). Bronze is a picture of the righteousness of God connected to the judgment (Num 16:37-40). God upholds His right when He judges hostile nations and protects His people, the believing remnant, from judgment.

God always reaches His goal and does so in a perfectly righteous way. The empires believe that they can do what they want. But here we see these empires with the eyes of the prophet, with the eyes of faith. We see how God directs the empires in their way. The chariots symbolize the government of God, Who is on His way to carry out His judgment on the four empires. The chariots of history go the way God wants. They accomplish the will of God without knowing it themselves. God directs history in such a way that His purpose is achieved.

The fact that there are four chariots indicates the universal of God’s directing. We see this in expressions like “four winds of the heavens” (Zec 2:6;

Eze 37:9), “the four ends of heaven” (Jer 49:36) and “the four corners of the earth” (Rev 7:1).

Zec 6:2-3 | The Four Chariots and the Horses

2 With the first chariot [were] red horses, with the second chariot black horses, 3 with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.

The description of the horses is somewhat similar to that in Zechariah 1 (Zec 1:8; cf. Rev 6:3-8). The similarity is that in both visions there are different colored horses. Apart from that, there are only differences. In Zechariah 1 we see only horses, with riders on them. They go over the earth to record the state of affairs and report about it (Zec 1:8-11). Here they are war chariots with horses to carry out God’s judgments (Psa 68:17). Each chariot has its own area (verse 6).

Zec 6:4-5 | The Four Spirits of Heaven

4 Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, “What are these, my lord?” 5 The angel replied to me, “These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth,

Zechariah wants to know the meaning of the chariots (verse 4). He asks “the angel”, which is the Angel of the LORD, whom he addresses with “Lord”, Adonai. The Angel answers that the chariots are “the four spirits of heaven” (cf. 7:1; Dan 7:2). They are powers that are sent out from heaven. It means that the four empires going forth are called up from heaven. In Psalm 104 winds – wind and spirit is the same word in Hebrew – are the messengers of God who carry out His will (Psa 104:4).

All these powers have as their point of departure “the Lord of all the earth” (cf. Zec 4:14). The name of God has been “the God of heaven” since the exile. But God never gives up His claims to the earth. In order to maintain His claims He uses the ruling powers. They are under the providence of God Himself. He determines where they go, without them being able to deviate from the path He wants them to go. We see that in the two mountains of bronze they walk between. They are controlled by demonic powers, which are completely under God’s control.

Nations fight each other, but the demonic powers in the heavenly places that govern them do not fight each other, but God and His people. The main reason for the existence of the realm of Babylon is that through them God wanted to discipline the Assyrians for their attitude towards Israel. He also wanted to use the Babylonians as a means of discipline for His people because of their unfaithfulness. But when they violate His people, they are in turn given into the power of the next empire.

Zec 6:6-7 | Where the Horses Are Going Forth to

6 with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country. 7 When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth." And He said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth.

About the red horses, where we can think of Babylon, nothing more is said because this empire is already over. The black horses represent the Medes and Persians. They go to the north where the Babylonian world empire is and subdue it. Then come the white horses, representing the Greek-Macedonian empire, and they conquer the Medo-Persian empire. Then come the horses representing the Roman world empire which also conquer the land of the south, which is Egypt, making Egypt a province of the Roman empire.

The strong horses, the Romans, want to subdue the whole earth and not just the country in the north and the country in the south. They can only fulfill their desire under God's permission. They are not aware of this. We don't read that in the history books either. But for faith this is reality.

Zec 6:8 | God's Wrath Appeased

8 Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, "See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north."

God cries out to Zechariah and then speaks to him. The fact that the crying out of God precedes His speaking means that it is an urgent call to pay attention for what He is about to say. He tells Zechariah that He wanted the judgment of Babylon to appease His wrath. Literally it says "caused My spirit to rest in". This is a thing of the past in Zechariah's time.

God's Spirit had no rest when His people stayed in Babylon. He worked in Cyrus to call His people to return to their land (Ezra 1:1-3). Cyrus carried out the judgments of God on the Chaldeans. He helped, favored and redeemed God's people. All this is very pleasing to God. It has calmed His Spirit.

Zec 6:9-10 | Zechariah Must Take an Offering

9 The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, 10 "Take [an offering] from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon.

When all postulated authority has been set aside and God's Spirit has come to rest through the judgments exercised, it is the time for God to show the authority acknowledged by Him. This happens in the following message. This does not come in a vision like the previous message, but through "the word of the LORD" (verse 9).

The LORD says to Zechariah that three men from Babylon who still live there, will come to visit him. They are mentioned by name. The three are a remnant in Babylon and represent those who will return to Israel in the last days, which are now near. Not all who stayed in Babylon have alienated themselves from God's people. Although the serious word to flee from Babylon has also come to them (Zec 2:6), yet they have remained there.

Now they perform an act of faith that transcends the behavior of the returnees. They bring a great offering for the rebuilding of the temple. That is a stimulus for the others. God works profit for His house through the tribulation of exile. .

They come with gifts, with silver and gold (verse 11). Much silver and gold is found with those who, through the exercise of exile, have learned to appreciate Jerusalem and the house of God. Silver speaks of what God is as He makes Himself known in the grace of reconciliation. Gold reminds us of the glory of God.

Zechariah has to go to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, on the same day that he gets the assignment. Josiah means 'Yahweh supports', Zephaniah means 'Yahweh protects'. In the house that is connected to

these names, the meeting takes place. The envoy from Babylon is already there and Zechariah has to join them there.

Zec 6:11-12 | The Branch

11 Take silver and gold, make an [ornate] crown and set [it] on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. 12 Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD.

Zechariah must make an ornate crown out of the silver and gold (verse 11). He must then set it on the head of Joshua, the high priest. A crown does not belong to a high priest, but on the head of a king, the head of Zerubbabel, who is out of the line of David. However, God wants to show that King and Priest unite in the Person of the Messiah. Placing the crown on the head of the High Priest speaks symbolic language.

Zechariah must explain the meaning of this act to Joshua so that Joshua will not think he is the actual king. He must do so in the Name of the LORD of hosts, a name often mentioned in the remainder of the book. It is the name that indicates that the LORD has all power over all earthly and heavenly hosts.

The crown is connected to the Branch, literally Sprout, that is to come (Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15-17). The call "behold, a man" is reminiscent of what Pilate says: "Behold, the Man!" (Jn 19:5). The Sprout is the Messiah from the house of David. Sprout means 'to sprout out' (Isa 53:2). He "will branch out from where He is" or "sprout out", that is, out of Zion or Jerusalem. The Savior shall come out of Zion (Rom 11:26; Psa 14:7), not to Zion. He is ascribed to Zion, he belongs to Zion (Psa 87:5-6).

Joshua here in his ministry is a type of the Messiah, Who will be King-Priest, "He will be a priest on His throne" (verse 13). He will be "a shoot" that "will spring from the stem of Jesse" (Isa 11:1). He shall come forth from His own people. And He will build the glorious temple of the realm of peace which we find in Ezekiel 40-43. Here it is about the future temple.

Zec 6:13 | The Messiah Is Priest on His Throne

13 Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”

Verses 12-13 give a beautiful picture of the Messiah as King and Priest. He will have this dignity after His enemies have been dealt with, as described in the last night vision. He is still in heaven now and is not sitting on His own throne, but on that of His Father (Rev 3:21). The moment that God will give Him His own throne, the throne of his father David, has yet to come (Lk 1:32). Then He will reign as King.

Everything gives way to Him:

1. The high priest Joshua of Zechariah 3 gives way to the Messiah Priest.
2. The governor Zerubbabel of Zechariah 4 gives way to the Messiah King.
3. Zerubbabel, the temple builder, gives way to Him Who builds the temple.
4. The two anointed ones of Zechariah 4 (Zec 4:14) give way to the anointed King-Priest.

He is the true Melchizedek, who was also king and priest (Heb 7:1). His kingship lays the foundation for His authority; His priesthood connects His caring grace and compassion to it. Each time the emphasis is on 'He'. In this verse that word is rightly stated at the beginning of every line.

Between the two sides of the ministry that are present in one Person, “the counsel of peace” takes place. The royal aspect and the priestly aspect are in perfect harmony in Him. The counsel of peace will be there between the Messiah and Yahweh. He is Man and also God. This cannot be said of any human being. As a Man he is King and Priest, as Yahweh He fulfills all His promises in Him.

Zec 6:14 | The Crown Comes in the Temple

14 Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah.

This prophecy is given in response to the faithful act of the three men from Babylon whose hearts go out to God's temple. The crown is given a place in the temple that Zerubbabel builds. The remembrance of the faith of the three and of the goodness of the one who took them into the house (verse 10) will remain connected to the temple. Their deed will always remain in remembrance; that great is that deed for God.

Also today God has a temple, His house, the church. There God searches for hearts who want to contribute to its rebuilding in order to fulfill its purpose, which is that worship is performed. He will always think with joy of everyone, with whom He finds that.

Zec 6:15 | The Nations Will Come and Build

15 Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD." Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.

Those "who are far off" are the nations. They will cooperate in building the temple of the LORD. It is about those from the nations who repent to the God of Israel. They will be counted among God's people and will be allowed to build, not the temple, but the wall (Isa 60:10).

Again, the 'me' sent is ultimately the Messiah and not Zechariah (cf. Zec 4:9). Zechariah is here a picture of Him. The prerequisite for the fulfillment of all these things is to "completely obey the LORD your God". They will do the same in the future, for then the law of God is given in their minds and written in their hearts (Heb 8:10). Then He is truly 'their God'.

Zechariah 7

Introduction

The contents of Zechariah 7-8 is especially of practical significance. These chapters are as it were a short pause. They are easier to understand, but more difficult to put into practice. They emphasize a righteous life by the people of God in the light of their unfaithfulness in the past and the glory that will be their part in the future.

Zechariah 7-8 is divided into four parts. Each part begins with “the word of the LORD” coming to Zechariah (Zec 7:1,8; 8:1,18).

Zec 7:1 | The Word of the LORD Comes to Zechariah

1 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth [day] of the ninth month, [which is] Chislev.

After the memorable night in which Zechariah got his eight night visions, two years have passed. It will take another two years before the rebuilding of the temple is completed. In between, that is “the fourth year of King Darius” or the year 518 BC the word of the LORD comes to Zechariah. It happens at the beginning of the month Chislev. That month corresponds to a part of our month November and a part of December.

Zec 7:2-3 | An Envoy With a Question About Fasting

2 Now [the town of] Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men to seek the favor of the LORD, 3 speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, “Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?”

There are two men coming from Bethel. They have Babylonian names, which seems to say that they were born in Babylon and are among the returnees (cf. Zec 6:10). They do not help in temple building, but now come to seek the favor of the LORD. It seems that their hearts go out to the temple and that they are saddened by its destruction.

Two years after the night visions, these men come to the priests with a question about fasting in the fifth month. The priests are supposed to be familiar with the law of God (Deu 17:9). They also address their question to the prophets. These will be Haggai and Zechariah. Their question concerns fasting in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC (Jer 52:12-13). They have been fasting for seventy years now, i.e. from the beginning of the exile. It is not a fast instituted by the LORD, but an own initiative of the people. Now that the new temple is almost ready, they ask whether it still makes sense to continue with it.

The background of the question is not entirely clear. There sounds some fatigue in the remark “as I have done these many years”. It has become a rut, a habit of which the usefulness is no longer recognized. The question has arisen whether it is still necessary to continue with it. If God wants it, He must say so. Then they will continue with it.

Man always wants to know what he is up to. He prefers to have rules, then he can stick to them and thus measure whether he is doing the right thing. Thus with us the question can arise: ‘Is it really that important to celebrate the Lord’s Supper every Sunday? If it has to be done, then it has to be done, but where does it say it has to be done?’ As a counter-question may be asked: ‘Why does this question arise, what is the cause of it?’ If the Lord’s Supper is nothing more than an obligation, it can also be celebrated once a year, or when it is convenient.

But God is not interested in outer habits. He wants to see what is in the heart for Him. That is why He gives principles, starting points, by which they can live their lives under the guidance of the Spirit. The answer to the question is therefore not ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

There is fasting in the fifth month (verse 3) and in the seventh month (verse 5). In the next chapter two more days of fasting are added (Zec 8:19).

1. The day of fasting in the fifth month is on the occasion of the capture of the city and the destruction of the temple (Jer 39:2; 52:6-7).
2. The day of fasting in the seventh month is on account of – it is believed – the murder of Gedaliah, the man appointed by Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs 25:8-9; Jer 51:1). That too is a catastrophe.

The question of the envoy is about fasting in the fifth month, in remembrance of the destruction of the temple. Now that the temple is almost rebuilt, fasting in remembrance of that seems no longer necessary. After all, with a rebuilt temple there is no reason anymore to continue to “weep ... and abstain”. On the contrary, there is reason to rejoice. They would therefore no longer have to behave like Nazarites by separating themselves from the pleasant things of life that are permitted in themselves, such as food and drink (Num 6:3).

Zec 7:4-5 | For Whom Have They Fasted?

4 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 5 “Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted?’

The question has been put to the priests and prophets (verse 3), but the LORD Himself answers through His prophet (verse 4). It is an answer in two parts. The first part is in the remainder of this chapter and the second part is in Zechariah 8. In the first part He says what He expects of the people and why He was obliged to lead them into exile. In the second part He promises them that He will accept them again in His favor.

The question is asked in the singular “shall I ...” (verse 3), but the answer comes “to all the people of the land and to the priests” (verse 5). The question is about fasting in the fifth month, but the answer includes fasting in the seventh month. In the seventh month Gedaliah was killed and the remains fled (2Kgs 25:23-25; Jer 41:1-3).

It appears from the answer of the LORD that these days of remembrance have been reduced to mere duties of religion. Fulfilling a duty only because it is proper is of no value to God. We can do something because it is a good habit. According to His habit the Lord Jesus goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath (Lk 4:16). But good habits become hollow and empty if we do them not for the Lord but for ourselves. Then the feasts of the LORD turn into feasts of the Jews (Lev 23:4-6; Jn 2:13; 7:2).

The answer is therefore not whether or not they should continue. They are free to decide that for themselves. The answer relates to the why and

how of their fasting. It is about whether we do things for the Lord or for ourselves. Fasting is renouncing what is permitted in itself, with the aim of dedicating oneself to the Lord.

Fasting is never an end in itself. The only prescribed fasting day for Israel is the great Day of Atonement, to chasten their souls, to humble oneself before God because of their sins (Lev 16:19-34). If, during the four days of fasting, the people are aware of why things went the way they did with Jerusalem, they will turn to God in prayer for help.

But now the question sounds as to whether they really did it for God. It is a question that must have chilled them to the bone. That must also be the case with us. For whom do we do what we do? Is it really all just for the Lord? God is not concerned with religious customs in themselves, but with the motive, why someone does it.

Zec 7:6-7 | For Whom Do We Eat and Drink?

6 When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves? 7 Are not [these] the words which the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with its cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?"

What applies to fasting also applies to the time when there is not fasting, but eating and drinking (verse 6). Just like fasting they have done the same for themselves and not for God. They have not involved Him in it. For us it is also about glorifying God in all things: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1Cor 10:31; Rom 14:6b).

God has already pointed out the wrong fasting to His people through His prophets. Isaiah is such a prophet (Isa 1:11-17; 58:3-7). But the people have not obeyed them. That is why God had to send His people into exile. Let them take that warning example to heart and listen to Zechariah now!

Verses 6-7 show that to God the issue is not whether people fast or not. The real fasting, the fast that pleases God, does not consist of a Pharisee abstinence from eating and drinking, but an observing of and living up to the Word of God. This is what the prophets preached to the people before exile.

This overthrows the idea that one can obtain the favor of God by fasting. It is left to them to decide whether or not they will stick to the fasting days mentioned above. Here we have a clear example of the great difference between Christendom and other religions. It is not primarily about what someone does, but why he does it; the motivation is decisive.

Zec 7:8-10 | What Matters to God

8 Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah saying, 9 "Thus has the LORD of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; 10 and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.'

The word of the LORD comes further to Zechariah (verse 8). Through Zechariah He speaks to the people as "the LORD of hosts". It is not about new announcements, but a repetition of what He has always said through His prophets. They have always rejected that message, but He repeats it. This shows His patience. What God has said in the past will always retain its power and therefore He can always come back to it.

The first thing that matters is that they "dispense true justice" (verse 9). This applies in the first place to the judges. But it is also a word that every member of God's people should take to heart. True justice is a judgment in which you can have confidence. It is impartial and corresponds to the facts. There is no seeking of one's own advantage behind it. Here we see the attitude we have to take towards our brothers and sisters.

It follows from that attitude that we "practice kindness and compassion" to each other. We show this when we give our brothers and sisters what they need, both for the body and for the soul. This is worth much more to God than all the sacrifices that are made according to the law or all kinds of external service that happens without the heart being involved.

It is not only about hurting no one, but about helping the other (verse 10). It is especially about the widows and the orphans and the strangers and the poor (Exo 22:22). They have no possibilities to provide for themselves and they have no one to rely on. If they act out of love, they will not hurt someone else, but on the contrary they will do good. For this they should not devise evil in their hearts against one another (cf. Mic 2:1).

Zec 7:11-12 | Refusal to Pay Attention

11 But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. 12 They made their hearts [like] flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.

The past shows how the people responded to God's calls through His prophets (Deu 9:6,13,27). Their refusal to pay attention they have accompanied by a strong opposition to what God has said to them (verse 11). They do not put their shoulders to it, but turn a stubborn shoulder (Neh 9:29). It is like an ox that doesn't want a yoke put on its neck. Finally, they have stopped their ears so that they have become deaf to the voice of God. It is also a gesture of contempt for the Speaker.

The words of the prophets are those of the Spirit (Neh 9:20,30). Not listening to the words of the prophets is the same as not listening to the words of God. Their stubborn refusal to listen stems deeply from the hardening of their hearts (verse 12). They did not want to listen, they deliberately stopped their ears. Such an attitude can only cause great wrath with God.

Zec 7:13-14 | Calling, but No Listening

13 And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the LORD of hosts; 14 "but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate."

If a man persistently refuses to listen to God, the time will come when man will call to God, but God will not listen (Pro 1:27-28; Isa 1:15; Mic 3:4; Jer 11:11; 14:12). God has called them through His prophets, but they have not listened to them. The people have called to Him in the distress that God has brought upon them, but then He has not listened.

He had to scatter them with a storm wind (verse 14). Because they did not need Him, He surrendered them to a company that does not know Him, so that through experience they would learn how bitter it is to be alienated from the love and mercy and care of God. The fact that the "pleasant land"

has been turned into “a desolate” land is not attributed here to the enemy, but to the actions of Israel itself. It is due to their sins. Nobody could enter it anymore or return to it. It had become uninhabitable territory.

But there will always be a rest (Isa 10:20-22a). God judges the whole, but always preserves a remainder, a remnant, alive that will form for Him the whole to which He fulfills His promises.

Zechariah 8

Introduction

This chapter is the sequel to Zechariah 7 and shows the other side. The chapter has two parts. Both parts are introduced by the statement that the word of the LORD comes to Zechariah (verses 1,18).

The first part (verses 1-17) declares that, under certain conditions, the people are restored to the favor of God. The second part contains the answer to the original questions about fasting, the declaration of joy, and the spreading of the gospel (verses 18-23).

Both parts can be further subdivided into ten parts which all start with the statement “thus says the LORD” (verses 2,3,4,6,7,9,14,19,20,23). We can speak of ten blessings which are the part of the people when they have been restored to God’s favor.

Zec 8:1-2 | The First Blessing

1 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, 2 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.’

For the third time the word of the LORD comes to Zechariah (verse 1; Zec 7:1,8). After the exhortations in the previous chapter now come the promises of blessing. The first promise is the encouragement of the LORD that He is “exceedingly jealous for Zion” and that “with great wrath”. He will not abandon His people. His heart continues to beat in grace for them and He will fulfill His promises.

Twice He speaks here of His jealousy for Zion (cf. Zec 1:14). He expresses in a strengthening way His warm love for them, so that they will be deeply convinced of this. He wants to own the people completely and only for Himself and not share their love with anyone else.

Zec 8:3 | The Second Blessing

3 Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts [will be called] the Holy Mountain.'

The LORD has departed from Jerusalem because of the persistent sins of the people. This is described by Ezekiel (Eze 8:3; 9:3; 10:3-4,18-19; 11:22-23). But the LORD comes back. That happens when the Lord Jesus – He is Yahweh – will come to His people with blessing. If He returns to the city, it is only possible if faithfulness and holiness are to be found there (Isa 1:26; Zep 3:13). This will be the case in Jerusalem. The city “will be called the City of Truth”.

Mount Zion, on which the temple will be built, will be called “the Holy Mountain”. That is not only a name, but the mountain will be truly holy. It is a mountain that is separated from all other mountains to be alone and totally dedicated to Yahweh. In the book of Isaiah, Yahweh calls this mountain “My holy mountain” several times (Isa 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11,25; 66:20). Other prophets do the same (Jer 31:23; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Oba 1:16,17; Zep 3:11; Dan 9:16,20).

Zec 8:4-5 | The Third Blessing

4 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. 5 And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'

This scene will become reality in the Messianic realm. That is still the future, but this look into the future is for the moment an encouragement for Zerubbabel and his people. This scene is a consequence of the truth and holiness of the previous verse. These have an effect among God's people of harmony and joy.

With the coming of the Lord Jesus peace has come, the war is over. Everyone, even the weakest and most defenseless members of society, can be in the streets, or squares of Jerusalem without fear of advancing hostile armies. The ages will again be those of before the deluge (Isa 65:20,22). The promise of a long life is regarded by the Jews as one of the greatest

blessings of God's government. It is the reward for obedience (Exo 20:12; Deu 4:40).

The offspring will be numerous, healthy and happy. The children can play carefree. There is no more threat of war and related death or imprisonment. The hatred of the world has been stifled. The streets will be full of children playing and not of protesting people. Now the streets are still dangerous places for children, both because of traffic and of crime.

Playing children is something God also enjoys (Mt 11:16-17). Parents may take an example of this. Playing children and the enjoyment of it by the old people is a matter of God's joy. It is not a waste of time. Old and young will live together in harmony. The scene of prosperity and contentment contrasts sharply with the poverty, confusion and dissatisfaction in which we live.

In the church the literal situation described here may already be present spiritually. There is, if all goes well, no generation gap. There is also room for the development of each stage and revelation of spiritual life. We must give boys and girls all spiritual help that is possible, both in word and example.

They are two opposing age groups, the old men and old women and the boys and girls. The old people are so old that they support their trembling limbs with a stick. On the other hand, we see children radiating energy with a joy that smiles at life. In both categories we see the goodness of the Creator.

The children are at the beginning of life. Everything in them has yet to develop. They can count on God's help in this. With the very old we see that He has helped them, their whole long life long. He has guided them through all the changes, opportunities and dangers of this fragile life, even in the period in which they have seen their strength diminish.

Zec 8:6 | The Fourth Blessing

6 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?' declares the LORD of hosts.

The fourth blessing is an encouragement in view of the previous blessing. The scene painted in the previous verses seems an impossibility. Also for us it is hard to imagine when we look at the world situation. But for God nothing is too difficult (Gen 18:14). We can count on Him for the realization of His will. The complicated life of today will give way to an uncomplicated life in the realm of peace.

There is then nothing that is harmful to life. Everything that makes life now so difficult and sometimes unbearable, all mental and physical illnesses and even death (Isa 65:18-25), all jealousy and striving for more, are then past tense. Everyone will be perfectly happy with his part and be able to enjoy it completely. They will invite others to enjoy it (Zec 3:10). And all because God dwells in their midst.

Zec 8:7-8 | The Fifth Blessing

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; 8 and I will bring them [back] and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'

We see that God Himself manipulates everything. Human effort is not asked for, even not expected. It is completely beyond man's ability to realize God's plan. In order to realize His plan, God Himself will save His people from all corners of the world wherever they are as prisoners (verse 7). From the east, where the sun rises, and the west, where the sun sets, they will come (Psa 50:1; Mal 1:11).

He will bring them to Jerusalem (verse 8; Isa 11:11-12; 43:5-6; Eze 37:21; Amos 9:14-15). They may live where He dwells. This means that they will enjoy His presence. It also means that He enjoys their presence. They are His people and He will be their God.

This will be the case because they will then completely correspond to "truth" and "righteousness". "In truth" God will fulfill all His promises and "in truth" the people will enjoy the promises. God does this "in righteousness" because His right has been fulfilled through the work of His Son on the cross. As a result, His people will share the blessing "in righteousness".

Zec 8:9-13 | The Sixth Blessing

9 *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, [those] who [spoke] in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built. 10 For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another. 11 But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,' declares the LORD of hosts. 12 'For [there will be] peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these [things]. 13 It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.'*

The preceding promises (verses 1-8) are an encouragement to Zechariah and his contemporaries. Verses 9-13 are an encouragement and an admonition at the same time. This section begins in verse 9 with the exhortation "let your hands be strong" and ends with it in verse 13.

This word of exhortation comes to those who hear the words of the prophet at that moment. God's words always contain an exhortation to do the commissioned work and at the same time give the power to do the work. Thus God's Word also comes to us as a word for today.

In verse 10 a motivation is given for the exhortation to let their hands be strong. That motivation lies in the contrast between the present and the former times. "Before those days," which are the days when the rebuilding of the temple was resumed and continued, there is no reward for the people for their work. Even the animals get nothing.

After the foundation of the temple, the interest in its rebuilding disappeared. Haggai describes the cause of it. As long as they think of themselves and their own house, they are lacking. If God does not get His place and share, the cultivation of the land will yield nothing. All their efforts will yield nothing compared to the work done. The results are extremely meager, far below expectation (Hag 1:9-11; 2:16,19).

Apart from disappointing results, it is also wrong with the living conditions. There is no peace “for him who went out or came in”. There is no safety and security to enjoy the little result of the hard toil in peace. The dissatisfaction is not caused by an enemy from outside, but by internal distrust. Everyone is the opponent of the other. These internal divisions and quarrels are sent to them by God. It is His discipline on their seeking their own interests while neglecting His home.

For us, there is always the danger that we are more committed to our own homes and interests than to the house of God and His interests. The most important must come first.

But the LORD will no longer do so with them, for “now ... the remnant of this people” is occupied with His house (verse 11). Because they are no longer as they were in the previous days, He will no longer be so for them. This means that He will no longer discipline them, for they are no longer neglecting His house in favor of building their own houses.

In verse 11 is written what the LORD will no longer be to them. Then in verse 12 the LORD tells them what He will be to them. He will give the seed peace, which means He will give them a rich harvest. The same goes for the vine. This will be done by the dew of heaven. Heaven, God, is the origin of blessing. He will make the remnant enjoy all that blessing as their own possession.

Seeing the blessings will give us strength to do the work the Lord has commanded us to do. Those who seek something for God will receive so much blessing that they cannot comprehend it all.

In verse 13 the thoughts go further into the future. Here Judah and Israel are mentioned together. Judah, the two tribes, and Israel, the ten tribes, will again be united into one nation. They will be united under one Head, Jesus Christ.

Among the nations the Jews are often seen as a curse. They are blamed for all kinds of disasters. In general, the people are always despised by the nations. God will change that. His people will be recognized and honored by the nations.

For us, the preceding verses mean that we, too, have no prosperity if we think only or mainly of our own affairs. Blessing will be there if we first think of God's house, the church. The blessings of the heavenly places (Eph 1:3-14) will again be enjoyed by us if we give God's house the first place. We cannot imitate the church life of Acts, but we can listen to God's Word for our time.

Zec 8:14-17 | The Seventh Blessing

14 "For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I have not relented, 15 so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear! 16 These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. 17 Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the LORD."

In verses 14-15 God takes the initiative. He has not rejected them forever. He makes His Word come true. When they sinned, He had to punish them (verse 14). That is what He had intended and that is what He has done. In His discipline He had to do them harm. But that time is over. He brought them back to Himself. They serve Him and His interests.

Therefore, He has "again purposed ... to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah" (verse 15; Jer 31:28). His actions are always in accordance with what He has intended to do. He never has to go back on anything. "He is not a man that He should change His mind" (1Sam 15:29b).

Just as the punishment of exile came upon Israel through the purpose of God, so now there is a purpose of the LORD to do good to Judah. He says through Jeremiah: "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope'" (Jer 29:11). They do not have to fear that He does not do what He has purposed to do Himself, for good.

What He has done according to His purpose for evil, emphasizes all the more that He will do for good what He has purposed. That He has kept

His Word that He has spoken for evil, is the guarantee that He will keep His Word that He has spoken for good.

They can count on His blessing. But there is also another side. He expects something from them. That something is written in verses 16-17. In verse 16 it is about deeds, in verse 17 about thoughts, the heart. The first thing God wants to happen is for them to “speak the truth to one another”. Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth (verse 3). This means that its inhabitants will speak truth to one another. Falsehood does not suit a person or a people who is in connection with the God of truth. Speaking the truth is always a blessing.

For us, members of God’s church, this is also an assignment. Paul quotes this verse in his letter to the Ephesians. He gives as reason: “For we are members of one another” (Eph 4:25). Because we are connected to each other as members of the same body, speaking truth is not only a benefit for the other, but also for the speaker himself. When truth is spoken, it strengthens the bond between the members of God’s people, while lying damages that bond.

Speaking truth should certainly and especially be done in lawsuits. The gate is the place where justice takes place (Gen 19:1; Rth 4:1; Amos 5:10,12). If a judgment is pronounced there that is in accordance with the truth, it will serve peace. There will be no contradiction or rebellion. A judgment that is in accordance with the truth will find general agreement.

In verse 17 is written what God hates. Both things mentioned are the sum of the two stone tablets of the law. He who loves his neighbor will think no evil in his heart against his brother or sister. He will be out for the good of the other. Loving perjury means linking God’s Name to injustice and lies. In both cases it is about the inner attitude. God does not only say that it is wrong, but that He hates it.

Zec 8:18-19 | The Eighth Blessing

18 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, 19 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth [months] will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’”

Here God answers the question concerning days of fasting. They will be days that are held full of joy. The reason for this is that they will realize that those days of fasting have their reason in their own unfaithfulness. When there is acknowledgment of sins, earlier burdens become activities that are performed full of joy.

The LORD does not say that they should not fast. He lists again the two days of fasting He mentioned in the previous chapter – fasting in the fifth and seventh month (Zec 7:3,5) – and adds two more. This brings the number of days of fasting to four.

The days of fasting are linked to four terrible events in the recent history of Israel and serve as a reminder of those terrible events.

1. The fasting in the fourth month is in remembrance of the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs 25:3-4; Jer 39:2; 52:6-7).
2. The fasting in the fifth month takes place because of the destruction of the city and the temple (2Kgs 25:8-9; Jer 52:12-13).
3. The fasting in the seventh month takes place in memory of the murder of Gedaliah (Jer 41:1-17; 2Kgs 25:25).
4. The fasting in the tenth month is because of the siege of Jerusalem which began on the tenth day of the tenth month (2Kgs 25:1; Jer 52:4; Eze 4:1; 24:2).

Against the background of the days of fasting instituted by the people themselves, the LORD calls for the love of truth and peace. First love of truth is mentioned and then love of peace (2Tim2:22). There can be no peace without truth. God has spoken the truth, therefore they (and we) will love the truth. On the basis of truth He gives peace, therefore they (and we) will love peace.

If the people love truth and peace, they will condemn their past. After all, the reasons for fasting lie in their own unfaithfulness and deviation. If they acknowledge this, these different reasons for fasting will be transformed into joy and cheerful feasts. A feast is a common thing. People come together to be happy together.

The LORD will change these days of fasting into days of joy and cheerful feasts. This means that He will give them such full riches of salvation that

Judah will no longer think of the earlier sad events. The new situation of blessing washes away all the suffering and sorrow of the past. There is only joy because of the blessings given to them by the grace of God (Isa 35:10).

Zec 8:20-22 | The Ninth Blessing

20 "Thus says the LORD of hosts, '[It will] yet [be] that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go." 22 So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.'

The blessing will not be limited to the house of Judah (verse 15), but will also extend to the peoples and inhabitants of cities outside Israel (verse 20). Once Israel is converted, it will attract the world to go to that land (Isa 2:1-5; Mic 4:1-5). Contrary to the few and weak Jews who are now building the temple, there will be an enormous appeal from this people in the future. As a result, many people and mighty nations will come to Jerusalem. Their goal is to seek the LORD and worship Him there and thereby "entreat the favor of the LORD" (Isa 60:3; 66:23).

The fact that the inhabitants will go from one city to another shows their concern for each other's spiritual well-being (verse 21). They want to encourage others to go to the place of worship and blessing "at once". There is no time to lose. They not only encourage others, but set a good example, "I will also go". They will take the lead themselves. The others can follow.

They show zeal for the honor and glory of God in their willingness to honor God in the place where He dwells. There is no better method for fathers to stimulate and motivate their families to go to the church meeting than to go first themselves. A good example will stimulate good followers.

Also the nations will realize that to entreat the favor of the LORD is only possible by acknowledging Him in His rights (verse 22). They have not done this before, but they are doing it now. This also means that they will ask for His will, how He wants to be served and worshiped. They will ask for His law. This case requires the greatest urgency. They want to seek the

face of the LORD. This means that only He is the object of their prayers and no longer something of creation or self-made idols.

Zec 8:23 | The Tenth Blessing

23 Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

The grasping of the slip is not done to terrorize the Jew, but indicates the desire for the blessing and privileges that the Jews possess (Num 15:38; Deu 22:12). Grasping the garment is the gesture of a suppliant (Isa 3:6; 4:1).

Though God must work in the hearts, He would like to use the testimony of the believers to persuade people to ask for Him. Because the ten men have heard that God is with the Jews, they want to go with them. What they have heard, they have also believed. They have come because they want to share in the religious privileges of the Jews.

There is a great lack of happiness and joy in the world. If happiness and joy are found in the connection with the Lord and with each other among the believers, it will attract people from the world. They will ask us to go with us to a place where the Lord Jesus is worshiped. It is a good gospel preaching. When unbelievers come into the church, it is possible that they come to the acknowledgment that God is present (1Cor 14:25).

Zechariah 9

Introduction

The book takes on a different character from this chapter on. No more dates are mentioned and no more night visions take place. Probably Zechariah is no longer the young man of the previous chapters, but an older man. He has seen the rise of the Greek empire. That is what he mentions in this chapter (verse 13). A mention of it does not fit in any of the previous sections. The prophecies that follow now are different from those of the previous chapters. He says nothing more about certain circumstances or events of his life and also nothing about temple building.

Zechariah 1-8 mainly relates to the time in which Zechariah lives, although not exclusively. Its purpose is to encourage the rebuilders of the temple. Israel is still under Medo-Persian rule. In those chapters only occasional things have been said about future events, although they can be referred to in applications.

Zechariah 9-14 deals almost exclusively with the future. Eighteen times the expression 'in that day' appears in these chapters, the stereotype indication for the end time. The theme is the coming of the Messiah and the judgment and blessing that goes with it.

Zechariah 9-10 is about the Greek dominion and Zechariah 11 is about the Roman dominion. These three chapters form a whole, introduced by 'burden'. Zechariah 12-14 is about the last days of Israel's national history.

Zec 9:1-6 | A Burden for Heathen Cities

1 The burden of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the LORD),
2 And Hamath also, which borders on it;
Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.
3 For Tyre built herself a fortress
And piled up silver like dust,

*And gold like the mire of the streets.
 4 Behold, the Lord will dispossess her
 And cast her wealth into the sea;
 And she will be consumed with fire.
 5 Ashkelon will see [it] and be afraid.
 Gaza too will writhe in great pain;
 Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded.
 Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza,
 And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.
 6 And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod,
 And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.*

“A burden” is “the word of the LORD” imposed on the prophet as a burden (verse 1). It contains the thought of an impending prediction of approaching judgment. Verses 1-6 deal with the cities of heathen peoples. God will judge them. He has His eye upon them, but not here as a blessing. [Dutch and Darby Translation translate: “The LORD has an eye upon men, and upon all the tribes of Israel”.] These cities have been conquered by Babylon and will soon be destroyed again. They characterize the principles of the world. They are rival cities that all want to influence the world stage in their own way. The only city spared in this chapter is Jerusalem.

“The land of Chadrach” is only mentioned here in the Bible. Because “Damascus” is then mentioned, it is possible that Chadrach is another name for Syria. The mentioned cities will be conquered and destroyed by Alexander the Great. This happened in 332 BC. It seems that with this a first fulfillment of this prophecy has taken place.

However, it is not Alexander who rules the world, but God. God rules the history of the world and sees all nations (Pro 15:3). According to what He sees, He acts. He judges or spares. When judgment comes, His eyes are like a flame of fire (Rev 1:14). He judges the nations as well as “all the tribes of Israel.

“Hamath”, which borders Syria, will also be judged (verse 2). In Hamath a large number of officers from Judea were killed by Nebuzaradan, after they were taken as prisoners from Jerusalem (2Kgs 25:18-21). This cold-blooded murder has not been forgotten.

“Tyre and Sidon” are also judged. The highly praised wisdom of Tyre (Eze 28:3) will not save the city. Nor will its wealth accumulated in a fortress benefit (verse 3). She built the fortress for “herself” and not for God. She relies on that and not on God. What she sees as her strength, on which she trusts, has brought her to a greater fall.

With a “behold”, the prophet turns his gaze away from the haughty Tyre to focus it on what the Lord, Adonai, is about to do (verse 4). Tyre will experience the power of God. “The Lord” will dispossess the city. He will do so after seven months of siege by Alexander the Great, who is but a means in His hand. Alexander has reduced the city to ashes.

This act of the Lord with Tyre will cause fear and trembling in the cities of the Philistines (verse 5). They have seen the incredible, the fall of Tyre, which means there will be no escape from judgment for them either (cf. Isa 23:5). “see and be afraid” in Hebrew is a play on words, *tere* and *tira*. Four of the five known cities of the Philistines are mentioned. The fifth city, Gath, is not mentioned, probably because that city has lost all meaning.

The population of the Philistine Asdod will be replaced by a mongrel race (verse 6). It is Alexander’s policy to mix the conquered peoples with each other.

Zec 9:7 | Conversion of the Philistines

*7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth
And their detestable things from between their teeth.
Then they also will be a remnant for our God,
And be like a clan in Judah,
And Ekron like a Jebusite.*

Here Zechariah predicts the conversion of the Philistines. First, God takes away everything that prevents them from becoming a part of His people. With this, every work of God begins in conversion. By “their detestable things” are meant their idolatrous sacrifices. They are eaten with blood and all. Both things are forbidden by God (Acts 15:20,29; Exo 20:3; Gen 9:4).

People from the cities mentioned above can join God’s people (2Sam 24:18-25; 1Chr 21:18). This is a remnant of the nations. So there is a remnant of

the Philistines that remains for God. They will, as it were, merge into Judah and Israel and even take up prominent positions in them (“clan” can also translated with “chief”). The Jebusites are the original inhabitants of Jerusalem. When the land is conquered, they will continue to live among the Israelites (Jos 15:63).

Zec 9:8 | God Watches Over His House

*8 But I will camp around My house because of an army,
Because of him who passes by and returns;
And no oppressor will pass over them anymore,
For now I have seen with My eyes.*

This verse contrasts with the previous verses, in which the judgment of the surrounding peoples is announced. God places Himself around His house and city like a guard, like a fiery wall (Zec 2:5). Alexander the Great has always left the city alone during his travels back and forth through the land. Jerusalem never came under his dominion. The city did deserve that, but God’s grace spared Jerusalem the subjugation.

It also has a prophetic meaning. Later the city was conquered again by the Romans, in 70 AD. The times of the Gentiles did not end with that. There will be another siege of Jerusalem. Then the Lord Jesus will come and deliver the city. In the future, God will also protect the city. The fulfillment of this we read in verses 9-10.

God sees it and perceives it (cf. verse 1). He follows the movements of the enemy, nothing escapes His all-seeing eyes. This means that His people may know themselves to be perfectly safe. This awareness may also give us rest.

While the heathen world falls under the judgment of destruction and the remnant of the heathen are converted to the living God, God will protect His home. He will cause His King to appear in Jerusalem, Who will establish His kingdom of peace all over the earth.

Zec 9:9 | Behold, Your King Is Coming to You

*9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout [in triumph], O daughter of Jerusalem!*

*Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation,
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

This verse has already been fulfilled, but verse 10 has not yet been fulfilled. These two verses link the first coming and the second coming of Christ. This often happens in the prophecy. There is joy at the coming of the King (verse 9) and the establishment of His kingdom (verse 10), at the foundation of peace and the fact of peace. The prophet sees, as it were, two mountain peaks, but not the valley between them (Mic 5:1-3; Isa 9:1-6; 11:1-10). The valley is the period in which the mystery of the church is revealed and that is not the subject of the prophets.

In the “daughter of Zion” we see grace. In the “daughter of Jerusalem” we see the faithful remnant. There is “a remnant according to [God’s] gracious choice” (Rom 11:5). The prophet directs their eye to the coming of the “King” who comes to them. He is a just King, He acts according to justice. He is also endowed with salvation, He is a Savior. If He should act with them according to the law, they should all be judged. That is why it is so impressive that He is also Savior. He has suffered as the Just for the unjust (1Pet 3:18). Therefore, there is grace and on that basis a remnant.

The fact that He is “just” does not only mean that He is Someone Who does justice or has righteous attributes, by which He fulfils the will of Yahweh in every respect. He is also Someone Who is inspired by righteousness. He is completely characterized by it and maintains in His government this first virtue of a ruler (Psa 45:7; Isa 11:1-4; Jer 3:5-6; Jer 33:15-16).

But how is He coming? “Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey”. It marks the humility and poverty of the Messiah. It describes someone who is familiar with suffering and misery and who lives in externally insignificant circumstances. It means the whole of the humble, wretched and suffering condition as described in detail by the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53:1-12).

What such a person has been through makes him sensitive to the situation of others. He can empathize with that. It is someone who has the power to escape his miserable circumstances, but does not use that power. This

is the Lord Jesus. That is why He can say to us: “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Mt 11:29).

And then a King coming on a donkey! A king should come on a horse. This will also happen at His second coming, when He appears in power and majesty (Rev 19:11-16). But at His first coming, He comes on a colt “on which no one yet has ever sat” (Lk 19:30). Without being tamed, the animal carries Him completely willingly. The youthfulness of the animal is emphasized by the addition of “the foal of a donkey”.

He is a King in humiliation, Who comes to die on a cross. This is how He comes to His people. Thus the prophet passes from Alexander the Great to the true Great King. That He will come this way is seen only by those who are taught by God. In Him the glory that has returned from the temple to heaven (Eze 8:3; 9:3; 10:3-4,18-19; 11:22-23) comes again in the midst of His people.

Regarding the spiritual meaning of the donkeys and their service, the following can be considered.

1. In the donkey, an unclean animal, we can see a picture of the people of Israel who are unclean because of their sins.
2. In the foal of a donkey we can see a picture of the remnant of Israel, which should actually have been killed, but was redeemed by the Lamb (Exo 13:13). This makes it suitable to carry the Lord to Jerusalem.
3. The fact that the foal has never carried anyone means that the Lord Jesus must take the first place in all things. Similarly, He was born of a woman with whom no man has had sexual intercourse and He is buried in a tomb in which no one has ever been buried before.

Zec 9:10 | The Reign of the Prince of Peace

*10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations;
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth.*

Here we see the Lord Jesus come to earth for the second time. He has come with the clouds of heaven, in power and majesty, to exterminate the enemies of His people in order to deliver His people and give them peace. He not only gives peace to His people, but He brings peace all over the earth. The realm of peace begins.

“Ephraim” refers to the former realm of the ten tribes. “Jerusalem” is mentioned as the capital of the kingdom of Judah. Under the Messiah, the two kingdoms, still divided today, will be reunited (Isa 11:13).

Because of the destruction of their military power, “the chariots”, the wars will end (Psa 46:9). Also the horses, the war horses, will be taken away by God (Mic 5:9), as well as the battle “bow”. All instruments of war will be gone.

This King will also “speak peace to the nations”. This is done not by commanding peace through His authoritative word, but by bringing war among the nations to an end (Mic 4:3). He will speak words of peace that will put an end to disputes and promote the well-being of the nations (cf. Est 10:3).

This situation of peace is therefore not limited to Israel. The kingdom of peace that Christ will establish will be “from sea to sea And from the River to the ends of the earth” (Psa 72:8; Gen 15:18; Exo 23:31). The Euphrates is the easternmost border of the land of Israel.

Zec 9:11 | The Blood of the Covenant

*11 As for you also, because of the blood of [My] covenant with you,
I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.*

The situation described in the previous verses is still future. Jerusalem is not liberated yet. There is no real independence yet. Jerusalem will be a pit in which there is no water. It is reminiscent of the history of the God-fearing Joseph, whose first prison is also a pit without water (Gen 37:24; cf. Jer 38:6; Isa 29:4). In that prison will be a miserable and poor remnant (Zep 3:12; Isa 29:1-8) that will be redeemed by the LORD.

The basis for this liberation is “the blood of the covenant”, which is the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ. The “prisoners” are the

prisoners of Zion. In the time of Zechariah they are those who are still in Babylon. But we may think especially of the end time. When we think of what Babylon spiritually represents as a pit without water, it is a picture of a religion of the flesh, where the Spirit, the living water, is lacking.

In Exodus 24 there is also talk of covenant blood, but that blood speaks a threatening language (Exo 24:3-8). If they do not keep the covenant, God will do to them as He does to the animals and kill them. It is the blood of judgment. However, God does not accept the people on the basis of the blood of the old covenant, but on the basis of the blood of the new covenant, which is the blood of Christ. The Lord Jesus spoke about this at the institution of the Supper (Mt 26:27-28).

Zec 9:12-13 | Double Restoration

*12 Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope;
This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you.*

*13 For I will bend Judah as My bow,
I will fill the bow with Ephraim.*

*And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece;
And I will make you like a warrior's sword.*

This is another group of prisoners. In verse 11 the prisoners are the remnant in Jerusalem. Here in verse 12 the prisoners are the scattered among the nations. The pit of verse 11 has been changed into “the stronghold” in verse 12. The different groups of prisoners do have the same solid ground to hope for and that is the blood of the new covenant. The prisoners scattered all over the earth will return to Jerusalem.

The LORD calls for them to come and proclaims “this very day” as a motivating additional promise that He “will restore double” to them. The double compensation here is not that of Isaiah 40, but that of Isaiah 61, where they receive double blessing after all the suffering they have endured (Isa 61:7; Isa 40:2; cf. Job 42:10). The double reward that the LORD will give His people will consist of the fact that He frees them from exile and slavery and makes them an independent nation, and that He makes them the head of the nations.

For the fight against the surrounding nations God also uses Judah and Ephraim, the two and the ten tribes. Judah is like a bow, Ephraim is like the arrow, and together they form one tool against the enemies. “Greece” or the Greek-Macedonian empire is the representation of the power of the empires with which Israel will later come into contact.

Zec 9:14-15 | The Lord Jesus Appears

*14 Then the LORD will appear over them,
And His arrow will go forth like lightning;
And the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet,
And will march in the storm winds of the south.
15 The LORD of hosts will defend them.
And they will devour and trample on the sling stones;
And they will drink [and] be boisterous as with wine;
And they will be filled like a [sacrificial] basin,
[Drenched] like the corners of the altar.*

Here we find the coming of the LORD, that is the Lord Jesus, in glory. This is in contrast to verse 9, where it is about His first coming, in humiliation. He appears at His return. Then the kingdom is established as it is written in verse 10. His coming is accompanied by lightning, trumpeting and storms.

Yahweh appears “over them”, that is, from heaven. He appears as a war hero to fight for them. His arrow shoots out like lightning (Hab 3:11). He goes forth at the head of His people. By blowing the trumpet, He gives the signal to fight. He attacks the enemy with the terribly devastating violence of the “storm winds of the south”. Storm winds coming from the south are the fiercest storms because they come from the Arabian desert, which borders Canaan in the south (Isa 21:1).

The LORD does not only fight for His people. In battle He is also a shield for them against the weapons of the enemy. That is why they are able to exterminate their enemies and to eat their flesh and drink their blood like tearing lions, that is to say, to take their lives away from them and feast on the spoils. In the picture that Zechariah uses here, he may have thought of something Balaam said about God’s people (Num 23:24).

Zec 9:16-17 | Salvation, Comeliness and Beauty

16 And the LORD their God will save them in that day

As the flock of His people;

For [they are as] the stones of a crown,

Sparkling in His land.

17 For what comeliness and beauty [will be] theirs!

Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

The LORD appears (verse 14), protects (verse 15) and saves (verse 16). This salvation will not be undone again. It is a perfect and lasting salvation. It concerns “the flock of His people”. That tells His people that He is their Shepherd.

The animals in that flock are as “the stones of a crown”, like the stones on a king’s crown. The sheep of the Messiah serve as decoration on His crown. When the Messiah rules, they give His reign an extra sparkle. They reflect His glory in His land. Through their victory over all the powers of the world, Israel has come to the highest glory. This glory is only due to Him who first fought for them on the cross. There He paid for their sins. That is the basis for His fight against their enemies from whom they are forever redeemed. That is also the basis for the brilliance that now radiates from them.

Greater than the comeliness of the sheep is the comeliness of the Shepherd [“theirs” is literally “his” i.e. the Messiah]. Greater than the beauty of the people is the beauty of the Shepherd. What joy will fulfill His heart when the whole plan of God with His people is fulfilled. Then He will “exult over” them “with joy” and “be quiet in His love” (Zep 3:17).

Young men will no longer die in battle, but will generously enjoy the proceeds of the land. Young women will no longer fear the fate of a future husband, but will know plenty of joy.

Zechariah 10

Zec 10:1 | Ask From the LORD

*1 Ask rain from the LORD at the time of the spring rain —
The LORD who makes the storm clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to [each] man.*

After the promise of blessing is made, the people are told what they can do. What they can do is pray for that blessing because only God can give it. He alone can give rain (Jer 10:13; 14:22; Hos 6:1-3; Joel 2:23; Deu 11:13-15; 32:2).

It is said to the people that they should “ask rain ... at the time of the spring rain”. It is asking for a special blessing, even if it is only for a remnant, at the end of the history of God’s people, just before the coming of the Messiah. It is a question of blessing at the appointed time. The blessing will come, but God wants His people to ask for it. By praying for it, they show that they agree with His merciful intentions.

Zec 10:2 | Teraphim Speak Iniquity

*2 For the teraphim speak iniquity,
And the diviners see lying visions
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain.
Therefore [the people] wander like sheep,
They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.*

Prayer brings blessing (verse 1), relying on idols (verse 2) brings disappointment and sorrow. What stands in the way of blessing must be removed. The idols, such as the teraphim, the house gods (Gen 31:19; Jdg 17:5; 18:5), and also the gods of other nations, such as the Baal, have caused for example, that God had to withhold the rain to the people in the days of Ahab (1Kgs 16:30-32; 17:1).

The people resorted to these idols. They were disappointed. Instead of giving, these took from them and made them rudderless. This is the condition

of the people when the Lord Jesus comes to them. The people are like a flock that has no shepherd (Mt 9:36; Mk 6:34; Eze 34:5-6). In the following verse the LORD promises that He will deliver His flock from the oppression of false shepherds.

“Diviners” are consulted to predict the future. They can be placed among the false prophets, who use “iniquity”, “lie” and “false dreams” (Jer 23:30-32; 27:9-10). Resorting to diviners for information and guidance is specifically forbidden (Deu 18:9-14). God has given His prophets to make His will and the future known through them. He will also ultimately give the true Prophet, the Messiah (Deu 18:15-22; Jn 4:25; 6:14; Acts 3:22-23). Zechariah again uses words from Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Jer 27:9; 29:8; Eze 21:29; 22:28).

That they ‘comfort in vain’ is something like ‘giving vapor as comfort’. It means that nothing at all of their comforting promises will come true (Job 21:34). It is hot air, their words evaporate, they dissolve into the void and nothing remains of them.

Zec 10:3 | God’s Anger Against the False Shepherds

*3 “My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
And I will punish the male goats;
For the LORD of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah,
And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.*

“The shepherds”, the religious leaders of God’s people, are deceivers. “The male goats” are the civil leaders and also the people who follow the false shepherds. All these leaders are mercenaries who have no real love for the sheep, but only want to benefit from them (Jn 10:12; Eze 34:1-10). God will judge them.

God, “the LORD of hosts,” stands up for His defenseless, exploited people. He turns the people that belong to Him, the sheep, into horses (cf. Song 1:9). Thus He makes them an instrument in His hand to carry out the judgment on the surrounding people (cf. Zec 9:13). It also shows that the power of Judah does not lie within them, but that they are powerful through God. He Who Himself is fearless makes them fearless. He Who Himself has all the power, gives them of His power to fight.

God's concern for Judah will not be limited to the liberation from the oppression of the evil shepherds. He will also turn Judah into victorious people. This is the meaning of the picture of "His majestic horse in battle". It is the picture of a beautiful and richly decorated warhorse, like a king is used to ride on. This picture is as characteristic as the description of Judah and Ephraim as a bow and arrow (Zec 9:13).

Zec 10:4 | Christ: Cornerstone, Tent Peg, Bow of Battle

*4 "From them will come the cornerstone,
From them the tent peg,
From them the bow of battle,
From them every ruler, [all] of them together.*

"From them" that is from the flock of Judah of the previous verse, "the cornerstone", "the tent peg" and "the bow of battle" will come. These are three names for the Lord Jesus. The cornerstone is the ruler or leader, that is the Messiah, upon Whom the building of government rests figuratively (Isa 28:16; Eph 2:20). The tent peg is the peg on which valuable objects are hung. On the Messiah hangs all the glory and hope of His people (Isa 22:23-24). The bow of battle shows the Messiah as a Man of war (Exo 15:3; Psa 45:4-5). Earlier the people were called the (battle) bow (Zec 9:13). He is the last and greatest of all the rulers who came forth from Judah.

The Messiah does not come here from heaven, but from Judah, from the people themselves to whom He has come with blessing (verse 3). In His Person an awesome power emerges that will crush the enemy. Out of Him come "every ruler" or "every oppressor". Those who were previously oppressed are now the oppressors of those who used to oppress them (2Thes 1:6-7). Again, we see that they have the power to oppress the enemy or to rule over them not of their own accord, but from the Lord Jesus, their Messiah.

Zec 10:5-7 | Mighty Men Through the LORD

*5 "They will be as mighty men,
Treading down [the enemy] in the mire of the streets in battle;
And they will fight, for the LORD [will be] with them;*

*And the riders on horses will be put to shame.
 6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah,
 And I will save the house of Joseph,
 And I will bring them back,
 Because I have had compassion on them;
 And they will be as though I had not rejected them,
 For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.
 7 "Ephraim will be like a mighty man,
 And their heart will be glad as if [from] wine;
 Indeed, their children will see [it] and be glad,
 Their heart will rejoice in the LORD.*

She, the flock of Judah, who were first introduced to us as sheep, then as horses, we now see "as mighty men" (verse 5). With a large power display they will humiliate the enemies by "treading" them "down in the mire of the streets". It shows that the enemies are no different than the mire of the street. That God's people are able to fight and overcome in such a way is because the LORD is "with them" (Jos 1:5; Jer 1:8). By doing so, they will shame the enemy riders on horses, who think they have the power on their side.

It is clear that this is the second coming of the Lord Jesus (verse 6). "Judah" and "Joseph" are the two houses of Israel or the two and ten tribes. They will only be one house again under the Messiah. This will be the result of their calling to Him. He will interrogate them and restore them as if He had not rejected them. He will draw a line through the past and erase it.

Ephraim, that is the house of Joseph, (verse 6) will become like a mighty man like Judah and be glad as if from wine (verse 7). He will cheerfully fight like a mighty man who is strengthened by wine – wine symbolizes joy. The joy of the LORD is his strength (Neh 8:11). The children see this joy in the fight and become glad as well. They share in the joy, without having to fight. The source and atmosphere of the joy of all is the LORD Himself (cf. Phil 4:4).

Zec 10:8-12 | I Will ...

| 8 *"I will whistle for them to gather them together,*

*For I have redeemed them;
And they will be as numerous as they were before.
9 "When I scatter them among the peoples,
They will remember Me in far countries,
And they with their children will live and come back.
10 "I will bring them back from the land of Egypt
And gather them from Assyria;
And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon
Until no [room] can be found for them.
11 "And they will pass through the sea [of] distress
And He will strike the waves in the sea,
So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;
And the pride of Assyria will be brought down
And the scepter of Egypt will depart.
12 "And I will strengthen them in the LORD,
And in His name they will walk," declares the LORD.*

In order to remove all doubt about the fulfillment of this promise, the liberation of Ephraim is described in even more detail in this section. Several times in these verses we read the expression "I will". God says He will do it, so it will happen. Who will be able to thwart it?

The LORD will whistle the people to Himself. The people in scattering will recognize the shepherd's flute. God redeems to gather His people together. He will also make them as numerous as they have been. He will make good all loss.

He had to "scatter them among the nations" because of their sins. It is remarkable that God says this here in Zechariah after an earlier scattering, that is after the exile in Babylon. This seems to be a new scattering. Perhaps we can think of what happened in the year 70 AD, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. In those distant regions, far away from the promised land, they and their children will repent. This will happen in the future. They will think of Him again (Deu 30:1-2; Jer 31:27), and then He will let them return.

All the peoples of verse 9 are represented by Egypt, the southern neighbor, and Assyria, the northern neighbor. From all these nations the LORD will

bring them into His land. Gilead and Lebanon represent the whole land of Israel on both sides of the Jordan (Jer 50:19; Mic 7:14-15). Many will be born in Israel, so that the land will become too small (Eze 1:7; Jer 30:19-20; Eze 36:11; Isa 49:20; 54:3). Then the land will have the borders that God promised Abraham and never had (Gen 15:18).

In verse 11 we have a reference to the passage through the Red Sea, the former salvation, as a symbol for the future salvation. By "the sea [of] distress" is meant the sea of nations. In that sea God's people have been in fear. But the LORD Himself will go through that sea and dry up every obstacle on the way to liberation and the land. He will precipitate the waves that threaten to engulf them and take away the waters of fear.

The people will be strengthened in the LORD (verse 12) for their spiritual needs. Their whole life (walk) will be pervaded by the thought of the glory and honor of the LORD (Mic 4:5). Here is the climax. Walking "in His name" can mean that they are His representatives or ambassadors. It can also mean that they will live in accordance with what He has shown of Himself. They will live everywhere and continuously under His protection and according to His will.

Zechariah 11

Introduction

This chapter is about the false shepherds, who were mentioned in the previous chapter (Zec 10:2-3), as opposed to the true Shepherd of whom Zechariah is a type (Zec 11:4). In Zechariah 10 it is mainly about the flock, here it is about the shepherds. This chapter describes the first coming of the Lord Jesus and how the people as a whole rejected Him.

Verses 1-3 describe the judgment on the false shepherds, which is announced in verses 6,9. The chapter culminates in the one false shepherd, the antichrist in verse 17. The false shepherds gradually come to power after the return from Babylon and are clearly in power when the Lord Jesus is on earth. The judgment on them takes place in 70 AD.

Zec 11:1-3 | Judgment on the False Shepherds

*1 Open your doors, O Lebanon,
That a fire may feed on your cedars.
2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
Because the glorious [trees] have been destroyed;
Wail, O oaks of Bashan,
For the impenetrable forest has come down.
3 There is a sound of the shepherds' wail,
For their glory is ruined;
There is a sound of the young lions' roar,
For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.*

Lebanon has been constantly prey to invasions from the north (verse 1). But the land will experience an even more terrible invasion. However reluctant it may be to open its doors to the king of the north in the future, they will not be able to stop his march towards Israel. God is bringing him to His land because of the “ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION” that was erected in the temple (Mt 24:15-22). Cedars are a picture of dignitaries.

The different types of trees mentioned (verse 2) represent people. They are called to express their feelings of sorrow. By “cypress” are meant the rich. The “cedars” and the “oaks of Bashan” are the strong, the rulers and men with authority (Isa 2:13). “The impenetrable forest” stands for the mass of the common people. The latter will no longer groan under the yoke of ‘cypress’ and ‘oak’. Cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan are symbolic descriptions for the false shepherds.

The first part of verse 3 drops the symbolism and speaks about the persons, the shepherds. They see themselves as the “glory” of the land. The “young lions” are the princes, the rulers who behaved cruelly. Of the “pride of the Jordan” (cf. Jer 49:19; 50:44) nothing remains, for it is destroyed (Jer 25:34-38). This was done by the Romans, who established themselves as a power in Israel.

Zec 11:4-5 | The Flock Doomed to Slaughter

4 Thus says the LORD my God, “Pasture the flock [doomed] to slaughter. 5 Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and [each of] those who sell them says, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!’ And their own shepherds have no pity on them.

After the judgment in verses 1-3 the reason for this judgment comes in the following verses. That reason is that they have rejected their Messiah. Zechariah speaks of “the LORD my God” (verse 4), which is especially fitting for the Messiah. This makes Zechariah the type of the Messiah. The prophet receives a command from God as a type of the Messiah. The Lord Jesus receives the command of His Father to pasture the sheep (Jn 10:1-4,7,9,11,14-18).

The sheep are called “flock [doomed] to slaughter” because they were destined for this purpose by the Romans (cf. Psa 44:22). This also applies to us (Rom 8:36).

In verse 5 the people are still seen as a whole, the people the Lord Jesus comes to and sees as sheep who have no shepherd (Mt 9:36). There are three groups in the people: “buyers”, “sellers” and “shepherds”.

1. The buyers are the new owners of Israel, the Romans, who slaughtered the sheep without any feeling of guilt. This was mainly done by the Roman

general Titus during and after the destruction of Jerusalem. Flavius Josephus speaks of 1.5 million victims who died in the battle with the Romans.

2. The sellers delivered the people to the Romans. That is especially Herod. False leaders make merchandise from God's people, from the souls of men. Also the Pharisees and scribes are among the sellers, they did not spare the people either. They ate the houses of widows and enriched themselves with the gifts of God's people.

3. The shepherds are the leaders of the people. They exploited God's people.

The people are in bad shape. It has bad civil governments and bad religious leaders (Jer 50:6a).

Zec 11:6 | God Judges His Apostate People

6 For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," declares the LORD; "but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver [them] from their power."

God surrenders His people, the unbelieving masses, into the hands of others (verse 6). The judgment is carried out by "his king", which is the Roman emperor. So they also said to Pilate: "We have no king but Caesar" (Jn 19:15). A preliminary fulfillment of this judgment took place in the year 70 AD. The Romans did not spare the land then, but ruined it. God did not intervene for His people and did not save them from the hand of the Romans. The final judgment will be exercised in the future. In the future, the restored Roman empire will give its power to the false king of the people, the antichrist.

Zec 11:7 | The LORD Himself Pastures the Sheep

7 So I pastured the flock [doomed] to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.

In this verse Zechariah speaks in the I-form and is a type of the Lord Jesus. Here again the sheep are called "the flock [doomed] to slaughter".

The judgment on the sheep is fixed. Yet the shepherd is ordered to pasture them. This is how the Lord Jesus comes to His people, a people about whom the judgment is fixed, to take care of those sheep that are taken away from judgment.

Among the flock of the people of Israel are sheep whom He knows by name. "The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out" (Jn 10:3). He calls them out of the stable of Israel, while the other sheep remain in the fold, that is the people of Israel.

The Messiah, although He knows the outcome, carries out God's command during His life on earth. He pastures the real sheep of the flock. Not all of Israel is automatically His flock, although He has come for all as a Shepherd (Mt 9:36).

The "afflicted of the flock" are the poor in spirit, the penitent (Zep 3:12). They are deeply bowed down in spirit, contrite by their own sins, without any defense. There is no more spirit power. They are the remnant in the midst of the flock doomed to slaughter. We recognize them in the days of John the baptist in those who come to him to be baptized while confessing of their sins. We also see them in Joseph and Mary, Zechariah and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna (Luke 1-2).

This Shepherd doesn't have just one staff, He has two staffs. In both staffs one can see the purpose of the pasturing. The first staff expresses what God sees in Israel, the attractiveness of the people to Him. The second relates to the relationships of the people, the unity of the people. Thus He has pastured the flock and provided them with food.

Zec 11:8-9 | Three Shepherds and the Mass Annihilated

8 Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. 9 Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh."

The three shepherds of verse 8 are the spiritual leaders of whom the Lord Jesus reveals the depraved character at the end of His life on earth. We recognize them in the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees and a lawyer (Mt 22:15-16,23,34-35). He has lost His patience with them and in holy an-

ger he pronounces the “woe” over them (Mt 23:13,15,16,23,25,27,29). They have shown more and more their aversion to Him and this in spite of His perfection as a Shepherd, a task He performs without failure. As a result, He also has an aversion to them (cf. Isa 1:13-14).

Verse 9 is the result of that in turn. His reluctance to pasture them any longer does not apply to the afflicted, but to the herd of the great mass of the people who do not want to listen. They do not know His voice. Only those who know His voice, the afflicted, He leads out. God surrenders to judgment those who stay in the fold.

God speaks of a triple disaster.

1. “What is to die, let it die” refers to the deadly plague that makes its victims.
2. Through war the people will be “annihilated”.
3. Those who are left will “eat one another’s flesh” in the greatest selfishness in their urge to stay alive. They will even literally eat each other (cf. Gal 5:15) and thus annihilate one another.

This is the result because they reject the Shepherd and the Shepherd leaves them to themselves.

Zec 11:10-11 | The Staff Favor Cut in Pieces

10 I took my staff Favor and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD.

The breaking of the staff Favor marks the end of God’s relationship of love with Israel. Since the rejection of the Lord Jesus, He can no longer favor the people, with the result that the blessing for the peoples has also been postponed. God also has a covenant with the nations in His heart (Isa 56:6-7).

The Lord Jesus had come “to confirm the promises [given] to the fathers and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy” (Rom 15:8b-9a). If Israel had accepted Him, this verse would have been fulfilled for the nations. Then the realm of peace would have come and there would be harmony between the nations.

Now the salvation has gone to all nations to form out of the nations a people for His Name, that is the church (Acts 13:47-48). In the Old Testament the church is a mystery. However, the promise has not been broken, only postponed. And postponement is not abandonment with God. That is what Zechariah 14 shows.

When God acts according to His Word, that is always a confirmation for the remnant. That is why paying attention to Him is paying attention to the Word. Through the cross, the rejection of the Messiah, the whole picture, the whole course of history, of Israel has changed. The afflicted have been taught that the Lord Jesus had to suffer and enter into His glory, as the Lord explains to them from Scripture (Lk 24:26-27).

Zec 11:12-13 | What the Shepherd Is Worth to the People

12 I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give [me] my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty [shekels] of silver as my wages. 13 Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, [that] magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty [shekels] of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

Here the prophet speaks again, where we hear the Lord Jesus speaking behind him. Here Christ asks the people what He is worth. He does not force them to answer, but they do answer. The answer should be that He is everything to them, that they owe their lives and all their livelihood to Him. But the answer they give speaks of deep contempt.

Judas Iscariot asks the question of the value of the Lord Jesus to the leaders of the people: "What are you willing to give me ...? (Mt 26:15a). God uses Judas to ask this question. In this way God brings them to a valuation of His Son. The people, through their leaders, do not estimate Him higher than the price of a (dead) slave (Exo 21:32). "And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him" (Mt 26:15b).

The appreciation for Who the Lord Jesus is, is becoming less and less in Christianity. One doubts, or even openly denies, His omnipotence, His virgin birth, His work of reconciliation, His resurrection and even His existence. Also now, the question sounds in Christianity, in which we also find, on the one hand, the afflicted who pay attention to Him and God's

Word and, on the other hand, the mass of confessors: ‘What am I worth, what is your appreciation of My service?’ We have to answer this question personally.

In verse 13 the LORD is going to speak. The LORD says here of Himself that He has been valued by them at thirty shekels of silver. He speaks ironically of a “magnificent price”. Here we see that the Lord Jesus is the LORD, Yahweh, the God of Israel. He is the same as Jesus of Nazareth. He has taken that slave form (Phil 2:7). He is considered worthy of that price, a despicable price (Exo 21:32).

The LORD throws that prize from Himself. He has the money that is thrown by Judas in His house, thrown to the potter as a testimony of the disgust He has for it. Judas does this as an expression of his repentance for having surrendered his Master (Mt 27:3-5), but without confessing his terrible deed.

The elders and chief priests buy, after having conferred, for that money “the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day” (Mt 27:7b-8). The Potter’s Field is worthless for agriculture because of the potsherds the potter throws on it. In the destination of the money – the purchase of a burial place for strangers – we see the irony of God. The whole earth has become one big Field of Blood for Israel, a burial place for Israelites who are scattered around the world like strangers, wandering around there.

Zec 11:14 | The Staff Union Cut in Pieces

14 Then I cut in pieces my second staff Union, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

When the Lord Jesus comes to His people, it is out of love for them and to make the broken people one again. But that love is rejected. Therefore, when He is sentenced to the cross, this staff is also broken. The bond of brotherhood between Judah and Israel is broken.

We see the same in Christianity. There is much division among Christians, because Christ is not valued and no attention is paid to Him and His Word any longer. The staff Union, i.e. the brotherhood, is lost when the staff Father is broken and the Lord Jesus and His Word are no longer the binding

center. The Shepherd turns it into one flock. When we no longer see Him, the flock is scattered. Then we are at each other's mercy and eat each other (verses 6,9).

Zec 11:15-17 | The Judgment on the Antichrist

*15 The LORD said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. 16 For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat [sheep] and tear off their hoofs. 17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd
Who leaves the flock!
A sword will be on his arm
And on his right eye!
His arm will be totally withered
And his right eye will be blind."*

In verses 15-17 we suddenly find ourselves in the end time. If Christ is not valued, the people will accept "a foolish shepherd", the antichrist (Jn 5:43). They will value him. They will get someone who does nothing for them, but uses them to feast.

Zechariah must change clothes (verse 15). He has to dress again as a shepherd (verse 7). The equipment of the good shepherd is exchanged for that of a foolish shepherd, that is the antichrist, the false messiah (Dan 11:36-40; Rev 13:11-18). With this, Zechariah depicts that Israel forced the good Shepherd to lay down His work because of their sins.

After that, the people are not left to themselves, but will be surrendered by the LORD Himself into the hand of a foolish shepherd (verse 16). In the place of the good shepherd comes a foolish shepherd. Foolish means someone who does not take God into account. "The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"" (Psa 14:1). This shepherd has no moral awareness, no moral standards. He tramples all God's institutions underfoot.

He is the complete opposite of the good Shepherd and can be compared to thieves and robbers and the mercenary (Jn 10:8,10a,12). The thieves and robbers are overt opponents. They do their work secretly, but their intentions are clear. They are out "to steal and kill and destroy" the sheep (Jn

10:10a). They feast upon the sheep and eat the flesh of the fat animals. He also mutilates them by tearing off their hooves so that they can no longer walk properly.

The mercenary seems to care about the herd and is only revealed when difficulties arise. Then it turns out that he does not care for the sheep. He abandons the sheep, he leaves them “and flees” (Jn 10:12). He has no concern for the sheep. If they are threatened, he does not look after them. He does not look for the young, inexperienced animals that are lost and cannot rejoin the flock on their own strength. If a sheep can’t go on because it has a broken leg, he won’t do anything that can cause healing. Everything a good shepherd does, he does not do.

The antichrist is truly a “worthless shepherd” (verse 17). God pronounces the “woe” over him, because he “leaves the flock”. This “woe” is underlined by the judgment with which God will strike him. His arm and his eye are struck by the sword of judgment. His arm is the symbol of the power on which he is famous. His right eye is the symbol of his insight or intellect on which he has boasted. By the judgment, his arm will “be totally withered” and therefore become completely unusable (cf. 1Kgs 13:4). He will also lose all insight and intellect and go his way in darkness. At the same time this puts a great defamation on him (1Sam 11:2).

Zechariah 12

Introduction

With this chapter begins the last part of the book.

Zec 12:1 | God, the Creator and Former

1 The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. [Thus] declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,

The “burden” concerns “Israel”, although its content is about Judah and Jerusalem. All of God’s actions ultimately have the blessing of all Israel, the ten and the two tribes as their goal. What He speaks, He makes true. His Word is as much as His deed.

The LORD presents Himself here in His omnipotence. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all things and holds all things in His hands, including the spirit of man (cf. Isa 42:5; Amos 4:13). That He presents Himself as such here is to indicate that events will develop in the way He has determined. It is meant to remove all doubt about the realization of the wonderful things that are foretold in the following verses.

This is not just about one-time creation activities, but about God’s continuous action with His creation and with man’s spirit. In the same way, He is always busy shaping the spirit of man (cf. Psa 51:12b; 1Cor 2:11). As we get older, our thoughts, feelings, institutions change as a result of God’s meddling with us. God is the Father of spirits (Heb 12:9; Num 16:22).

Prophets more often first point to God in His omnipotence, before they make prophetic statements about things that are completely out of man’s reach. They do that to stimulate faith in their words. What, according to our opinion, is hopeless and exceeds all reason and credibility, does not pose any problem to Almighty God. We have to learn to look at Him and not at the circumstances.

Zec 12:2 | Jerusalem, a Cup That Causes Reeling

2 “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

God is going to speak up for Jerusalem and Judah. He will make Jerusalem the center of the political world. Judah is the area where in the future the fleeing believers of the remnant will find themselves. God makes Jerusalem “a cup that causes reeling”, which is a cup of judgment, from which He makes “all the peoples around” drink so that they are reeling. As a result, they are unable to stand, but will fall to the ground and perish (cf. Isa 51:17; Jer 25:15-28).

The peoples want to subjugate Jerusalem and feast upon them, but the effect is that they themselves are ruined by Jerusalem. God makes all peoples who want to interfere with the ungodly Israel, whether they are enemies or friends, as people who can no longer judge soberly. They will behave like reeling people who can no longer go straight and are no longer able to act wisely. This applies to the hostile king of the north and his companions, but equally to the befriended beast out of the sea with his Western European armies who want to defend Israel against the armies of the king of the north. God is the only One Who has the right to deal with His people.

Zec 12:3 | Jerusalem, a Stone That Is Difficult to Lift

3 It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

The expression “in that day” often occurs in Zechariah 12-14. It is the characteristic expression that places the described events in the future. There are essentially two events: the victory of Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah to defeat Israel’s enemies and establish His kingdom.

All the nations of the world will participate in the invasion of Jerusalem (Psa 83:4-8; Joel 3:9-16; Rev 16:12-16). The whole world will be involved, including the European allies of Israel. Both the enemy attackers and the friendly defenders will lift over Jerusalem. It is assumed that lifting the

stone is a term from the sport of weightlifting. Those who offend Jerusalem will be exterminated by the faithful remnant in Jerusalem. Those who want to defend Jerusalem will be killed with the ungodly mass.

All those who want to lift Jerusalem to throw it on the ground and trample it will be severely injured. All attempts to disrupt and destroy the city will come like a boomerang over all the gathered peoples. Jerusalem will push them down and destroy them. It will severely injure those peoples, like human hands are cut and torn as they lift rough and heavy stones.

The people have thought they can take Jerusalem like a stone and do what they want with it. They have also thought the same of the stone that “was cut out of the mountain without hands” (Dan 2:45). That stone is the Lord Jesus (cf. Isa 28:16; Lk 20:17). They also lifted Him and killed Him. But He will come back and then fall on them and scatter them like dust (Lk 20:18; Mt 21:44).

Zec 12:4 | The LORD Strikes the Enemies

4 In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

Cavalry forms a large part of the army in the east. God will make that part harmless. The weapon of strength will turn against themselves. Instead of the horses leading their riders to victory, they will carry them into ruin (cf. Exo 15:1,21). The riders themselves will become mad. The curse that has been imposed on Israel and has also come upon them (Deu 28:28), will now strike their enemies.

God chooses for His people. Over them He keeps His eyes open to protect them (1Kgs 8:29; Neh 1:6; Psa 32:8; 33:18; cf. Amos 9:4). This promise is strengthened by the repetition of the punishment that God will bring upon the enemies. He will strike the peoples with blindness, so that they can no longer perceive the situation in which they find themselves (cf. 2Kgs 6:18).

Zec 12:5-6 | God Gives Strength to His People

5 Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, their God.’ 6 “In that

day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.

The believing remnant for which God stands up against their enemies, has two groups. There is a group in Jerusalem and a group outside Jerusalem. Just before the coming of the Lord Jesus, the believing remnant in Judah, who fled to the mountains, will be encouraged by the faithfulness and perseverance of the remnant in Jerusalem. In Micah 5 we also see that the LORD will use people to gain victory over the enemy (Mic 5:4-8). They will drive out of the land the siege force left behind by the Assyrians there – while the main force has gone further to Egypt (Dan 11:40-43).

Along with destroying the strength of the opponents as described in the previous verses, God will forcefully gird His people to resist and defeat the enemy (verse 5). Before the Lord Jesus personally appears, He will support the remnant. That is the situation here. The appointed leaders of the fleeing remnant (Mic 5:4) will be strengthened by the remnant in Jerusalem, which in turn will be strengthened by the LORD.

They act together, while each express their personal conviction, “my strength is for us”, as it says literally, in the encouragement of their brothers in Jerusalem. They express their personal conviction that the LORD their God is the source of their strength. The LORD is “the LORD of hosts”. This means that He controls all hosts, including those of the enemy.

The remnant has two enemies. There is an enemy outside the land, the king of the north with his allies, who invades the land. There is also an enemy inside the land, the antichrist with his followers, the wicked peers.

What happens in these verses not only takes place at the coming of the Lord, but continues after His coming on earth. Before Jerusalem is liberated, the remnant of Judah will drive out the enemy, the Assyrians, with the help of the LORD (verse 6). God turns the remnant into a company that judges anything that is contrary to His holiness (Isa 11:14). After that, Jerusalem will be liberated. Jerusalem will then be given rest in the place where it is located.

Zec 12:7-9 | The LORD Saves, Defends and Destroys

7 The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah. 8 In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David [will be] like God, like the angel of the LORD before them. 9 And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

The LORD saves (verse 7), defends (verse 8) and destroys (verse 9). First He saves “the tents of Judah” (verse 7). “Tents” contrast with the fortified city of Jerusalem. This emphasizes the defenselessness of Judah, that it is exposed to the anger of the enemy outside the protective walls of Jerusalem. God, in the salvation of His people, gives priority to what is without protection and weak, so that there is no reason for man to boast of himself.

Judah is liberated first and then Jerusalem. So there is equality there as well. It prevents Jerusalem from boasting of its privileged position. It is about exalting only in the Lord (Jer 9:24; 1Cor 1:31; 2Cor 10:17). In both cases the liberation has been worked by the LORD.

Also Jerusalem has in itself no power to chase away the enemy. God makes the weak inhabitants of Jerusalem as David, the war hero and invincible king (2Sam 17:8; 18:3). It is like Paul boasting about his weaknesses so that the power of Christ dwells in him (2Cor 12:9). The people will experience that they can do everything only in Him Who strengthens him (Phil 4:13).

The house of David ultimately refers to the Messiah, or to the prince who will reign on earth as a substitute for the Messiah. In the realm of peace the Lord Jesus will not continually be seen on earth. It will be a situation similar to the situation after His resurrection. Then He appeared here and there and was no longer bound to a certain place.

In the conflict with the heathen peoples, the LORD will provide the inhabitants of Jerusalem with great strength with which they will overcome all their enemies. The people of Jerusalem are weak in themselves. There are among them who are staggering, inhabitants who do not stand firm on their feet, but stumble. They will become like David, the brave hero of Israel (cf. 1Sam 2:4; 2Sam 17:8).

Also David has no strength in himself. His power is a superhuman force. He owes it to God. Therefore he is “like God, like the angel of the LORD”. The point of comparison lies in power and strength, not in moral similarity with God. “The angel of the LORD before them” refers to Christ, Who is at the head of his people before them, as their Commander (Mic 2:13), from Whom they derive their power.

The Lord Jesus Himself will make the final judgment on all heathen peoples (verse 9). The coming heathen peoples are those who advance against Jerusalem under the leadership of the king of the north, the leader of the Assyrian armies. They will first besiege Jerusalem, capture it, and then move on to the south, Egypt, to submit to it (Dan 11:42-43). But when they hear rumors from the north and east, they return to Jerusalem. Then the Western European armies have also arrived in Har-magedon (Rev 16:16). There the LORD will destroy them (Dan 11:44-45).

Zec 12:10 | Look on Him and Mourn for Him

10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

After destroying the enemy, something must still happen to Israel. After the physical salvation of “the house of David” and “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” the spiritual salvation must now follow. They must repent and convert. The true great Day of Atonement must come. This will happen in the hearts of the believing remnant through “the Spirit of grace and of supplication” Who will be poured out on them by God Himself. There is grace from God and supplication with people. Both come as the working of God’s Spirit. It is the Spirit who grants grace and works penance.

Here we see a remarkable representation of facts. Who speaks here? The LORD speaks, the same of verse 1, the Creator of heaven and earth. Who will they look on? “They will look on Me”, that is the Speaker, the LORD. But how will they look on Him? As the One, “whom they have pierced”, that is none other than the Lord Jesus.

They will look on Him Whom they have pierced, a Man, as Thomas saw Him (Jn 20:27-28). They will then see that the Messiah is the LORD Himself, that the despised Jesus of Nazareth is the LORD Himself. Not a Roman soldier, but Israel pierced Him (Jn 19:34,37). We must realize that each one of us personally did the same, through the Roman soldier.

“Look on” is watching with great attention. When they see Him like this, they will pronounce the mourning of Isaiah 53 (Isa 53:1-12). It is the mourning of the loss of an only son (Amos 8:10). Christ is the Firstborn Who is being reintroduced into the world (Heb 1:6).

Zec 12:11 | The Great Mourning

11 In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

Zechariah compares the mourning at the sight of Him Whom they pierced with the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. This is most likely the mourning because Josiah was killed in battle in Megiddo (2Chr 35:22-25). Josiah was killed by his own fault, but is still a son of David and very beloved. That is why it is “a great mourning” and can be referred to as a comparison with the one about the Messiah here. He, the Innocent, Who was rejected by them, an act of which they are guilty. The valley of Megiddo (Jdg 5:19) is similar to “Har-Magedon”, where in the future the enemy nations will be gathered and judged by the Lord Jesus (Rev 16:16).

Zec 12:12-14 | Collective and Personal Mourning

12 The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves; 13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves; 14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

It is clear that these are not hired complainants (cf. Mk 5:38-40). Collective confession of guilt must be made if something has been done wrong collectively. But national mourning only has value if everyone has his or

her personal share in it. There is a collective guilt, but everyone personally must suffer for it. In this way, every family in Israel will share in this grief.

There is also another division. There is talk of “the family of the house of David” (verse 12), which means the royal family, and of “the family of the house of Levi” (verse 13), which means the priestly family. Within these families another refinement is made. “The family of the house of Nathan,” the son of David (2Sam 5:14; 1Chr 3:5; Lk 3:31), is within the house of David, again separately involved as a family in that mourning. The same goes for “the family of the house of the Shimeites” within the house of Levi. Thus, the mourning will continue in “all the families that remain”.

The fact that with “each family by itself” always is talk of “their wives by themselves”, indicates that repentance exceeds the unity that exists in the innermost bond on earth. Each stands personally before God (cf. Joel 2:16). Husband and wife form a unity, but a husband cannot take the place of his wife in mourning over a sin. The wife has her own responsibility.

No one comes to repentance for what someone else does, not even in the most intimate bond. Everyone must humble himself over his own sins and see that the Lord Jesus had to be pierced for that. Then a fountain of cleansing opens, as we see in the next chapter (Zec 13:1).

Zechariah 13

Introduction

Zechariah 13 connects chronologically to Zechariah 12. In Zechariah 12, Zechariah first speaks of a covenant of peoples who march against Jerusalem, only to find their end there (Zec 12:1-9). The remnant receives from the LORD the power to fight the enemy, while He Himself is not visible. Judah will be able to drive out the occupying power (Assyria) before its main force returns from Egypt.

Then the second phase is described, in which the LORD does appear (Zec 12:10-14). They will look on Him Whom they have pierced. When God as a Man was present in humiliation, they pierced Him. That humbled Jesus will return to show Himself to His people.

The first effect is mourning. In Him they smote God Himself on the cheek (Mic 5:1). True spiritual restoration begins with a mourning over one's own sins before God. This is a general principle. They will see the Lord Jesus and recognize Him as the One rejected by them. They will also see Him as the One Who God has set as a throne of grace.

Zec 13:1 | An Open Fountain

1 *"In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity."*

In Zechariah 12, God's work in removing sin and subsequent purification follows man's repentance and conversion, which is worked by God's Spirit. Everything is a work of God and His grace, without falling short of man's responsibility. Just as God Himself pours out the Spirit of supplication upon Israel, He also provides the means for the cleansing of sins. "The house of David" and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" represent the whole people here, just as in the previous chapter (Zec 12:10).

Here takes place what is presented in the great Day of Atonement. Through the cross, Christ has become the fountain of reconciliation; on the cross that fountain is opened. The people have sentenced Him to the cross, but

God has made it this fountain. It is a fountain from which cleansing water comes.

There is a distinction between cleansing by water and cleansing by blood. Both came from the side of the Lord Jesus when He was pierced (Jn 19:37). Blood is the righteous foundation toward God to forgive us our sins. Water is towards man. The Word of God, which is compared to water (Jn 15:3; Eph 5:26), is used to convince us of sins through which we come to confess our sins. The water comes from the side of the Lord Jesus. What would the Word benefit if the Lord Jesus had not died, so that we could live a pure life?

The purifying stream of water continues throughout the entire realm of peace (Joel 3:18b; Eze 47:1-12). A fountain keeps giving fresh water at all times. Not only do we need this water for our conversion, which completely cleanses us from our sins, but we also need it as our daily cleansing. The latter is done by reading the Word of God. We are born again once, but each time we need a new application of the water.

Zec 13:2 | Idols and Their Prophets Cut off

2 “It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.

This verse contains one of the results of the always flowing fountain of the previous verse. In their lives and land they will no longer be able to endure anything that cannot endure the light of God’s Word. Cutting off the names of the idols means that their authority, power, and influence will be nullified (Exo 23:13; Jos 23:6-7; Psa 16:4). The worship of God will be completely free from mixing with idolatry. The LORD says in Hosea of that time: “Then I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth and their names will not be remembered” (Hos 2:17).

Idolatry is everything that takes the place of God’s authority that shows that we find something more important than the Lord Himself. That may even be the church of God. We are warned not to give the idols a place in our lives (Col 3:5; 1Jn 5:21).

Also, all false “prophets” who speak to the people and lead them to the idols will be removed from the land, along with “the unclean spirit”. The expression “unclean spirit” appears only here in the Old Testament and is in sharp contrast to the Spirit of grace and supplication.

Zec 13:3-4 | The False Prophet Killed

3 And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD’; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies. 4 Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;

Here the possibility is suggested that there is another false prophet walking around (verse 3). But that prophet will not live long (Deu 13:6-10; 18:20). He will be accused by his own father and mother (cf. Mt 10:37). The love for God and His truth surpasses the most precious natural bond. However much God-fearing parents love their children, their love for God and His honor goes beyond that.

His father and mother will judge him in spiritual strength. They do that by piercing him. If the true Prophet is seen and they have confessed what they have done to him, there will be spiritual power to exercise discipline as God wills.

The message of false prophets has always been well received by wicked kings. Those prophets will be ashamed if it turns out that nothing comes true of their lies (verse 4). They have given the impression of being prophets by wearing a hair coat (1Kgs 19:13,19; 2Kgs 1:8; 2:8,13; Mt 3:4), but they have been false prophets.

As far as our time is concerned, we can think of different doctrines of roman catholicism, such as purgatory, the sacraments and confession. The pope and the priests put on their ‘hairy robe’ and give the crowd the impression of a superior holiness. If the Lord Jesus rules, He will settle that posturing once and for all.

Zec 13:5-6 | The True Prophet

5 but he will say, 'I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.' 6 And one will say to him, 'What are these wounds between your arms?' Then he will say, '[Those] with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.'

What is in verse 5 is a great contrast with the previous verses. There it is about the false prophets, here it is about the Lord Jesus. He occupies an extremely humble position. With Him there is nothing of the posturing that so characterizes the false prophets. He declares Who He is and what has been done with Him. He speaks as He is, in extreme humility.

He says: "I am not a prophet" (cf. Amos 7:14). He was sent to earth by God as Slave. This has become necessary because man has become a slave to sin. In order to free man from the power of sin, it has become necessary that He humbled Himself and became Man and Slave. In this sense man sold [literally: caused another to buy me] Him for this purpose from His youth, from His coming to earth. He was bought by man as the Hebrew slave and served a perfect period of time (Exo 21:2).

As the Slave of God He became the Slave of man. He never sought His own honor (Jn 8:50). He devoted Himself completely to man. He was in our midst as One Who serves. He went through the land to seek fruit for God and to sow the seed in the world. His own life was one perfect fruit for God. And the results of His work are also perfect for the glory of God.

Man's appreciation of His service is His rejection. The people He had come to serve have inflicted many wounds on Him and pierced Him in His side and hands (Psa 22:16c). When He returns in His glorified body as a glorious apparition, the wounds inflicted upon Him in the house of Israel will be asked for. The house of Israel is here called "the house of those who love me". It is the wounds that were inflicted upon Him by His enemies in that house and will remain visible in His glorified body (Jn 20:24-28).

Zec 13:7 | God Strikes His Shepherd

*7 "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the man, My Associate,"
Declares the LORD of hosts.*

*“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.*

The Lord Jesus is first stricken by men in the house of His friends (verse 6). Then He is stricken by God (verse 7). If verse 6 would not be followed by verse 7, the mourning of Israel would not have come to an end and could never have been changed into a song of jubilation.

We are not reconciled by what people have done to the Lord Jesus, be it the Jews or the Gentiles. It was not the wounds of Pilate’s scourges that brought healing for our sins, but the wounds of God’s judgment (1Pet 2:24). That is what the sword speaks of. Everything that we, humans, have done to Him has only made our guilt even greater. What has brought us reconciliation is not by what man has done, but by what God has done to Him. “But the LORD was pleased To crush Him” (Isa 53:10a).

In verse 7 the LORD takes over the conversation. However, He does not speak to His Son nor to man, but to the sword of judgment. When Abraham had to sacrifice his son, the judgment knife was stopped (Gen 22:9-12). When God had to sacrifice His Son, He gave Him up to the sword of judgment.

Here He Who sent the Shepherd speaks. He calls the Shepherd “My Associate”. That Shepherd is the Companion of God. That could not be said of any man on earth. How can God say “My Shepherd” and let follow directly after that “strike the Shepherd”? It is for the sake of the sheep and still sheep that are scattered. As fulfillment of this verse, the disciples fled (Mt 26:31,56), which also refers to the scattering of Israel.

But the consequences go much further. There will also come a moment when He will turn His hand to the little ones again. That will happen when He will fulfill the promises He made to Israel. He will gather His people from the ends of the earth and bring them into His land.

Only in a spiritual way, i.e. after repentance and conversion, will God re-establish the ties with Israel. It says that He will turn His hand to “the little ones,” the remnant, the little flock (Isa 40:11). Because His hand with in it the sword of His righteousness has come down upon His Shepherd in anger, He can turn His hand in grace to the little ones.

Zec 13:8-9 | Two Parts and a Third Part

*8 "It will come about in all the land,"
Declares the LORD,
"That two parts in it will be cut off [and] perish;
But the third will be left in it.
9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, 'They are My people,'
And they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"*

Verses 7-9 cover the period from the cross to the millennial realm of peace, with a large gap in time between verse 7 and verse 8. Verse 7 looks back on the death on the cross of the Lord Jesus and its consequences for His own, His sheep. Verse 8 looks forward to the future. "Two parts" is the ungodly mass of the people. They perish in the final judgments. "The third" part is the remnant, the little ones of verse 7.

The remnant, "the third" part, will come into "the fire" of testing, which is the great tribulation (verse 9). Refined they will come out of the great tribulation and then enter the realm of peace. Gold and silver are melted because only then can these metals be cleansed from the unclean, leaving pure silver and pure gold from which the blacksmith can make something beautiful (Pro 25:4). It can only be purified when it is melted.

In the fires of trial a purification process takes place that is completed by the Lord Himself at His coming (Mal 3:2-3a). Peter uses this picture in his first letter for the purification of faith and that in view of the revelation of the Lord Jesus (1Pet 1:7; Psa 66:10).

Out of the distress of the trial they shall call upon the name of the LORD, and he will hear them. Then the result of the cleansing process is achieved, the restoration of the relationship between God and His people. The LORD will acknowledge them again as His people (Hos 1:9; Jer 30:18-22; Eze 11:19-20) and they will acknowledge that the LORD is their God.

Zechariah 14

Introduction

This chapter describes the introduction of the realm of peace.

Zec 14:1 | The Day for the LORD

1 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.

We now come to a special day (cf. verse 7), “a day for the LORD” (verse 1), which has been spoken about so often. It is literally the day of the LORD, it is His day. By this is meant the period in which He openly claims and maintains the dominion over creation (Isa 2:12). That is the end of man’s authority under the leadership of Satan and of his contempt for God.

Christ will judge all enemies and also divide the spoil. The spoil will be Christ’s and He will divide it. The nations believe they have reached their goal and will be able to divide the spoil. But they have reckoned outside of Christ Who will deal with them on this day. He will do that in Har-Magedon.

Zec 14:2-3 | The Nations Gathered and Judged

2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

Here the last attack on and capture of Jerusalem by “all the nations” of the earth is described (verse 2; cf. Zec 12:2). It is a self-willed act of the nations as they are gathered by the LORD for their battle against Jerusalem. The LORD stands behind the events and controls them, so that His purpose is achieved. That purpose is the liberation of His people by the judgment of their enemies.

At first it seems that the peoples are succeeding in their intention. They capture the city, plunder the houses and ravish the women. In doing so, they carry out God's judgment on apostate Israel. They also take half of the population of Jerusalem into exile. But there is talk of "the rest of the people", which is a remnant that is not cut off and stays in the city. So there is no total destruction of the city as there was in the year 70 AD. It is the last siege by the nations. If the Lord Jesus cuts them off, the times of the Gentile will have come to an end (Lk 21:24).

When the need is greatest, the LORD appears. His people are attacked and whoever touches them touches the apple of His eye. He will then go out of heaven (Rev 19:11-16) to fight as He did before. We can think of His fight against the Egyptians when He frees His people from bondage (Exo 14:14). He also fights for His people when they take possession of the land of Canaan (Jos 10:14).

Zec 14:4-5 | His Feet on the Mount of Olives

4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. 5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, [and] all the holy ones with Him [Hebrew: with You]!

These verses have no prefill. They have yet to be fulfilled in their entirety. The Lord Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives from where He went to heaven (verse 4; Acts 1:9-12). "His feet", the feet of the Lord Jesus, stand on the Mount of Olives. Here we have another proof that He is the LORD, Yahweh. He is the Son of Man Who comes with the clouds of heaven and He is also the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13,22). He is the LORD coming from the LORD, a mystery incomprehensible to us.

It seems that the touch of his feet causes an earthquake which splits the Mount of Olives in two. Because one half of the mountain faces north and

the other half faces south, a “very large valley” is created that runs from east to west.

This valley will serve as an escape route (verse 5). But who will flee here? Is that the remnant left in Jerusalem for whom an escape route is opened here by the LORD? More likely it is that the wicked suddenly see a possibility of fleeing from the coming Judge – which of course will turn out to be an illusion.

“The earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah” to which Zechariah refers took place two centuries earlier (Amos 1:1). It must have been an earthquake deeply engraved in the memory of the people, and it has become a fixed place in history. They then fled out of great fear of the earthquake. In this way one will not only flee from the enemy, but especially out of fear for the appearance of the LORD that accompanies such impressive natural phenomena.

The prophet is so full of what he sees, that in the last part of the verse he passes from descriptive to addressing. He sees in the mind how everything will go. He is so involved in it, that he turns unnoticed to Him Who shows him everything and proclaims: “And all the holy ones with You.” He speaks to the Lord Jesus. Zechariah represents the remnant here.

“The holy ones” who return with the Lord Jesus are not the angels. They are the Old Testament and New Testament believers who were all caught up at the coming of the Lord Jesus in the air (1Thes 3:13; 4:14-18). After all the believers are revealed before the judgment seat of Christ and the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated, they come back to earth with Christ.

In what follows, Zechariah first describes the full and certain result of the coming of the Lord Jesus (verses 6-11). Then he shows the judgment of the enemy (verses 12-15) and what the consequences are (verses 16-21).

Zec 14:6-7 | A Unique Day

6 In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. 7 For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

The day of the LORD will be a very special day. It is a day of judgment over the wicked, a day when all light is absent for them (verse 6; Joel 3:15; Eze 32:7-8; Mt 24:29; Rev 6:12). There is only thick darkness for them (Amos 5:18).

It is a unique day known only to the LORD (verse 7). This day does not begin with light, but with darkness and ends not with darkness, but with light. The light does not disappear in the evening, but it remains light. That light comes from Him Who is the Sun of righteousness. He does not set, but will continue to shine for a thousand years.

Zec 14:8-11 | The LORD is the One and Only

8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. 9 And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be [the only] one, and His name [the only] one. 10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. 11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

When the Lord Jesus rules, Jerusalem will be a fountain of blessing for the earth (verse 8). Living waters will flow out of the city. That waters flow in two directions. It flows in easterly direction, "toward the eastern sea" which is the Dead Sea. It also flows in westerly direction, "toward the western sea" which is the Mediterranean Sea. The blessing that flows out of Jerusalem will not dry up. Summer and winter the water flows continuously (Eze 47:1-8; Joel 3:18).

At that time, the LORD is King, not only over Israel, but "over all the earth" (verse 9). Therefore, the confession of the Jew will be the confession of the Gentiles, that the LORD is the Only One and His Name is the Only Name. Then there will be no more idols to be served (cf. Zec 13:2). Only one Name will be mentioned and heard. In that blessed time there will be only one religion, only one way in which that religion is practiced.

Verse 10 describes the restoration of the land. In the midst of a plain lies Jerusalem as a radiant climax (Zec 12:6; Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1). “Geba” lies in northern Benjamin (Jos 21:17) and “Rimmon” in southern Judah (Jos 15:32). Several well-known names of buildings in Jerusalem are mentioned, which makes it clear that it is about the earthly Jerusalem and not about the heavenly.

Jerusalem has been restored. The inhabitants of the city will no longer suffer any burden (verse 11). They are free of any yoke. There is nothing more to fear. They are safe.

Zec 14:12-15 | The Judgment Described Once More

12 Now this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. 13 It will come about in that day that a great panic from the LORD will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another. 14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance. 15 So also like this plague will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey and all the cattle that will be in those camps.

In these verses Zechariah once again describes the extermination of the nations that have gone to war against Jerusalem. He has already talked about this in the first verses of this chapter, but here he adds a few more details. The LORD will also send a supernatural plague for the defeat of His enemies and by doing so he will bring down the enemy (verse 12). In this way He executes a lightning-fast judgment on the military power of the enemies. The citizens of the enemy nations are judged when Christ has established the throne of His glory on earth. Then He will separate the nations into sheep and goats (Mt 25:31-46).

With the enemies, attention is focused on “their eyes”. Their eyes “will rot in their sockets” because they have only looked at their supposed booty in greed. Also “their tongue” is mentioned. Their tongue “will rot in their mouths” because with it they have blasphemed the LORD.

The nations that have gone to war against Jerusalem will partly rot as a result of a plague sent by the LORD (verse 12). Another part will be killed by the sword of their own army (verse 13). A last part will be killed by the remnant of Judah who took up arms (verse 14).

In addition to the physical rotting, there will also be a confusion among them, worked out by the LORD, through which each will see his fellow warrior as his enemy (cf. Jdg 7:22; 1Sam 14:15-20; 2Chr 20:23). Internal division will also be a means by which the enemy will perish. This takes place before the walls of Jerusalem.

A third cause of the downfall of the enemies is the faithfulness of Judah. They will expel the enemy (verse 14). This will bring them a great booty. Judah will not fight against, but in Jerusalem. There are some who have fled into Judah and are now coming back to liberate Jerusalem. After the battle, the spoil will be divided (2Chr 20:21-25).

Animals in the service of the enemy will also be judged (verse 15; Zec 12:4; 1Sam 15:3). All means employed by Satan in his struggle against God and His people will be exterminated.

Zec 14:16-19 | The Feast of Booths

16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. 17 And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. 18 If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no [rain will fall] on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. 19 This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

After all enemies have been judged, i.e. the enemy armies of the heathen peoples, the realm of peace can begin. “any who are left of all the nations” will go up annually to Jerusalem for the feasts (verse 16). Of all the feasts of the LORD mentioned in Leviticus 23, the Feast of Booths is mentioned by name. It is the last feast of the cycles of feasts. It is celebrated when the

whole harvest has been brought in. It is the last and the culmination of all feasts.

The Feast of Booths is mentioned here because this feast itself finds its fulfilment in the millennial realm of peace. During the feast, the wilderness journey of the people is remembered and also the more than two thousand years that the people have wandered through the wilderness of the peoples. All the nations, the rest of them, the nations which the Lord Jesus calls 'sheep' (Mt 25:31-40), celebrate it with them, most probably through a delegation which they send to Jerusalem. They will worship the Messiah.

In the realm of peace, it is still necessary to rule in order to restrain sin. It is not yet the perfect state. On families that do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the LORD, no rain will fall. As a result, there will be no harvest for them (verse 17). Of the heathen peoples, Egypt is specially mentioned (verses 18-19).

We should not infer from these verses that at the time of the completion of the kingdom of God there will still be heathens who will refrain from worshipping the true God. The idea is simply that there will then be no more room for heathenism within the sphere of the kingdom of God. We see this emphatically in the two following verses that form the end of this chapter and this book, where all unholy things will be removed from the kingdom.

The application of the Feast of Booths for us is that the Lord Jesus appreciates it when we think back to what He did on the cross. We do this on earth especially when we celebrate the Lord's Supper and proclaim the Lord's death. We will remember for all eternity what He did because we will always see the Lamb standing, as if slain (Rev 5:6).

Zec 14:20-21 | Everything Is Dedicated to the LORD

20 In that day there will [be inscribed] on the bells of the horses, "HOLY TO THE LORD." And the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the bowls before the altar. 21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day.

While outside Israel evil is judged, within the people everything is “HOLY TO THE LORD”, that is, everything is dedicated to Him. The whole life will be pervaded by the holiness of the LORD. The people will then be the holy nation that God has always envisioned (Exo 19:6). What used to stand only on the turban of the high priest (Exo 28:36) is now read everywhere, which will be true in practice. Earlier, horses of the enemies were struck by the curse (verse 15), here horses contribute to the glorification of the LORD.

The same goes for the cooking pots in the house of the LORD. These cooking pots are, as it were, upgraded to a service directly related to the altar, i.e. they contribute to the worship of the LORD. All ordinary utensils are used for multiple glorification of God. This is already true for us. Everything we do, including the ordinary eating and drinking, should be for the glory of God (Col 3:17; 1Cor 10:31).

What is true for the cooking pots in the house of the LORD, is true for “every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah” (verse 21). Every everyday utensil shall be dedicated to the LORD and will be used to His honor. Every object throughout the land will be so holy that it could be used in the temple.

With this presentation Zechariah wants to speak to the heart of his people. He wants them to think about that future time and then make sure that they bring everything in line with it. Also for us it is important to take the house of God, the church, seriously. This means that we dedicate everything in our whole lives, seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. Everything in God’s church has to serve to the glory of Him of Whom the house is.

Everything that has always endangered service to the LORD will then no longer be there. The merchants – that is the meaning of the name Canaan – will no longer be there to turn the things of the Lord into merchandise. The Lord cleansed the house of His Father of merchants as the first act in the temple (Jn 2:16). The time when religion is merchandise is gone forever. The judgment on the roman catholic church as an economic power indicates this (Rev 18:15-24).

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