

**Adult**

# **Sabbath School Lessons**

## **Visions of Victory**



**October, November, December 1989**



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We have had the privilege and opportunity to help train young people in Peru, Mexico, and Chile. It is our special joy to see our former students in positions of leadership in the church.

Our children have also chosen to be missionaries.

We thought we were giving up a great deal when we first accepted the call to mission service, but blessings received have been far greater than any sacrifice.

*Allen, Judith, Brad and Lorice Jamison*

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# Meet the Author of This Quarter's Sabbath School Lessons



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Born in Syria to a family with Greek Orthodox background, Dr. Samaan emigrated to the United States where he completed his education. He holds a BA in religion and history from Walla Walla College, a Master of Science and Public Health from Loma Linda University, a Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from Andrews University.

Dr. Samaan began his denominational work as a pastor in Idaho, where he was ordained in 1979. He later served as director of youth outreach and campus ministries for the North Pacific Union, before accepting a call to the Africa-Indian Ocean Division to serve as director of lay activities and Sabbath School. He returned to the United States in 1987 to complete his doctoral degree and teach at Andrews University.

Dr. Samaan wrote the teacher's edition on Daniel and has written several articles for Adventist publications, including *Collegiate Quarterly*.

Dr. Samaan and his wife, Sherilyn, have an eight-year-old daughter, Maria. The family enjoys music, the outdoors, traveling, and reading.

**Companion Book:** Check with your local conference Adventist Book Center for the companion book to this quarter's lessons.

# Introduction to the Book of Zechariah

## Visions Of Victory

This quarter's study of the book of Zechariah will not attempt to exhaust every passage or chapter, but will deal with the major themes of this important book.

Zechariah is one of the most difficult books in the Bible to interpret. It demands the most earnest study and reflection. However, in spite of the difficulty of interpreting some passages, this book is a precious treasure chest of God's truth. Through its often-intermingled maze of history and eschatology, the face of Jesus the Messiah, the central personality, can be seen looking out from its pages.

One of the main reasons why the book of Zechariah is somewhat unknown is that it is so often neglected. Christians need to pay much more attention to its study because it is one of the most Messianic, eschatological, and apocalyptic books of the Old Testament. It is the largest book among the Minor Prophets, containing fourteen chapters. It has much in common with Daniel and Revelation. In fact, Zechariah shares with Daniel the honor of being the Old Testament equivalent of what Revelation is for the New Testament.

Martin Luther called Zechariah the "quintessence" of Old Testament prophecy. It presents a summary of many revelations of previous Bible writers concerning the Messiah, His work, and His advents.

Finally, Zechariah contains a wealth of promises, comfort, and encouragement for God's remnant people today. The prophecies of Zechariah came at a time of great uncertainty and flagging zeal. The remnant of the returning exiles were gripped with discouragement and fear. During such a prevailing mood, God called the prophet Zechariah to infuse courage and hope in the sagging morale of His people. God also calls upon His remnant people today to listen to the comforting and empowering messages of Zechariah streaming forth from the Messiah—His love, life, work, and soon return.

### Overview of Zechariah

1:1—6:15	7:1—8:23	9:1—14:21
Visions and messages of exhortation and encouragement	The question of fasting and God's answer, "mourning turned to joy"	Eschatology—the complete and final victory of God and His remnant

# Look Up and Live

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 1:1, 7, 18; 2:1; 4:4-6; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1, 4, 5.

**SAB** **PM** **MEMORY TEXT:** "I lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2 RSV).

**GOD REMEMBERS ME.** The Hebrew name Zechariah means "God remembers." Often in the hustle and bustle of life we forget that God remembers us; we need to stop, turn, lift up our eyes, and see Him. God is not unmindful of His people during times of trouble and discouragement. He invites us to look up and return to Him so that He can dwell with us and bless our endeavors.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Zechariah—God Remembers (Zech. 1:1, 7).
- II. Zechariah Lifted up His Eyes and Saw (Zech. 1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1).
- III. Understand, Apply, and Live (Zech. 4:4-6; 6:4, 5).

**TOO BUSY TO LOOK UP?** In his book *The Pilgrim's Progress* John Bunyan describes the experience of the man with the muckrake. This man was so busy with the rake in his hand removing the dirt around him that he never stopped to look up and see. What the man missed seeing was an angel above him in whose hand was a crown of gold. The angel was patiently waiting to give the crown to the man with the muckrake, but he never was ready to receive it. Why not? Because he was so preoccupied with what he was doing that he never turned, or lifted up his eyes to look.

As we study these lessons, let us not be like the man with the muckrake. Let us be like Zechariah, who remembered that God was there, turned, and lifted up his eyes again and again to see a vision of the Lord. This will not enable us to share Zechariah's prophetic gift, but it will enable us to enter into the thrilling spiritual experience of grasping the meaning of his visions and applying their messages to our hearts.

## **SUN** I. ZECHARIAH—GOD REMEMBERS (Zech. 1:1, 7).

**Zechariah—Historical Sketch.** The Hebrew name Zechariah means "God remembers." It was a common name in Old Testament times. Twenty-nine persons mentioned in the Bible shared this name. The meaning of Zechariah's name was fitting to the situation in which the returning exiles found themselves. The unsettled political situation in the Persian

empire and the bitter opposition and prejudice from neighboring Samaritans led to great discouragement among the Jews. For a time they completely stopped the program of rebuilding the Temple. Instead they began caring for their own material interests. As a result they lapsed into spiritual lethargy. Difficult times followed.

**God had not forgotten.** During this time of discouragement and uncertainty, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah brought messages of encouragement and hope to the people. God had not forgotten them as they had thought. He was calling them to return to Him so that He might dwell in their midst and remember them always. He assured them that He was ready to work for them so that they could complete the rebuilding of the Temple.

**God kept His promise** to restore the Temple. The work of restoration was resumed in the second year of Darius I Hystaspes, (520/519 B.C.) and was completed in his sixth year (515 B.C.). (See Ezra 6:14, 15.)

**Why God allows trial.** "God has a purpose in sending trial to His children. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose that they are fulfilling. All that He brings upon them in test and trial comes that they may be strong to do and to suffer for Him."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 578.

**The question that concerns me.** When I face criticism, opposition, and trial, do I lose sight of God's presence in my life? Such struggles can drive me closer to God or farther away from Him. What are their effects on my spiritual life? Do I find myself thinking, like God's people of old, that the Lord has forgotten me? Do I begin focusing on my own selfish material interests?

**Zechariah—the person.** Zechariah was a young man when, about the year 520 B.C., he was called by God to the prophetic ministry. He was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai. (See Ezra 5:1; 6:14.) He also functioned as a priest, carrying on the priestly line of his grandfather Iddo. (See Zech. 1:1; Neh. 12:1, 4, 16.) Because Haggai was an old man when Zechariah began his work, he found young Zechariah a great help. "Two months after Haggai's last recorded message was delivered, Zechariah had a series of visions regarding the work of God in the earth."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 580.

Theirs was a united and cooperative ministry. Zechariah built upon and reinforced Haggai's messages. "The earnest pleadings and the encouragements given through Haggai were emphasized and added to by Zechariah, whom God raised up to stand by his side in urging Israel to carry out the command to arise and build."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 576.

**Zechariah was born a captive in Babylon.** The fact that he came back to Jerusalem with approximately fifty thousand exiles tells us that he was reared to love God and his homeland.

1. List some of the traits of character exhibited by Zechariah. How would these characteristics be especially useful for one chosen by God to communicate to His people? Zech. 1:9, 19, 21; 2:2; 3:5; 4:11, 12.
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- MON**
2. What insights are we given into God's character as we see Him responding to Zechariah's questions, interruptions, and curiosity? Zech. 1:9, 10, 19, 21; 2:2; 3:5.
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Because of his personal characteristics, Zechariah became a well-chosen instrument to transmit to the people God's messages regarding the restoration of Jerusalem, the work of the Messiah, and last-day events. In the passages listed above notice how positively Zechariah responded to God's messages and appeals.

**God invites our dialogue.** One thing we learn from Zechariah's experience is that God does not mind our questions. He is willing to hear us. He invites: "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18). God is patient and loving, willing to be interrupted. At times He accepts our suggestions. He does everything possible to promote a relationship of dialogue and understanding.

**How do we relate to others?** In the light of God's reasonableness, His interest in listening to us, and conversing with us, how should we relate to others? Are we sometimes impatient with their questions? Do we listen patiently, or do we do most of the talking?

How do we relate to other people's ideas and suggestions? Do we sometimes appear ill at ease or defensive? Zechariah actually made a suggestion to the heavenly court to place a "fair mitre" on Joshua's head (see Zech. 3:5). His request was immediately granted by the all-knowing God.

3. According to Jesus, how did Zechariah die? Matt. 23:35.
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[Note: Some scholars have identified Zacharias mentioned in Matthew 23:35 with Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the high priest (2 Chron. 24:20-22). See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 492. However, Matthew specifically identifies the slain prophet as the "son of Barachias" (compare Zech. 1:1). See also *The Desire of Ages*, p. 619.] In denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus gave rare insight into how Zechariah's life ended. How tragic that, after his ministry of encouragement, he should be violently slain! Jesus' words concerning the death of Zechariah came shortly before His crucifixion by the very people whom He had come to save. Just as their forefathers had killed the prophets, so they crucified the Messiah.

**II. ZECHARIAH LIFTED UP HIS EYES AND SAW (Zech. 1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1).**

In the first six chapters we notice several times that Zechariah looked up to heaven and saw visions from God. He was living so near to the Lord that he was ready at any moment to receive divine messages. He was not the kind of person who brooded over his problems or kept his eyes on earthly things.

That is not to say that he was not a realist. He was. He understood well the problems of his people. But before attempting to resolve the problems down here, he lifted up his eyes to God. He acknowledged that his help came from beyond himself, from the Lord.



**4. What spiritual significance may be given to Zechariah's action of lifting up his eyes and seeing? Zech. 1:18; compare 2 Kings 6:14-17.**

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**We live in the natural and supernatural realms.** We are surrounded by seen and unseen forces that affect our daily lives. Often we focus our attention on what is visible, such as money, pleasure, and prestige. Consequently, we are blinded to the unseen world—the supernatural. We need to ask God to open our eyes to view the invisible.

We must remember the supremacy of the supernatural over the natural. The supernatural is much more real and enduring. Only by *God's* opening our eyes and *our* looking up, like the young man mentioned in 2 Kings 6:17, may we see by faith the presence of guides and protectors appointed by God. As we acknowledge the proximity of the unseen world of our Lord and His angels, the visible world around us takes on new meaning and is placed in correct perspective.

**5. Read the following texts and write down the main thought in each. What do they teach regarding the source of our deliverance?**

- Ps. 121:1, 2 \_\_\_\_\_
- Luke 21:28 \_\_\_\_\_
- Heb. 12:2 \_\_\_\_\_

**Look away from self to Christ.** "God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free. . . . He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and He desires us to lay our perplexities and troubles at His feet, and leave them there. It is not wise to look to ourselves, and study our emotions. If we do this, the enemy will present difficulties and temptations that weaken faith and destroy courage. . . . We are to look away from self to Jesus."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 249.

6. How may we apply Zechariah's willingness to receive Heaven's messages on repeated occasions? What blessing can we expect when we continue to listen and respond to the Lord's counsel? Zech. 4:1; 5:1; 6:1; 8:1; compare 1 Sam. 3:10; Isa. 6:8.
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In our modern world there are many voices vying for our attention. Let us keep our ears tuned to the voice of the Spirit and respond as did Samuel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

- WED 7. To what extent are our wills involved in the constant process of listening to the Lord and following His counsel? Phil. 4:13; 3:14; Heb. 12:4.
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**Grace alone saves, and faith works.** Our efforts can never save us. We must always acknowledge that only the free gift of Christ's grace makes us loyal disciples. (See Eph. 2:8, 9.) Nevertheless, when we are saved by grace we are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10, RSV). Now we are empowered by "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6, RSV). Inspired and strengthened by Christ's love and the goal of reflecting His character, we make a serious and a conscious effort to persevere in the Christian walk with regularity and steadfastness. In spite of our negative feelings and the obstacles we encounter, we daily place our wills on God's side.

**The power of choice.** "Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

8. What results when we daily look to the Lord? Isa. 45:22; John 3:14-16.
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**The necessary preparation.** "As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of an unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined, and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 85.

**Ask yourself:** Is my experience of spiritual communion with Christ steady and consistent, or is it only spasmodic and occasional? How can I develop consistency in my relationship with Christ?



### III. UNDERSTAND, APPLY, AND LIVE (Zech. 4:4-6; 6:4, 5).

9. What was notable about Zechariah's reaction when he did not immediately understand the meaning of the symbols he was shown? How did the Lord respond? Zech. 4:4-6; 6:4, 5.

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The Lord has not presented His messages in symbols and parables to confuse us, but to stimulate us to study and prayer. He wishes us to learn total reliance upon Him for the meaning of His Word.

10. What is the significance of the fact that the prophets did not fully understand the applications of their prophecies to later ages of the world? Are we looking only for Zechariah's understanding of his visions, or are there applications for us that he could not have grasped? 1 Peter 1:10-12; compare Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; Dan. 12:4, 8, 9.

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"The prophets to whom these great scenes were revealed longed to understand their full import. . . . To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which, since our first parents turned their steps from Eden, God's children have watched and waited, longed and prayed!"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 731.

"Even the prophets who were favored with the special illumination of the Spirit did not fully comprehend the import of the revelations committed to them. The meaning was to be unfolded from age to age, as the people of God should need the instruction therein contained. . . . What a lesson to the people of God in the Christian age, for whose benefit these prophecies were given to His servants!"—*The Great Controversy*, p. 344.

11. How may we understand the special applications of Zechariah's messages to our situation and to the final events of earth's history? John 16:12-15, 26; 1 Cor. 2:12, 13.

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**Reason must bow to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.** "God intends that, even in this life, truth shall be ever unfolding to His people. There is only one way in which this knowledge can be obtained. We can attain to an understanding of God's word only through the illumination of that Spirit by which the word was given. . . .

"God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers; and the study of the Bible will strengthen and elevate the mind as no other study can do. It is the best mental as well as spiritual exercise for the human mind. Yet we are to beware of deifying reason, which is subject to the weakness and infirmity of humanity. If we would not have the Scriptures clouded to our understanding, so that the plainest truths shall not be comprehended, we

must have the simplicity and faith of a little child, ready to learn, and beseeching the aid of the Holy Spirit.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 703.

### WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN TO ME?

Preoccupation with earthly things hinders our listening and responding to God. Take a moment now to identify some subjects or things that tend to absorb your mind and energies, thus blocking out God’s communication with you. List them below:

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Check the suggested strategies that might provide the answer to your need:

- Spend less time talking about my problems with other people and more time talking with God.
- Follow Peter’s suggestion (1 Peter 1:13).
- Follow the psalmist’s suggestion (Psalm 1:2).

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read Psalm 121:1-8; Isaiah 49:14-16; Hebrews 8:12, and *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 83-86.

**(FR)** **SUMMARY:** God, who gave His Son for us, will not forget us or forsake us. He is there always, waiting for us to respond to His love by lifting up our eyes to behold Him and receive what He has for us. That is how we maintain our relationship with God and receive the assurance of eternal life.

# Return to Me

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 1:1-6, 12-17.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isaiah 44:22).

**GOD'S EARNEST DESIRE.** In His love God wants to reestablish His covenant relationship with His people. He wants them to return to Him with all their hearts so that He may live within them and dwell among them.

## OUTLINE:

- I. God's Return to His People (Zech. 1:1-3, 13-15).
- II. Israel's Return to God (Zech. 1:3-6, 17).

**THE PROBLEM.** Two young men who were not serving God sat together in an evangelistic meeting. They both were profoundly affected by the sermon. In his heart one of the young men responded with increasing positiveness. He wanted to be free from his life of sin and be right with God. The other young man became more and more resistant. He thought of the sacrifices he would have to make to become a practicing Christian. He was attracted to Christ, but more attracted to the lifestyle he had been following.

When the call came at the end of the sermon, the first young man rose from his seat and walked to the front, signifying his wholehearted acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord. The other young man also rose from his seat, but he walked in the other direction—out of the hall and away from Christ.

The years went by. Both men had struggles and disappointments. The one who had found Christ trusted in Him for strength and endured it all patiently. The other man became more and more bitter, increasingly determined not to have anything to do with a God who "treated him so unfairly."

More years went by. The man who had found Christ remained a member of the church, but became indifferent. He thought he had heard and experienced everything. He believed he was saved and settled down to a pleasant, respectable existence within the church, but with little concern for those who did not know Christ. The other man began to soften in his attitude to Christ and the church. The Spirit of God gradually led him to a more tolerant attitude toward Christianity. The sufferings and disappointments of life were producing a desire for something better.

What would it be necessary for the Lord to do to save those two men? What would the men themselves have to do? How does the story of their lives relate to the message from Zechariah that we are studying this week?

SUN

## I. GOD'S RETURN TO HIS PEOPLE (Zech. 1:1-3, 13-15).

God's call to repentance through His prophet Zechariah is one of the most moving and spiritually intense in the Old Testament. The theme, "Return to Me" was a major emphasis of Zechariah's ministry. Before the Lord could restore Jerusalem and the Temple, He wished to restore His covenant relationship with His people. First and foremost He wanted their hearts. He was willing to shower spiritual and material blessings upon them if they would come back to Him and walk in His ways.

Disillusionment had gripped the exiles who had returned to Jerusalem. God's call to repentance was intended to infuse courage and faith. He sought to revitalize their sagging morale.

### 1. Which comes first, God's return to His people or their return to Him? Zech. 1:1-3, 16; compare Jer. 35:15.

**God never changes.** He is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). His word will stand forever. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isa. 40:8). The words and statutes of God overtake people and events. People die, events pass away, but God's truth marches on.

The same is true of God's covenant relationship with His people. In this reciprocal relationship God always is faithful. He never wants to forsake anyone. It is they who are unfaithful. They leave and forsake Him. Because of His love, God allows His unfaithful people to be exiled in order that they might return to Him. Even though God's plan never changes, the ways in which it is realized sometimes change because people are different, and they must be approached differently.

**God seeks out His own.** His great love is so overwhelming that even though He is the "injured party," even though His people leave Him for no reason, He is the one who takes the initiative by seeking them out, pleading with them to return to Him. God is doing all He can to restore us to Himself, short of forcing our wills. But He must have our cooperation. If a relationship does not result, it is not because of God's unwillingness, but because of our resistance and rebellion against Him and His plan.

### 2. How does the Lord initially approach His wayward people? Zech. 1:13; compare Isa. 54:6-8, 10; Matt. 23:37.

**How shall I give thee up?** Our loving heavenly Father loves us too much to allow us to rebel without trying to woo us back to Himself. In His love and concern, He becomes displeased with us. He allows us to face trials and difficulties to awaken us to our danger. It is His method of bring-

ing us back to Him, while all along He exclaims, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me. . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger" (Hosea 11:7-9).

**God punishes for our good.** "Humbled in the sight of the nations, those who once had been recognized as favored of Heaven above all other peoples of the earth were to learn in exile the lesson of obedience so necessary for their future happiness. Until they had learned this lesson, God could not do for them all that He desired to do. 'I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished,' He declared in explanation of His purpose to chastise them for their spiritual good. Jeremiah 30:11. Yet those who had been the object of His tender love were not forever set aside; before all the nations of the earth He would demonstrate His plan to bring victory out of apparent defeat, to save rather than to destroy."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 475.



3. What does the Lord mean when He says that He is jealous over His people? Zech. 1:14; 8:2; compare Eze. 39:25; 2 Cor. 11:2.

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"Unrequited love involved God in deep emotion which the Holy Spirit was not afraid to express in terms of human emotions, anger, jealousy, love. Nowhere in the Old Testament is God portrayed as impassive, aloof, uninvolved with our world. The utter holiness of His love only intensifies the suffering involved when that love is rejected, and His desire to save men from the death towards which they are heading is something we only dimly appreciate (Ezk. 18:23, 31, 32)."—Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972), pp. 98, 99.

**Positive jealousy.** The Hebrew word translated "jealousy" can be neutral, expressing either a positive or negative feeling depending on the context. When "jealousy" is motivated by selfishness it culminates in hatred. The opposite is true when "jealousy" is motivated by caring and concern for others. It culminates in love. "Jealousy" is a powerful expression of the righteous determination to protect, defend, and restore. Moreover, it can chastise, rebuke, and defend the object of its love.

**For Personal Reflection.** What kind of jealousy do I have in my interpersonal relationships and my relationship with God and His work? How do I feel when I see my friends and colleagues having more and doing better than I? How do I react when I see injustice, falsehood, and oppression, or when I see the name of a good person tarnished? How do I feel when I hear God's name maligned?

4. Why was the Lord displeased with the nations that had taken Israel captive? What did He plan to do to these nations? Zech. 1:15; compare Isa. 47:1-6; Amos 1:11.

Three times the Babylonians had invaded Palestine (605, 597, 586 B.C.), taking Israelites captive and finally destroying the Temple. Now God's people were ruled by the Persians who were more merciful than the Babylonians to subject nations. But the people surrounding Israel were trying to prevent the restoration that God had moved the Persians to decree. The heathen who had gone too far in punishing Israel were "at ease." They felt secure in their political predominance.

- TUE** 5. How does the Lord appeal to His people who are in captivity today? How does He plan to deal with their enemies? Rev. 18:1-8.

In the book of Revelation, "Babylon" represents the religious union of the last days that is out of harmony with God's will and Word. The Lord initiates the call to His people who are held captive by this false religious system. He warns them that "Babylon" is fallen spiritually, and that if people are to be saved they must sever their connection with her. The Lord's appeal is His last message for the world, "'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues'" (Rev. 18:4, RSV). This message is a repetition of the second angel's message (Rev. 14:8). It is designed to lead people to accept the "everlasting gospel," the first angel's message (Rev. 14:6, 7). When the glory of Christ's character is being shared by His people around the world (Rev. 18:1), the loving appeal to leave Babylon will have a dramatic effect on the honest in heart. They will respond to Christ's love, reject false religion, and join those who are preparing for the second coming of Jesus. (See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 383-390.)

**Have you considered and responded to Christ's appeal to return to Him with all your heart?** Are you represented by the indifferent church member described in the introduction to this lesson? Or are you like the man who does not profess to know Christ but who wants to find Him? There is divine healing for those in either of these situations.

## II. ISRAEL'S RETURN TO GOD (Zech. 1:3-6, 17).

6. What response from His people does the Lord seek in order that He can restore them spiritually? Zech. 1:3; 2 Chron. 7:14; Acts 2:37, 38.

The appeal for the people to return to God took place in the eighth month of 520 B.C. God wanted to make a complete break with the past and begin afresh with those of His people who had returned to Jerusalem.

**God calls; we must respond.** To "return" to the Lord means to turn around and walk in the opposite direction—toward God, instead of away from Him. Whether you are in the church or out of it, the only way to be saved is to respond to God's appeal. The Lord wants to be married to His

people (Eph. 5:25-27). He wants the covenant of grace to be our experience (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:6-11). We must hear, respond to His voice, and return; otherwise His initiative is of no avail to us. Zechariah 7:13 (RSV) expresses a tragic state of affairs that, at all costs, we must avoid: “‘As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,’ says the Lord of hosts.”

When we respond God gives repentance (sorrow for past sin and the power to turn away from it). “The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance. Peter made the matter clear in his statement to the Israelites when he said, ‘Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.’ Acts 5:31. We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.



7. Why is the history of God's people a special inducement for us to return to Him? Zech. 1:4, 5; compare John 5:40; Rom. 10:21.

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The lessons of history are vital to an understanding of our contemporary situation. Those who refuse to learn from the past will repeat the mistakes of their ancestors. In His Word, the Lord has recorded the history of His chosen people because He wants us to succeed where they failed. The questions we must ask are, Where did they fail? How did the Lord deal with them? How will He deal with us if we fail? What will He do for us and through us if we walk in His way?

8. How can we avoid the suffering and calamity that the Lord predicts? Zech. 1:6; Eze. 18:30; 2 Cor. 7:10.

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“Your ancestors and the earlier prophets, says Zechariah, are of the past, but Yahweh's words, which have been revealed through the mouth of these prophets, and whose effect has been clearly seen in your past history, have still an effective power which reaches right up to the present time, for they have overtaken you.”—*The Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1956), vol. 6, p. 1059.

What a tragedy that ancient Israelites did not repent of their sins until calamity and captivity overtook them! Zechariah's message is that it is much better to repent now, and not allow the consequences of sin to overtake us. Some within the church and many without are ignoring the inspired counsels that God has sent them. Whether these counsels come from a Bible prophet or from the Lord's messenger to the remnant, it behooves us to take notice of the message. Rejecting the prophets' words is rejecting

the instruction of the Holy Spirit. The result today will be what it was in ancient times—the withdrawal of Christ's presence and the tyranny of evil.

**9. How does God's promise of restoration apply to His people today?**  
Zech. 1:17; Rev. 21:2-4.

**The promise to literal Israel.** "God had commanded that Jerusalem be rebuilt; the vision of the measuring of the city was an assurance that He would give comfort and strength to His afflicted ones, and fulfill to them the promises of His everlasting covenant. His protecting care, He declared, would be like "a wall of fire round about;" and through them His glory would be revealed to all the sons of men. That which He was accomplishing for His people was to be known in all the earth. 'Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.' [Isaiah 12:6]."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 581.

**The promise to spiritual Israel.** The restoration of Israel, with Jerusalem as the center of the earth, could have been fulfilled to the chosen nation. But God's people failed to meet the conditions. Jesus pronounced the doom of the nation that had been chosen to receive divine favor. "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matt. 23:39, RSV).

Even so, the promise contained in Zechariah 1:17 will be fulfilled. The New Jerusalem will be the home of the saved. At the end of the millennium this Holy City will descend to the earth and become the center of God's government.

**Jerusalem restored as the prophets predicted.** "There is the New Jerusalem, the metropolis of the glorified new earth, 'a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.' 'Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.' 'The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.' Saith the Lord: 'I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people.' 'The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' Isaiah 62:3; Revelation 21:11, 24; Isaiah 65:19; Revelation 21:3."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 676.

**DOES GOD'S CALL TO RETURN APPLY TO ME?**

- Have I experienced God returning to me, and am I responding by seeking Him with all my heart? Have I been waiting to make myself better before going to Christ?
- In my own personal life, am I trying to improve without total dependence on God? Will the words of God confirm or condemn me when they overtake me?
- With God's help, am I meeting the conditions that God has set to maintain my covenant relationship with Him?

- Do I see people around me attracted to Christ by what they see in me? Do I share with them my testimony and show them how to return to God?

Complete the following sentence:

I will begin the process of returning to God by \_\_\_\_\_

**FR**

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter on repentance in *Steps to Christ*, pp. 23-36; Read Jeremiah 31:2,3; Isaiah 55:6-9; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 579, and *The Great Controversy*, p. 390:

**SUMMARY:** God wants us to return to Him with all our hearts so that He may restore us to Himself. Our covenant relationship with Him is reciprocal and conditional. God loves us too much to force our wills. In encouraging God's people to do His work, Zechariah is concerned with the religion of the heart, as well as with ethical reformation. In this he comes close to the ideal of the Sermon on the Mount. He emphasizes the importance of heart commitment, not the attempt to obey without union with God.

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# The Lord in Your Midst

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Zechariah 1:7—2:13.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zechariah 2:5).

**THE LORD YOUR GLORY AND PROTECTION.** In the first three visions the Lord shows Zechariah that, as the people return to Him, He becomes their God and they become His people. The same promise is for you today. Return to the Lord and He will dwell with you and be your glory and protection.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Man Among the Myrtle Trees (Zech. 1:7-17).
- II. The Horns and Carpenters (Zech. 1:18-21).
- III. The Man With the Measuring Line (Zech. 2:1-13).

**GOD SEEKS FELLOWSHIP WITH US.** One sure sign that you love someone is your desire to spend time with him or her. You feel at ease with someone whose company you enjoy. Time passes quickly as you fellowship together in peace and security.

Such an experience illustrates the relationship God wishes to have with His people. The first two chapters of Zechariah are characteristic of Scripture in general, in that the Bible emphasizes God's longing to have the closest possible union with His people. A major theme of the Scriptures is: Emmanuel, God with us. God is love, and His love is never alone; it always seeks togetherness with His creatures. This is central to the whole subject of restoration.

**God comes to dwell with us.** In the first three visions of Zechariah—the visions of restoration—we see clearly that God yearns to dwell among and within His people. As He builds His temple in their hearts and tabernacles among them, He Himself becomes their defense. He is aroused to action on behalf of those who trust Him. He "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. 2:5).

God's plan encompasses not only Israel but "many nations" which "shall be joined to the Lord" and shall be His people (Zech. 2:11).



## I. THE MAN AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES (Zech. 1:7-17).

In studying these visions we shall emphasize the broad and essential themes rather than minute details. Although it may not be possible to see meaning in every detail, the overall message is clear and relevant.

1. What were the time and circumstances under which Zechariah received his first vision from the Lord? Zech. 1:7; compare Ezra 5:1-5; 6:1-12.

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Zechariah's ministry began some time in October/November of 520 B.C. The vision mentioned in Zechariah 1:7 took place approximately on February 15, 519 B.C. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, pp. 98, 99.)

Ezra tells us that the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah resulted in the resumption of the rebuilding of the Temple under the direction of Zerubbabel (Ezra 5:1, 2). The visions we are studying in this lesson were used by God to inspire His people to begin again the great work of rebuilding the Temple.

Immediately the Jews were subjected to the opposition of their neighbors who did not wish to see the Temple rebuilt. An appeal to the Persian monarch, Darius I Hystaspes, resulted in his decree that the rebuilding should continue with assistance from the royal revenue (Ezra 6:1-12).

2. The man who stood among the myrtle trees is called by another name in this vision. What is his name? How is this person distinguished from the interpreting angel who accompanies Zechariah throughout the visions? Zech. 1:8-14.

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The man among the myrtle trees is the same as the angel of the Lord (1:11). He is to be distinguished from "the angel that talked with me" (1:13), who appears several times in the other visions (see 1:19; 2:3; 4:1-5; 5:5 and 6:4). Zechariah's accompanying angel who talked with him is to be distinguished from the angel of the Lord.

This "angel of the Lord" appears again in the fourth vision. In the court scene he is the advocate of Joshua the high priest (Zech. 3:1, 6). The "angel of the Lord" is Christ Jesus, the second person of the Godhead. "Angel of the Lord. That is, 'the Angel which is the Lord,' meaning Christ (cf. Jude 9; see PK 584; see on Ex. 23:20, 21)." —*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1092.

The *SDA Bible Commentary* comments on Exodus 23:20: "The 'Angel' plainly refers to 'the messenger [Angel] of the covenant' (Mal. 3:1), that is, to Christ (PP 252, 311). The word *mal'ak*, 'angel,' means 'messenger,' and is translated as often one way as the other. Christ was ever the Messenger of God to Israel (PP 366), and as such conveyed to them a knowledge of the character, will, and mercy of God (Gen. 22:1, 10-12; Ex. 32:34; Isa. 63:7-9; Mal. 3:1; John 8:56-58; 1 Tim. 2:5)." —Vol. 1, p. 628.

There seem to be three principal personalities involved in the first vision: God the Father, God the Son, and Zechariah's accompanying angel.

3. What evidence is there that the myrtle trees possibly symbolize the returned exiles, or God's people? Zech. 1:8, 10; compare Neh. 8:14-18.

Consider the following four points:

- The scene of the myrtle trees was well known by the children of Israel because such trees were plentiful around Jerusalem (Isa. 41:19). Branches of myrtle trees, as well as other trees, were used for the booths that were erected at the Feast of Tabernacles (Neh. 8:15).
  - The fact that the “angel of the Lord,” Christ, stood among the myrtle trees is consistent with the thrust of this vision, as well as the third vision, that God wants to dwell in the midst of His people.
  - The theme introduced here of God being in the midst of His people is central to the book of Zechariah and to the subject of restoration.
  - Zechariah is a Messianic book. The Messiah’s work for His people is the heart of Zechariah’s message.
4. **Who are represented by the red, speckled, and white horses? What message did they bring to the Lord? Zech. 1:8-11; compare Zech. 6:1-8; Rev. 6:1-8.**

We are informed that angels are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. 1:14). Having patrolled the earth and conveyed their particular messages to the areas to which they were sent, the angels report to the Lord that now circumstances are favorable for the restoration of His people within their own land.

5. **As God stands among His people, what attitude does He have toward them? What blessed assurances does He give them? Zech. 1:13-17.**

This first vision reveals that at this time of peace, when the earth is “at rest” (Zech. 1:11), God wants His people to resume building the Temple. Here is a timely spiritual lesson for us today. We must “build” the church in times of peace or we will have to do it under more difficult circumstances.

**A question for reflection.** What does the fact that Jesus stands among His discouraged and demoralized people tell you about Him and His concern for us?



## II. THE HORNS AND THE CARPENTERS (Zech. 1:18-21).

This short vision is comprised of two questions and two answers. The first question and answer relate to the four horns, and the second question and answer relate to the four smiths or carpenters. The dialogue is between Zechariah and the angel.

6. **In general, what do horns represent in Scripture? Dan. 7:8, 20, 21, 24; Rev. 17:12, 16.**

As an animal uses its horns to show its strength and defend itself, so nations manifest their power in conflict with their enemies. (See Ps. 75:4, 5; 132:17).

**7. What was Zechariah's first question? How did the angel answer him? Zech. 1:18, 19.**

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The four horns probably correspond to the four directions; hence the universal application to the whole heathen world. "Zechariah then saw the powers that had 'scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem,' symbolized by four horns."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 581.

**8. How did the angel respond to the second question that Zechariah asked? Zech. 1:20, 21.**

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The word "carpenter" in the King James Version comes from the Hebrew word that means "artisans," workers in metal, wood, and stone. "Immediately afterward he saw four carpenters, representing the agencies used by the Lord in restoring His people and the house of His worship."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 581.

Some have interpreted the four horns to mean the four hostile empires that persecuted and scattered Israel, namely Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. On the basis of the idea that the scattering of God's people had already occurred, some argue tentatively that the four horns represent Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. It suffices to state that these heathen powers each had their turn at being terrified and cast down by the artisans appointed by God to free His people and assist them in the reconstruction of the Temple services.

**God is intimately acquainted with the affairs of humanity.** He knows everything—past, present, and future—regarding every nation and every individual. He overrules the events of history and guides the affairs of nations so that He might help His people.

The provision of the four carpenters also indicates that when we invite God to dwell in our midst His work for us is invincible. No matter how mighty the horns, they can be overcome; *for every horn God has a carpenter to deal with it.*

**God's will among the nations.** "In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 499, 500.

**God's will for you.** "Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such a one, rather than allow him to be overcome."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 17.

**What does this mean to you?** Are you allowing Jesus to control the affairs of your life? Are you following His guidance as he seeks to make you a purified temple in which He can dwell permanently?



### III. THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING LINE (Zech. 2:1-13).

**God triumphs with spiritual Israel.** Zechariah's third vision predicted Israel's future greatness if she would cherish God's presence and favor. This vision reveals the triumph of God's plan to save His people and the world. The glorious prospect designed for her was not fulfilled to literal Israel, not because God failed, but because Israel failed. The divine plan would have been realized if Israelites had maintained their covenant with God and cooperated fully with His will.

**The plan remains; the method has changed.** "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today. He has 'let out His vineyard unto other husbandmen,' even to His covenant-keeping people, who faithfully 'render Him the fruits in their seasons.' Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 713, 714.

**9. How does the apostle Paul clarify the transition from literal to spiritual Israel? Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 3:29.**

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**10. What was symbolized by the measuring of Jerusalem? Zech. 2:2; compare Eze. 40:2-4; Rev. 11:1.**

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In the prophets, measuring the city and the sanctuary is a symbol of restoration after the captivity. The book of Revelation borrows the symbol from Zechariah and Ezekiel and applies it to the restoration of the sanctuary message after centuries of misunderstanding and neglect. The restoration of the sanctuary and the spiritual restoration of God's people occur at the same time and for the same ultimate purpose.

"God had commanded that Jerusalem be rebuilt; the vision of the measuring of the city was an assurance that He would give comfort and strength to His afflicted ones, and fulfill to them the promises of His everlasting covenant."—*Prophets and Kings*, P. 581.

11. Why was the young man with the measuring line interrupted in his work? Zech. 2:4, 5.
- 

There are two reasons why Jerusalem will not need walls around it:

a. **The vastness and richness of God's blessing.** Because of the vast multitudes of people and cattle that were to come into Jerusalem, the city could not be limited by walls. Jerusalem's greatness and influence would go beyond any stipulated boundaries.

b. **The Lord's presence.** Outwardly, God "will be unto her a wall of fire round about," referring to His defense and protection from her enemies. Walls will not be necessary. Inwardly, God "will be the glory in the midst of her," referring to His divine presence (Zech. 2:5).

-  12. How does the message of the vision of the man with the measuring line apply to the individual Christian and the Christian church today? Matt. 5:14-16; John 8:12; Acts 1:8.
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The promises given through Zechariah were transferred to the Christian church and its members, who are to be reflectors of Christ's glory. (See Eph. 5:8.) Jerusalem's boundaries now incorporate the entire world. Christians "have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all" (Heb. 12:22, 23, RSV).

13. From what land did the Lord instruct His people to flee so that they could dwell in Zion? How does this apply today? Zech. 2:6, 7; Rev. 14:8-10; 18:4.
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To flee is not always a sign of cowardice. Sometimes it is an indication of wisdom. Paul admonished Timothy to "flee from all of this . . ." (1 Tim. 6:11, NIV). List below some of the things in our culture from which you should flee:

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14. What is to be the destiny of those who have opposed God and His people? Zech. 2:8, 9; Rev. 18:8, 9; 20:7-9.
15. When will Zechariah's promises of the restoration of Jerusalem ultimately be fulfilled? Compare Zech. 2:4, 5, 10-12 with Rev. 21:3, 23-27.

“Then it is that the redeemed from among men will receive their promised inheritance. Thus God’s purpose for Israel will meet with literal fulfillment. That which God purposes, man is powerless to disannul. Even amid the working of evil, God’s purposes have been moving steadily forward to their accomplishment. It was thus with the house of Israel throughout the history of the divided monarchy; it is thus with spiritual Israel today.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 720.

**CHRISTIANS WITHOUT WALLS.** To avoid possible failure we sometimes erect defenses—self-imposed walls. Fear cripples and inhibits. God wants us to grow in personal satisfaction and usefulness. Check below the attitudes and beliefs that may be as walls keeping you from experiencing your full potential:

- I don’t have the ability     I don’t have the money  
 I am too old                     Others are better qualified  
 What will people think if I fail?

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“There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God.”—*Christian Service*, p. 254.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read Revelation 21; Romans 9-11; and *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 36, 37.

**SUMMARY:** God’s greatest desire is to dwell in our midst and in our hearts now and for eternity. Because we are precious to Him, He desires us to give Him our total trust and obedience. His desire is to manifest His light and power through us to others.

# A Brand Plucked out of the Fire

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 3:1-10.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Zechariah 3:2).

**RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR YOU.** This lesson reveals the vast difference between the characters of Christ and Satan and their contrasting attitudes toward humanity. Satan wants to accuse and destroy, but Christ defends and saves, showing mercy and bestowing righteousness.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Heavenly Court Scene (Zech. 3:1, 3).
- II. The Divine Defense (Zech. 3:2).
- III. Vindication and Restoration (Zech. 3:4-8).

**A MESSAGE FOR THE REMNANT.** Joshua's experience in this fourth vision represents God's plan for the exiles who had returned from Babylon. They were like brands plucked out of the fires of exile, hardship, and persecution. Except for God's mercy and forgiveness they would have been consumed. God's rescue came just in time. The theme of this lesson is the righteousness of Christ bestowed upon those who accept Christ as Saviour.

**Why this vision was given.** Satan was attempting to destroy God's plan of restoring spiritually the Israelites who had returned from captivity in Babylon. He was alarmed to see progress made in the rebuilding of the Temple, and he was "determined to put forth still further effort to weaken and discourage God's people by holding before them their imperfections of character. . . . But in this crisis the Lord strengthened His people 'with good words and comfortable words.' Zechariah 1:13. Through an impressive illustration of the work of Satan and the work of Christ, He showed the power of their Mediator to vanquish the accuser of His people."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 582, 583.

**A very helpful commentary on Zechariah chapter 3** is found in the chapter entitled "Joshua and the Angel," in *Prophets and Kings*; pp. 582-592. This chapter demonstrates that the vision of Joshua and the Angel has a specific message for God's people today.

**The last-day application of the vision.** "Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement: The remnant

church will then be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control even of many professing Christians. But here is a little company who are resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 587.

“It has been shown me that the experience recorded in the third chapter of Zechariah is now being acted over, and will continue to be while men, making profession of cleanness, refuse to humble the heart and confess their sins.—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1179.

“I entreat of you to read the third and fourth chapters of Zechariah. If these chapters are understood, if they are received, a work will be done for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, a work that means to the church: ‘Go forward and upward.’”—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 296.

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## I. THE HEAVENLY COURT SCENE (Zech. 3:1, 3).

1. Study the heavenly court scene found in Job 1:6-12 along with that described in Zechariah 3:1-7. List below some of the similarities that you discover.

**Joshua a type of Christ.** Joshua the son of Josedech or Jehozadak was the first high priest of Israel after the return from the captivity in Babylon (Haggai 1:1, 12, 14; cf. Ezra 2:2; Neh. 7:7). Joshua’s father Jehozadak was the high priest who was carried captive to Babylon at the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Probably Joshua was born in exile. (See 1 Chron. 6:15.) With other leaders of Judah, Joshua’s grandfather, the high priest Seraiah, had been executed at Riblah by the king of Babylon (2 Kings 25:18-21).

The name Joshua and the name Jesus are identical. Joshua is the Hebrew form, and Jesus is the Greek. Both names mean “Yahweh is the Saviour,” or “Yahweh saves.” In Matthew 1:21 we read, “thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

How appropriate it was for the high priest to be named Joshua! Israel’s sins had separated them from God. In the book of Zechariah, Joshua’s experience symbolizes the saving of his people from their sins, for he is a type of the Branch, the Messiah, through whom the iniquity of the land will be removed “in one day” (Zech. 3:8, 9; 6:11-13).

2. What was symbolized by the manner in which Joshua was clothed? What did Joshua’s condition represent? Zech. 3:3.

**Joshua depended on God’s mercy.** “The high priest cannot defend himself or his people from Satan’s accusations. He does not claim that Israel is free from fault. In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the

people, which he bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 583, 584.

3. Compare Zechariah 3:3 and Isaiah 64:6. Write a brief statement comparing the two texts.

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**How to answer Satan's accusations.** “When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ and that you may be saved by His matchless love. 1 Timothy 1:15.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 35, 36.



4. What do the following passages teach regarding Satan's identity and function? Zech. 3:1; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; 1 Peter 5:8; Rev. 12:10.

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The Hebrew word for Satan means “adversary” or “accuser.” The word translated “resist” in Zechariah 3:1 comes from the Hebrew verb meaning “to accuse.”

**Satan the accuser.** In this chapter Satan is the accuser of a specific individual representing the nation Israel. He is more than an evil force. He is a personal being who confronts the Angel of the Lord and accuses Joshua the high priest.

Satan functions as the prosecuting attorney. He stands at the right hand of the accused (Zech. 3:1). This was the position of the accuser in a court of justice.

5. What motivated Satan's accusations against Joshua and God's people? Were his accusations correct? Need we fear his accusations? Rev. 12:10; Rom. 8:31-39.

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**Satan, the accuser throughout time.** “As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who seek the mercy and favor of God. . . . Over every soul that is rescued from the power of evil, . . . the controversy is repeated. Never is one received into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the enemy. . . . His [Satan's] accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 585, 586.

**Satan's sevenfold strategy** may be outlined as follows:

- a. He leads people into doubt and skepticism.
- b. He causes some to lose their trust in God.

- c. He causes people to separate themselves from God's love.
- d. He tempts them to break God's law.
- e. He presents their sins before them to discourage them.
- f. He accuses them in order to secure their condemnation and destruction.
- g. He contests Christ's right to take them from him, for he wants to claim them as his own.

**Satan's claim.** "Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit, and he urges his accusations against them, declaring that by their sins they have forfeited divine protection, and claiming that he has the right to destroy them."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 588.

6. Who is "the angel of the Lord" who was defending Joshua? Zech. 3:1, 2; compare Gen. 22:11, 12; Ex. 23:20, 21; 32:34; 1 Cor. 10:4.

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"Then the Angel, who is Christ Himself, the Saviour of sinners, puts to silence the accuser of His people, declaring, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 584.

As Joshua's filthy rags represented the sins of his people, so Christ took our sins upon Himself. The Innocent One identified Himself with sin and sinners so that He might cover us with His righteousness. (See 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24.) Our sins killed Him. His righteousness gives us eternal life.

7. What do the following passages tell us about Christ's work for us? Isa. 53:6, 8, 10, 12; Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14, 15.

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## II. THE DIVINE DEFENSE (Zech. 3:2).

Satan's accusations are correct; we are guilty. Our only defense is acceptance of the freely offered righteousness of Christ.

8. What did Christ say in Joshua's defense? Why didn't He debate or argue with Satan? Zech. 3:2.

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"He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin and also their penitence, declares: 'The Lord rebuke Thee, O Satan. I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands. They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them'"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 589.

9. How did Christ deal with Satan in some of His other encounters with him? Jude 9; Luke 4:3, 4, 12, 13, 35.

When Satan comes to dispute, call on the Lord to rebuke him. When he is tempting and bargaining with you, appeal to God's holy Word, "It is written." And when he is using another individual to attack you, trust in Christ to rebuke him.

**The arguments of Calvary.** "The blood of Jesus Christ is the eloquent plea that speaks in behalf of sinners. This blood 'cleanseth us from all sin' "—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 517.

"In his own strength, man cannot meet the charges of the enemy. . . . He [Jesus] pleads their cause, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, vanquishes their accuser."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 586.

### 10. Why does Christ describe His people as "a brand plucked out of the fire" in Zechariah 3:2.

Have you ever by mistake thrown a precious letter or a rare document into the fire along with some wastepaper? Then, to your horror, you have discovered that precious piece of paper burning. Quickly you have retrieved it in spite of the smoke and the heat. You are sad that some of it has been burned, but glad that you have saved a remnant before it was totally consumed.

The word *brand* comes from the Hebrew word that means "a log," "a branch," "a twig," "a stick." This word occurs only three times in the Old Testament. (Compare Zechariah 3:2 with Amos 4:11, and Isaiah 7:4.)

**Satan's control overcome.** "But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 589.

## WED III. VINDICATION AND RESTORATION (Zech. 3:4-8).

### 11. What is symbolized by the taking away of Joshua's filthy garments and his being clothed in new garments? Zech. 3:4, 5.

**Justification** involves two aspects:

a. It destroys the guilt of past sins. Joshua's filthy garments were removed. (See Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:6-8.)

b. It includes the new-birth experience. Joshua was given new garments. (See Titus 3:5-7; Gal. 3:2-6; Rom. 10:6-10; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.)

**Imputation of righteousness** (justification) involves the bestowal of the righteousness of Christ upon the believer:

● "His [Joshua's] own sins and those of his people were pardoned. Israel was clothed with 'change of raiment'—the righteousness of Christ imputed to them."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 584.

- “The spotless robe of Christ’s righteousness is placed upon the tried, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 591.
- “All who have put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 587.
- “Through faith in His name He imputes unto us His righteousness, and it becomes a living principle in our life.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 302.
- “The resolutions you may make in your own finite strength, will be only as ropes of sand; but if you pray in sincerity, surrendering yourself, soul, body, and spirit, unto God, you put on the whole armor of God, and open the soul to the righteousness of Christ; and this alone—Christ’s imputed righteousness—makes you able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 346.

**12. What results from justification? Rom. 6:17-22; 1 Thess. 4:1-3.**

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“**Sanctification** is a state of holiness, without and within, being holy and without reserve the Lord’s, not in form, but in truth. Every impurity of thought, every lustful passion, separates the soul from God; for Christ can never put His robe of righteousness upon a sinner, to hide his deformity. . . . There must be a progressive work of triumph over evil, of sympathy with good, a reflection of the character of Jesus.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 214.



**13. What is symbolized by the “fair mitre?” Zech. 3:5; Ex. 28:36-38.**

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The Hebrew word translated “fair” means “to be clean, to be pure,” or “to be pronounced clean or pure.” The Lord plans that the minds of His people will be fully surrendered to the indwelling Holy Spirit. (Compare 2 Cor. 10:5; 2 Peter 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:23; Rev. 7:1-3.)

**14. What admonition did Christ give Joshua? What did the admonition signify? Zech. 3:7.**

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**15. Why are Christ’s people described as “men wondered at”? Who is the Branch? Zech. 3:8; compare Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15.**

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**16. To what end-time events does the prophecy of Zechariah chapter 3 apply? Compare Rev. 3:5; 19:7, 8; Dan. 12:1. (See *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 587-592.)**

**HANDLING GUILT.**

When the filthy garments were removed from Joshua he experienced forgiveness and release from guilt feelings. Some persons who are forgiven continue to experience the pain of guilt feelings. How should I handle guilt feelings? Read the suggestions below and indicate your selection of healthy or unhealthy ways of handling guilt by indicating a "plus" or a "minus" in the spaces provided:

- \_\_\_ Blame others.
- \_\_\_ Repress or deny your guilt feelings.
- \_\_\_ Examine your guilt feelings in the light of reason and the Scriptures.
- \_\_\_ Confess your sins and failures to God, and to others when necessary.
- \_\_\_ Reject unjust social contempt.
- \_\_\_ Avoid morbid self-condemnation.
- \_\_\_ After confessing and forsaking your sin lay your guilt feelings at the foot of the cross.



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled "Joshua and the Angel," in *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 582-592, and the chapter entitled "Facing Life's Record," in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 479-491.

**SUMMARY:** Through the experiences of Joshua and ancient Israel, God wants to teach us some vital lessons to prepare us for the sealing and His second coming. As we submit to Him and commune with Him daily, He becomes our justification, sanctification, and glorification. Our walk with Him in this world will go on in heaven when He comes again to take us home with Him.

**HAVE YOU GIVEN FOR SOUTHERN ASIA?**

1. New churches in Northern India
2. SDA High School at Khunti, Bihar, India
3. Evangelism to millions who do not know Christ

**Your Gift This Quarter Will Make a Difference!**

# By My Spirit

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Zechariah 4:1-14.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech 4:6).

**THE SPIRIT OVERCOMES.** Despite seemingly insurmountable problems, the Spirit of God will overcome all obstacles and complete God's work in the earth. Through the Spirit's power our lives are made purified temples for God's permanent indwelling.

## OUTLINE:

- I. Olive Trees (Zech. 4:3, 11-14).
- II. Oil (Zech. 4:6, 12).
- III. Candlestick (Zech. 4:2, 9, 10).
- IV. Light (Zech. 4:2).

**RIGHTEOUS BECAUSE OF THE SPIRIT'S PRESENCE.** There are two central figures in Zechariah 3. The central *human* figure is Joshua; the central *divine* figure is Jesus the Advocate. The theme is the righteousness of Christ. In Zechariah 4 the central human figure is Zerubbabel, and the central divine figure is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit empowers Zerubbabel to act, build, and overcome formidable obstacles.

**Christ's righteousness is sufficient.** Another relationship between the two chapters becomes apparent. In the same way that the righteousness of Christ was vital for Joshua and the people he represented, the Holy Spirit was essential for Zerubbabel and the people he represented. The holy oil flowing into the candlesticks symbolizes the Holy Spirit supplying strength for Zerubbabel. The same work is accomplished for God's people in every age.

In order to maintain the righteousness of Christ in our lives, we must maintain our daily walk with Jesus. "The righteous will continually follow righteousness, because Christ, who is formed within, is righteousness and truth."—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times Articles*, vol. 4, p. 208. Such a continuous experience of righteousness, as emphasized in Zechariah 3, depends on the unending flow of the Holy Spirit into our lives, and through us to others. We keep the robe of His righteousness not by our human might, but by God's Spirit (Zech. 4:6).

**Why this vision was given.** The work of rebuilding the Temple in

Jerusalem had been halted because of opposition from Israel's enemies. Through Zechariah, the Lord brought encouragement to Zerubbabel and his people who were struggling to reestablish the Temple and its services. The work of rebuilding the literal Temple, as well as the task of preparing each heart as a purified temple for the Lord's indwelling, ultimately is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. As we demonstrate faith in the Lord by cooperating with Him, His Spirit accomplishes that which human effort is powerless to achieve.

SUN

### I. OLIVE TREES (Zech. 4:3, 11-14).

1. What is the significance of what Zechariah saw on either side of the seven-branched candlestick? Zech. 4:3.

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Zechariah was given a vision of a seven-branched candlestick of gold with a bowl upon the top of it. On either side of the candlestick was an olive tree from which flowed oil through golden pipes leading to the bowl. The oil then fed the seven lamps of the candlestick and the light shone forth.

There are four major symbols depicted in the vision: olive trees, oil, seven-branched candlestick, light.

2. In response to Zechariah's two questions, how did the angel interpret the symbolism of the olive trees? Zech. 4:11-14.

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The angel did not say who "the two anointed ones" are. He simply identified them as the source of the "oil," and therefore of the light. The two anointed ones receive their instructions from the One in whose presence they minister, "the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14). Hence, the ultimate source of the "oil" is the Lord Himself.

**Holy ones in God's presence.** "So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence His Spirit is imparted to the human instrumentalities who are consecrated to His service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate to God's people that heavenly grace which alone can make His word a lamp to the feet and a light to the path. 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' Zech. 4:6."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 408.

"It is to receive blessing for us that they [the two anointed ones] stand in God's presence. As the olive trees empty themselves into the golden pipes, so the heavenly messengers seek to communicate all that they receive from God. The whole heavenly treasure awaits our demand and reception; and as we receive the blessing, we in our turn are to impart it. Thus it is that the holy lamps are fed, and the church becomes a light bearer in the world."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 510.

3. What meaning does the book of Revelation give to "two olive

trees?" How does John's vision of the olive trees relate to Zechariah's? Rev. 11:3, 4.

In Revelation two olive trees and two candlesticks symbolize "my two witnesses." The symbolism is somewhat different from that employed in Zechariah 4. Yet there is a clear relationship. Study of Revelation 11 reveals that God's "two witnesses" are none other than His Word, written by Old and New Testament prophets. God's Word prophesied in "sackcloth" for the 42 months or 1260 years of papal supremacy (A.D. 538-1798). His Word destroys His enemies (Rev. 11:5), has power to shut heaven, produce plagues (v. 6), and finally triumphs through the might of the Lord Himself (v. 12).

"'Thy word,' said the psalmist, 'is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' Revelation 11:4; Psalm 119:105. The two witnesses represent the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. Both are important testimonies to the origin and perpetuity of the law of God. Both are witnesses also to the plan of salvation."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 267.

The "olive trees," or "two anointed ones," impart God's Word to willing hearts. "Let every man who enters the pulpit know that he has angels from heaven in his audience. And when these angels empty from themselves the golden oil of truth into the heart of him who is teaching the word, then the application of the truth will be a solemn, serious matter. . . . A man may lavish all the treasures of his learning, he may exhaust the moral energies of his nature, and yet accomplish nothing, because he himself has not received the golden oil from the heavenly messengers; therefore it cannot flow forth from him, imparting spiritual life to the needy."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 338.



4. In John's vision of the seven candlesticks, who takes the place of the olive trees? Rev. 1:13, 18.

Christ is the source of the blessing that the "two anointed ones" impart to His people. He is the living Word (John 1:1-3; Rev. 19:13) whose light and power is imparted by the holy ones who stand in His presence. He is the One who "liveth, and was dead" (Rev. 1:18). His power over death spells life to every believing soul. "For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

II. OIL (Zech. 4:6, 12).

5. What was the purpose of the oil in Zechariah's vision? What does the oil represent? Zech. 4:2, 6, 10, 12.

The central symbol in the prophecy of Zechariah 4 is the oil, and the central message is contained in verse 6. The reasonable conclusion is that the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The ultimate source of the oil is "the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14). The special gift of the Holy Spirit was provided by the Father at the request of Christ (John 14:16-18; 16:7-14). The "two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:14), heaven's angels who pour the oil of truth into receptive hearts, are constantly cooperating with the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to bring conviction and comfort to God's people.

**A constant supply available.** "Read and study the fourth chapter of Zechariah. The two olive trees empty the golden oil out of themselves through the golden pipes into the golden bowl from which the lamps of the sanctuary are fed. The golden oil represents the Holy Spirit. With this oil God's ministers are to be constantly supplied, that they, in turn, may impart it to the church."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 188.

"The dispensation in which we are now living is to be, to those that ask, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Ask for His blessing. It is time we were more intense in our devotion. To us is committed the arduous, but happy, glorious work of revealing Christ to those who are in darkness. We are called to proclaim the special truths for this time. For all this the outpouring of the Spirit is essential. We should pray for it. The Lord expects us to ask Him. We have not been wholehearted in this work."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 511, 512.



6. How does Zechariah's vision of the oil flowing into seven branches of the candlestick enable us to interpret John's statements regarding the Holy Spirit? Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5.

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There are not seven Holy Spirits. John's reference to the "seven Spirits which are before his throne" (Rev. 1:4) borrows the symbolism of Zechariah. The oil in the candlestick of the sanctuary was directed seven ways, representing the fact that the Holy Spirit does a perfect work for God's people around the world. The perfect and eternal vigilance of the Holy Spirit was spoken of by both Zechariah and John. The oil in the seven branches of the candlestick represents "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zech. 4:10). Similarly the seven eyes of the Lamb "are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6).

No human being can ever complain that he did not receive sufficient light to be saved. The Holy Spirit does a perfect work for imperfect people, rendering possible the response that will inevitably result in salvation. (See Rom. 2:11-16.) No one can hide from the Spirit of God. His divine presence and conviction are lovingly provided for the most remote peoples of earth. (See Ps. 139:7-10.)

7. What symbol takes the place of the oil in John's vision of Christ? Rev. 1:16.

We often think of a sword as a symbol of destructive power. Such an application is quite biblical. (See Rev. 19:15, 21.) Even so, the sword emanating from Christ's mouth in Revelation chapter 1 also represents the spiritual support that He imparts to His church. Paul spoke of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17; compare Heb. 4:12). After His resurrection, Jesus "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20:22). This is the background to John's vision of Christ in Revelation 1. The "oil" of Zechariah, and the "sword" of Revelation both symbolize Christ's gift of the Spirit to His people.

8. Why will those represented by the five foolish virgins be lost? Matt. 25:3, 4, 8.

**Knowledge of truth not enough.** "In the parable, all the ten virgins went out to meet the bridegroom. All had lamps and vessels for oil. For a time there was seen no difference between them. So with the church that lives just before Christ's second coming. All have a knowledge of the Scriptures. All have heard the message of Christ's near approach, and confidently expect His appearing. But as in the parable, so it is now. A time of waiting intervenes, faith is tried; and when the cry is heard, 'Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him,' many are unready. They have no oil in their vessels with their lamps. They are destitute of the Holy Spirit.

"Without the Spirit of God a knowledge of His word is of no avail. The theory of truth, unaccompanied by the Holy Spirit, cannot quicken the soul or sanctify the heart."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 408, 411.

WED

### III. CANDLESTICK (Zech. 4:2, 9, 10).

9. Who is represented by the seven-branched candlestick seen by Zechariah? Zech. 4:2, 6-10.

The symbolism of the candlestick comes from the ancient tabernacle. The candlestick or lampstand (Hebrew: *menorah*) of the sanctuary holy place had seven branches with a lamp on top of each. Zechariah was given a vision of sanctuary imagery.

In this vision the candlestick, or lampstand, symbolizes Zerubbabel in particular and God's people in general, of whom he was the representative. Through Zechariah, the Lord was saying, "Zerubbabel, you and your people cannot rebuild the Temple by your own human might. You can only succeed in your work as you enter into a spiritual relationship with Me, and trust Me to work on your behalf. You must have the golden oil of the Holy Spirit flowing through the lamp of your life, giving you light and power to accomplish your work."

10. How many lampstands were there in the Holy Place of Solomon's Temple? 2 Chron. 4:7, 20.

The symbolism of Solomon's Temple was somewhat different from that of the wilderness tabernacle, but the meaning was the same. The candlesticks or lampstands represented God's people, who were to be reflectors of His glory (Isa. 58:8, 10). The light shining forth represented the Lord's light reflected through His people to the world (Ps. 4:6; 18:28).

11. What is represented by the seven candlesticks or lampstands seen by John? Rev. 1:12, 20.
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The close parallel between the visions of Zechariah and John is very apparent. In both cases God's people are instructed to rely upon Christ and His Spirit for grace to fulfill the Lord's will in the earth. As Zerubbabel and his people were inspired to complete the rebuilding of the Temple, so God's people today are encouraged to go forward by faith, receiving the constant infilling of the Spirit as the power to proclaim the gospel in all the world. Then will come the fruition of our hopes. (See Matt. 24:13, 14.)

**Christ the Source of light and life.** "Christ is spoken of as walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks. Thus is symbolized His relation to the churches. . . . If the candlesticks were left to mere human care, the flickering flame would languish and die; but He is the true watchman in the Lord's house, the true warden of the temple courts. His continued care and sustaining grace are the source of life and light."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 586.

 IV. LIGHT (Zech. 4:2).

12. What is the primary application of the light that shone from the lamps seen by Zechariah and John? John 1:4, 9; 8:12.
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**Humanity's only Light.** "No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ. Jesus, the Saviour, is the only light that can illuminate the darkness of a world lying in sin. . . . Humanity has in itself no light. Apart from Christ we are like an unkindled taper, like the moon when her face is turned away from the sun; we have not a single ray of brightness to shed into the darkness of the world. But when we turn toward the Sun of Righteousness, when we come in touch with Christ, the whole soul is aglow with the brightness of the divine presence."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 39, 40.

13. What secondary application can be made of the light seen by Zechariah and John? Matt. 5:14; Acts 13:47.
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**A glimpse of heaven granted to humanity.** "In all ages the 'Spirit of Christ which was in them' (1 Peter 1:11) has made God's true children the

light of the people of their generation. . . . In like manner the disciples of Christ are set as light bearers on the way to heaven; through them the Father's mercy and goodness are made manifest to a world enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. . . . The divine love glowing in the heart, the Christlike harmony manifested in the life, are as a glimpse of heaven granted to men of the world, that they may appreciate its excellence."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 41.

### AM I RECEIVING THE HEAVENLY OIL?

As a Christian, how can I be certain that I have the Holy Spirit in my life? Number the statements below in the order of their relative importance in determining your relation to Christ and your possession of the Holy Spirit:

- \_\_\_\_\_ I try to be a good family member and neighbor, and attempt to fulfill my civic responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I regularly attend Sabbath School and church and accept church responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I pay an honest tithe and give offerings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I truly enjoy my morning and evening devotional periods.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I try to live my faith and share it as I have opportunity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ I have assurance of my salvation and I am comparatively happy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Every day I invite Jesus to live in my life.

**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter in *Prophets and Kings* entitled, "Not by Might, nor by Power," pp. 593-597, and the chapter in *Testimonies to Ministers* entitled "Pray for the Latter Rain," pp. 506-512.

**SUMMARY:** The Lord wants the golden oil of His Spirit, His light, love, and power to fill our lives so that we might overflow to others. Are our lamps trimmed? Are we empty of self and ready to be filled with the Holy Spirit? God will accomplish great things through us if we respond to Him and unite our human weakness to His divine strength.

# Judgment and Vindication

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 5:1—6:8.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother" (Zechariah 7:9).

**CONDITIONS TO ACCEPTANCE.** God is willing to return to us, cover us with His righteousness, and fill us with His Spirit. Are we willing to accept Him, forsake our sins, and be spiritually fruitful? He is coming in judgment. Will we be condemned, or will we be vindicated?

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Flying Roll: Vision 6 (Zech. 5:1-4).
- II. The Woman in the Ephah: Vision 7 (Zech. 5:5-11).
- III. The Four Chariots: Vision 8 (Zech. 6:1-8).

**JUDGMENT AND VINDICATION IN ZECHARIAH.** This lesson deals with the last three visions of Zechariah. These visions speak of judgment and vindication. God's judgment affects the individual, Israel (the church), and the world. It results in either condemnation or vindication.

**Vindication the result of God's mercy.** It is evident that God wants to eradicate sin from the hearts of His people and from the entire earth. The time will come when He will have achieved that goal. This lesson serves as a complement to the lessons earlier in the quarter. As we have seen, God wants to return to us, dwell in our midst, cover us with His righteousness, and empower us with His Spirit. What more can He do for us? One thing He cannot do is to force our choice or do our part.

Joshua's vindication was a result of God's mercy. Even so, contrition and repentance on Joshua's part were essential. In a sense, the court scene continues in this lesson. Are we accepting with all our hearts what Christ has done for us? Are we appropriating His Spirit in our lives? Are we attached to Him? Is He dwelling in our hearts and in our midst?

**God's love is not weakness.** "The righteous will continually follow righteousness, because Christ, who is formed within, is righteousness and truth. They will be imbued with a pure, fervent love, a love begotten by the love of God. Their transgressions will be forgiven, and their sins pardoned. And God will look upon them with pleasure.

"Christ loves His church. He will give all needed help to those who call upon Him for strength for the development of Christlike character. But His love is not weakness. He will not serve with their sins, nor give them pros-

perity while they continue to follow a wrong course of action. Only through faithful repentance will their sins be forgiven; for God will not cover evil with the robe of His righteousness.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, vol. 4, Nov. 13, 1901.

**End-time implications.** This lesson has some special end-time implications and applications pointing to the day of atonement, the investigative judgment, the close of probation, the rejection of the wicked, and the eradication of evil.

SUN

## I. THE FLYING ROLL: VISION 6 (Zech. 5:1-4).

### 1. What did Zechariah see in his sixth vision? Zech. 5:1, 2.

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In Bible times scrolls used for writing were often made of leather. Sometimes the writings on the scroll contained cursings and judgment. (See Deut. 29:20 and 2 Chron. 34:24.)

**All could read.** “The prophet now sees a scroll, not rolled up in its case and stacked in the archives for the use of the priests and scribes, but flying, open like a banner for all to read.”—Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 126.

“By modern measure the roll was about 17 by 34 ft. Inasmuch as these dimensions agree with those of the holy place of the tabernacle (. . . Ex. 26:1), and with those of the porch of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:3), some have sought to show a connection between the ‘flying roll’ and the sanctuary. However, . . . there is no way of proving that such a connection was to be represented by the foregoing similarity in dimensions. . . . The dimensions were . . . probably noted to show the magnitude of the curse.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1096.

### 2. What did the scroll contain? What was God’s purpose in showing it to Zechariah? Zech. 5:3.

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This very large flying scroll was declared to be a curse flying over all the land, actively doing its work. The scroll signifies judgment. It also signifies that the law of God pronounces condemnation upon every disobedient, law-breaking person. (See Rom 7:7-14.) Those who refuse the “change of raiment,” the robe of Christ’s righteousness, are condemned by the law of God.

### 3. How may we avoid the law’s curse? Gal. 3:13, 14; Rom. 8:1-4.

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**Accounted and made righteous.** “We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such

as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

"More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 62, 63.



4. What is the specific mission of the flying scroll? What does it do? Zech. 5:3, 4.

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God is a loving God, but He is holy and takes sin very seriously. He loves the sinner but hates the sin, and greatly wants to rid His people of it. According to this vision God "will deal with those in Israel who refuse the 'change of raiment' (ch. 3:4) and who rebel against the leadership of His Spirit (ch. 4:6)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1096.

**Forsake sin or be forsaken.** "In order to appropriate the robe of Christ's righteousness, men would be required to forsake their evil deeds. . . . Those who refused would be visited by the curse pronounced by the flying scroll."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1096.

5. Compare the two sins condemned by Zechariah with the eighth and ninth commandments of the Decalogue. Why do you think these two particular sins were condemned? Ex. 20:15, 16.

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"'Every one who steals' (v. 3) symbolizes all those who have injured a neighbor in any way. 'Every one who swears falsely' (v. 3) stands for all who have dishonored God. The vision deals with the covenant law's comprehensive protection of the rights of God and of neighbor."—Elizabeth Achtemeier, *Nahum—Malachi: Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1986), p. 127.

**You cannot hide from God.** "Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligence of heaven. . . . He [God] is not deceived by appearances of piety. . . . Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 486.

God "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4:5). (See also Eccl. 12:14; Matt. 12:36, 37; Isa. 65:6, 7.)

**Reflect.** What does it mean to say that we have the truth? Do we mean only that we have correct teachings or doctrines? What does it mean to live the truth?

**6. What would happen to those who cherished sin? Zech. 5:3, 4.**

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In Leviticus 16 we learn that during the great Day of Atonement every person was to afflict his soul and humble himself before God, so that he might receive pardon and cleansing. By entering in heart into the spiritual experience that God designed he should have on this day, the penitent would not be cut off from Israel.

**Guilt remains when sins are not forsaken.** “Sins that have not been repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night; but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 486.

**7. What ultimately happens to those who cling to their sins? Mal. 4:1.**

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**Each individual case decided.** “Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. . . . The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another. Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 488, 490.

**II. THE WOMAN IN THE EPHAH: VISION 7 (Zech. 5:5-11).**

**8. Describe what Zechariah saw in the first part of his seventh vision. What is the meaning of the symbolism? Zech. 5:5-8.**

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Three main symbols are used in describing the first part of this vision: “ephah,” “a talent of lead,” and “woman.”

**The Ephah.** “The *ephah* was a large barrel used for measuring out grain (cf. Ru. 2:17; 1 Sa. 1:24, etc.) It was therefore a common household measure with a capacity of about 5 gallons. Even if this should prove an underestimation, a 10-gallon measure would still not contain a human being. In the vision, however, it may have been enlarged, as the scroll was.”—Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 128.

The “talent of lead” (Zech. 5:7), or “leaden cover” (RSV), literally means a round disk of lead that was the lid placed over the mouth of the ephah. A lid made of lead would ensure that the woman in the ephah would not escape. The Lord’s intention was that “wickedness” in Israel should be contained.

The woman symbolizes the wickedness of backslidden Israel, which always was seeking to get out and spread. The word for wickedness in Hebrew (verse 8) refers to the one who is declared guilty before a court. (See Eze. 18:20.)

9. What did an impure woman represent in John’s visions? Rev. 2:20; 17:3-7.

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Jezebel was used by John to illustrate the fallen spiritual condition of the church in the Middle Ages. The medieval “Jezebel” was the forerunner of end-time “Babylon,” an evil woman who symbolizes the union of false religions in the last days. This union comprises the papacy, apostate protestantism, and spiritism. (See Rev. 16:13, 14; compare chapter 13.)

A pure woman. Of course, we must add that the term *woman* in the Bible is also used as a positive symbol. A pure woman symbolizes the faithful church of God, which is clothed with the righteousness of Christ and firmly founded on the Word of God. (See Rev. 12:1, 5, 6, 13-17; compare 19:7, 8; 21:2.) She has been persecuted throughout history and suffers violent attacks toward the end of time. But she is protected, delivered from all evil, and made ready to meet her heavenly Bridegroom. (See Eph. 5:25-27.)

10. What meaning can be given to the drastic action of casting the woman back into the ephah and thrusting the lead disk over it? Zech. 5:8; compare Rev. 17:15-18.

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God is serious about sin. Symbolically, God gathers the accumulated wickedness into a container and seals it with a lead lid. This ensures that it will not escape and, like an infectious disease, pollute His people again. The Lord did not want the exiles who had returned to Israel to be constantly afflicted by the sins of those who remained behind in Babylon. (See Hosea 2:4, 12-14; 3:1-5.) Likewise at the end of time the harlot “Babylon” finally will be destroyed.



11. What happened to the ephah full of wickedness? Zech. 5:9-11?

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Wickedness in this vision is carried symbolically to “the land of Shinar.” Shinar was the power built by Nimrod (see Gen. 10:8-10; 11:2), and

it was the same as Babylon. The tower of Babel was built in Shinar. (See Gen. 11:2-9.) How appropriate that Israel's wickedness should be sent back to Babylon, where it belonged!

12. What relationship can be found between the fate of the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement and that of the woman in the ephah? Lev. 16:20-22.
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13. Where will wickedness be confined at the conclusion of the antitypical Day of Atonement? Rev. 14:8; 18:1-5; 19:19-21; 20:1-3. (See also *The Great Controversy*, pp. 480, 485, 486, 490, 491, 658.)
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### III. THE FOUR CHARIOTS: VISION 8 (Zech. 6:1-8).

14. Compare the horses and chariots in Zechariah's vision with the horses in John's vision? Zech. 6:1-8; Rev. 6:2, 4, 5, 8.
- 

Zechariah's horses are the same colors as those seen by John. In Zechariah's vision, the horses and chariots are sent by God into various parts of the earth. In John's vision the command for the horses and their riders to go into the earth (Greek: "Go," or "Come") is given by the living creatures, cherubim, who receive their commands from the throne of God. The horses and chariots of Zechariah represent messages sent by God that are appropriate to particular parts of the earth. (See Zech. 6:8.) Regarding Zechariah 6 as the background to Revelation 6, it is reasonable to conclude that John's four horses represent messages sent into the earth that are especially appropriate to the spiritual condition of the people in various places at various times.

15. What is intended by the "north country?" What does God's Spirit do there? Zech. 6:6, 8.
- 

**Divine control and direction.** "Because the invasion routes from Babylon entered Palestine from the north, Babylon had formerly been designated a northern power (. . . Jer. 1:14, 15). The term could, as appropriately, be applied to the Persians, who had taken over the territories of Babylon. The chariots 'which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth' (Zech. 6:5) doubtless represent God's agencies operating throughout the earth, 'silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will' (see Ed 173). The delegation to the north country probably symbolized the influence exerted upon the rulers of the Persian realm to further the work of God. It seemed at the time 'as if the permission granted the Jews to rebuild was about to be withdrawn' (PK 580). The vision must have brought great encouragement to the disheartened builders, for it gave

them the assurance that the mission to the north country would be successful. 'These that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country' (. . . v. 8). Darius issued a new decree shortly afterward, permitting the work to go forward, encouraging the enterprise by public funds, and threatening any who might oppose it (Ezra 6:7-12)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1098.

**16. What do Heaven's agencies do in the last days to make possible the rebuilding of God's spiritual Temple? Rev. 7:1-3.**

**AM I IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST OR THE "NORTH COUNTRY?"**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a well-known theologian, once said, "There is only one question of paramount importance in the Christian life, and that is, how we shall survive the last judgment?"—*The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 333. Circle the numbers of the statements below that describe your Christian experience or intention:

1. Loving ministry to the needs of others (Matt. 25:31-46).
2. Believe and obey the gospel (John 5:24).
3. Accept justification by grace (Rom. 3:24).
4. Abide in Jesus (John 15:5, 6).
5. Live according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4).
6. Judge others kindly (Matt. 7:2).
7. Overcome (Rev. 3:5).
8. Endure to the end (Matt. 24:13).



**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *The Great Controversy*, pp. 418-422, 429-431.

**SUMMARY:** God is doing His utmost to save us. He wants to do for us what He did for Israel in Zechariah's day: to remove sin from our hearts and from our church. Are we willing to let Him?

# The Branch

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 3:8-10; 6:9-15.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5, 6).

**CHRIST OUR ALL.** At the heart of the book of Zechariah, the Branch is presented as the supreme Personality, restoring His people, and functioning as their Advocate, Righteousness, Judge, High Priest, and King.

## OUTLINE:

- I. My Servant the Branch (Zech. 3:8-10).
- II. Behold the Man (Zech. 6:9-15).

**CHRIST IN ZECHARIAH.** In this lesson we focus on the Branch, who is the Messiah. The Branch is the Son of man and the Son of God, the High Priest and the King, the Servant, the One who builds the Temple and becomes its cornerstone.

We discovered in chapter 3 that Joshua, the high priest, was the central character. Yet it was evident that the Messiah, the Branch, was the divine Priest and King who defended Joshua and enabled Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple. He is the One who embodies the two holy offices: High Priest and King. This High Priest/King in Zechariah 6:12, 13 combines the work of Joshua and Zerubbabel described in chapters 3 and 4. He provides redemption, builds the kingdom of God, and rules over His people. At His first advent, Christ became our Saviour and High Priest (Heb. 4:14). He will come again as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16).



## I. MY SERVANT THE BRANCH (Zech. 3:8-10).

1. What is the Messianic significance of the word *Branch*? To whom does it refer? Zech. 3:8.

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The Servant Branch is presented in the context of the vision of Joshua's cleansing and restoration. In this vision Joshua, the earthly high priest, is a type of the heavenly High Priest.

In Hebrew, the word *branch* is, in itself, a Messianic prediction. (See Isa. 11:1; 4:2; Jer. 33:15.) The Jews came to believe that the Branch was a clear reference to the coming Messiah who would possess all the divine and human characteristics attributed to Him by the prophets.

**Israel's hope.** "In the Branch, the Deliverer to come, lay the hope of Israel. It was by faith in the coming Saviour that Joshua and his people had received pardon. Through faith in Christ they had been restored to God's favor."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 585.

2. What is the relationship between the term *servant* and Israel's hope of a Messiah? Compare Zech. 3:8 with Isa. 53:11; Phil. 2:6-8.

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"My Servant" portrays Christ. The servant is the Redeemer and the suffering Messiah, who gives Himself totally to the service of God and man. "Christ is revealed as the Redeemer and Deliverer of His people"—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 592.

3. Besides being portrayed as the "servant," how else is the Branch portrayed? What do each of the following passages teach regarding the Branch?

Zech. 6:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer. 23:5, 6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer. 33:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

The portraits of the Messiah listed above can be found in the life of Jesus as depicted in the four gospels:

a. In Matthew, the Messiah's line is traced back through the royal line to David. He is the *divine King* coming in exact fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

b. The Gospel of Mark presents the Messiah as a man of action, who goes about doing good. He is the *Servant of God* for humanity—helping, healing, and restoring. In this Gospel, the emphasis is more on the Messiah's service than upon His words and teachings.

c. In the Gospel of Luke, the Messiah is portrayed as the *Son of man*, who, through His incarnation, truly represents the human race. He succeeded as the second Adam where the first Adam failed. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

d. In the Gospel of John, the Messiah is presented as the divine and eternal *Son of God*. His genealogy is not traced back to David as in Matthew, for He is before Abraham, God from all eternity (John 1:1).

4. What significance do you attach to the stone referred to by Zechariah? Zech. 3:9.

The symbol of the stone also points to the Messiah, complementing the reference to the Branch. This stone is unique, one of a kind. It has seven eyes of perfect omniscience (knowing all things). (Compare Rev. 5:6.) The Messiah is sovereign. He has all knowledge and authority, searching and seeing all that takes place. From Him nothing is hidden.

“The verse is saying that the one who was already known as the Servant, Branch, and Stone will fulfill the priestly function, removing the sin of the land in a single day and thus providing for the very cleansing of Joshua and the others about whom the vision has been speaking.

“The Book of Hebrews develops these themes in the fullest measure and is therefore in some sense a New Testament commentary on Zechariah.”—James Montgomery Boice, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1986), p. 171.

**5. Study the following three passages along with Zechariah’s statement concerning the stone (3:9). Briefly comment on the significance of each passage:**

- Isa. 28:16 \_\_\_\_\_
- Ps. 118:22 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Peter 2:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Christ is the crowning stone, the keystone, and capstone that completes and perfects the temple of God. He is the precious cornerstone of the living temple that is comprised of His people. He is the head, and we are His body, the church. He completes, unifies, oversees, and infuses His life into the stones of the building, making them living stones.

**6. What did the Lord mean when He told Zechariah that, because of the work of the Branch or the Stone, He would “remove the iniquity of that land in one day?” Zech. 3:9. Consider the teaching of the following passages:**

- 1 John 2:2; 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_
- Heb. 9:25-28 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rev. 22:11 \_\_\_\_\_
- Isa. 4:2-6 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rev. 21:27 \_\_\_\_\_

**Christ removes guilt.** Guilt weighs heavily on the mind and its burden crushes the spirit. The only one who can remove it is the Lord Jesus. How grateful we must always be for Jesus’ healing ministry!

**7. What does the expression “under the vine and under the fig tree” signify? Zech. 3:10.**

Vines and fig trees came to symbolize the nation Israel. Planting and enjoying the fruits of these trees, as well as resting beneath them, indicated security, peace, joy, and prosperity. Prosperity and contentment were enjoyed when everyone had his own trees; none was grasping another's property.

The prophecy is perfectly fulfilled when Christ comes again. Guilt and evil will be totally removed from the land. Peace, joy, and prosperity will fill the dwellings of the saints. (See Isa. 65:21-25.)

## II. BEHOLD THE MAN (Zech. 6:9-15).

The eight visions of Zechariah climax in the coming of the Messiah. This important passage has historical, Messianic, and prophetic implications. The work of rebuilding the Temple and the spiritual restoration of God's people were to continue until Messiah's coming and the establishment of His everlasting kingdom. The fulfillment of this prophecy was conditional on the obedience of Israel (Zech. 6:15). The first advent of Christ provided a partial fulfillment. His heavenly ministry further fulfills the prophecy, but the final fulfillment will take place at the Second Advent.

### 8. Who arrived from Babylon and what did they bring with them? What was Zechariah to make? Zech. 6:10, 11.

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"Some have suggested that the three men were representatives from the Jews that were still in Babylon who had come with gifts for the Temple. Instead of their names the LXX [the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament] gives the symbolic meaning of the three names: 'the chief men,' 'the useful men,' and 'those that have understood it.'"—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1099.

Perhaps the names were intended to symbolize the kind of people who responded to God's call to return from Babylon.

### 9. What is the relationship between the crowned Joshua and the Branch? Zech. 6:11, 12.

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"In Israel the priestly and kingly offices were kept separate. The priest never wore a crown or sat upon a throne. The king never performed the priestly functions. Yet here a crown is placed upon the head of *Joshua*, not Zerubbabel, pointing forward to the one who should be both king and priest. It is said that 'he will be a priest on his throne' (v. 13)."—Boice, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 180.

### 10. Study the phrase, "and he [the Branch] shall grow up out of his place . . ." in Zechariah 6:12. Compare Isaiah 11:1; 53:2.

The “dry ground” symbolizes the dryness and barrenness of the spiritual life of Israel. Out of hopelessness came forth hope, and out of a dry stump sprang forth a living Branch, a promise of a new beginning and a new life. This living Branch will succeed where the dry stump, the Jewish nation, failed.

What a stark contrast between the Messiah and the nation of Israel! From the same seed, background, and environment springs forth the living Branch to give life, righteousness, and hope in place of death, evil, and hopelessness. From the dead stump and dry ground there were no branches, no tree, and no fruit to be seen, but with the coming of the living Branch, “the fruit of the land shall be excellent” (Isa. 4:2).



**11. What is the relationship between Zechariah 6:12 and Revelation 5:5, 9, 10; 22:16?**

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The only remedy for our lifelessness and fruitlessness is to be found in a living connection with the living Branch. We must draw nourishment and life from Him. Being disconnected from Him, we have absolutely nothing—we are no more than a dead stump in the middle of dry, parched ground.

**12. What will the Branch do? What are the verbs used to describe His actions? Zech. 6:12, 13.**

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“More than the material Temple completed by Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:14, 15) is here foretold. The prophet envisions the spiritual house.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1099.

The real Builder, the Messiah, was the driving force behind Zerubbabel and his building efforts. Zerubbabel’s building was a type of Christ’s work of building the kingdom of God after His resurrection.

**Jesus’ body temple.** Jesus referred to the temple of His body (Matt. 26:61). He would destroy it and build it again in three days. The temple of His body, His life, given voluntarily for His people, was to be resurrected. He would live for them and be with them always, even to “the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

**The spiritual temple.** The temple signifies the spiritual relationship between Christ and His people. Because He loves us, He seeks to dwell among us and within us. His love seeks togetherness with us. “And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8).

The temple of the Lord is referred to by Paul and Peter as the church, the spiritual house of God, and the body of Christ. (See Eph. 2:19, 20; 1 Cor. 3:16, 17 and 1 Peter 2:5, 6.) It will embrace the entire world as His kingdom is accepted and established in the people’s hearts.

**A question to consider.** Is the living Branch growing in my barren life?

Is He building the temple of His presence and power within me? Am I working with Him to build His temple, His body, His church?

13. In what interesting ways does Zechariah describe the kingly and priestly functions of the Messiah? Zech. 6:13.

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**Father and Son work for humanity.** The Revised Standard Version translates the latter part of Zechariah 6:13: "And there shall be a priest by his throne, and peaceful understanding shall be between them both."

"The relation between the Father and the Son, and the personality of both, are made plain in this scripture also [quotes Zech. 6:12, 13]."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 269.

"'And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' The love of the Father, no less than of the Son, is the fountain of salvation for the lost race. Said Jesus to His disciples before He went away: 'I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you.' John 16:26, 27. God was 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19. And in the ministration in the sanctuary above, 'the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.'"—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 416, 417.



14. Who are "they that are far off"? Zech. 6:15? Compare Eph. 2:13, 17; Acts 2:39; 1 Peter 2:3-5.

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"In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church. Zechariah refers to Christ as the Branch that should build the temple of the Lord. He speaks of the Gentiles as helping in the work: 'They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord;' and Isaiah declares, 'The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls' [Isa. 60:10]."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 595.

15. What are the conditions under which we can share in the Messiah's blessings? Zech. 6:15; compare John 15:10; Rev. 12:17.

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"The Jews might have formed the nucleus of God's spiritual house. However, the promises made to them were conditional, as is here clearly pointed out. Nevertheless, despite man's failure, God's purposes will move steadily forward and will be accomplished through those from every nation who constitute His spiritual house today."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1099, 1100.

#### IS CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST AND KING OF MY LIFE?

- What similarities can I see between my spiritual condition and that of the people to whom Zechariah presented his messages?

● How can I cooperate with Christ in His efforts to make me a temple for His divine indwelling?

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● How can I cooperate with Christ's attempts to incorporate into His kingdom those who "are far off"?

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** As you consider Zechariah's references to our High Priest, read Hebrews 8-10. Study Christ's present and future kingly role in such passages as 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5; 17:14; 19:16.

**SUMMARY:** Christ the "Branch" became human in order that He might serve those who were lost. He removes our guilt, giving peace and security. He builds the kingdom of God in us through His presence and power, and perfectly combines the two offices of priest and king in the divine plan of God to reconcile and restore humanity to Himself.

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# The True Fast

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Zechariah 7:1-14; 8:16-19.**

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**MEMORY TEXT:** "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:6, 7).

**TRUE RELIGION** goes beyond ritual and outward appearance. In love God leads us to hear His words, obey His will, and experience reformation of life.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Inquiry of Bethel's Delegation (Zech. 7:1-3).
- II. God's Response: Three Questions that Expose Selfish Motives (Zech. 7:4-7).
- III. God's Exhortation (Zech. 7:8-10; 8:16-19).
- IV. The Response of the People (Zech. 7:11, 12).
- V. God's Chastisement (Zech. 7:12-14).

**GOD'S FAST IS TRUE RELIGION.** This lesson presents a profound encounter between God and His people regarding the religion of the heart and the resulting manner of life. True religion is more than formality, or ritual, or conformity to the letter of the law. It involves a heart relationship with God and acceptance of the spirit of the law. It is concerned with true motives. True religion is designed by God to bring about willing obedience. Reformation of life is inspired by a genuine response to God's love.

Fasting became a ritual behind which God's people hid. Fasting was intended to focus their attention on God. Unfortunately it became a self-centered attempt to earn favor with God and man.

SUN

## I. THE INQUIRY OF BETHEL'S DELEGATION (Zech. 7:1-3).

1. Why was a delegation from Bethel sent to Jerusalem? Zech. 7:2, 3.

The Revised Standard Version renders Zechariah 7:2: "Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men, to entreat the favor of the Lord." The opening words of the verse read literally from the Hebrew, "and Bethel sent," referring to the people of Bethel. Bethel was located about twelve miles to the north of Jerusalem. The delegation from that town came to Jerusalem when the rebuilding of the Temple was well advanced. From God's response to them, one wonders how sincere they were. We gain the impression that they understood little of true religion.

**2. What is the significance of the fifth month mentioned in Zechariah 7:3?**

Several fasts were initiated during the Exile to fall in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months to commemorate the tragic events that took place. The chart below indicates what each fast recalled and gives Bible references for these events.

The Fast Month	The Event Commemorated	References
The fourth	Breaching of Jerusalem's wall	2 Kings 25:3 Jer. 39:2-4
The fifth	The destruction of Jerusalem 586 B.C.	2 Kings 25:8-9 Jer. 52:12, 13 Zech. 8:19
The seventh	The murder of Gedaliah	2 Kings 25:25; Jer. 41:1-2
The tenth	The beginning of the siege	2 Kings 25:1 Jer. 39:1



**II. GOD'S RESPONSE: THREE QUESTIONS THAT EXPOSE SELFISH MOTIVES (Zech. 7:4-7).**

God responded to the question of the Bethel delegation by asking three questions of His own. These questions were intended to clarify the issues and unmask human pretensions by focusing on the truth. The real issue was not fasting, but morality; not mourning and outward show, but a converted heart that seeks to obey God. God's questions were intended to cause His people to reflect on their actions and examine their real motives for routine religious behavior.

**3. What was God's first question, and to whom was it directed? Zech. 7:5.**

It is evident from this first question that the subject at hand involved not only the people of Bethel but "all the people of the land," including the priests. God was concerned for the entire nation. The people were preoccupied with fasts, traditions, and rituals that were initiated by men and not by God. Because these man-made rituals were self-centered, they did not lead to genuine repentance from the sins that brought about the calamities in the first place.

The focus of any act of worship must always be God. This fact is pointed out emphatically by the use of "me" and "even to me." Any religious act, be it a fast, a sacrament, or a preaching service must be God-centered, leading the people to a closer, more intimate relationship with Him. Any other attitude to worship renders it futile and empty.

**True religion centers on Christ's sacrifice.** "A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice, all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself as righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, this man is entitled to heaven, but it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, March 20, 1894.

**What is my attitude to worship?** As I examine my religious practices, are they Christ-centered? Are they genuine outward signs of an inner spiritual experience with God? Do they lead me to be absorbed with God or with self? Do they glorify God or self?

**4. To what two activities did God's second question refer? Zech. 7:6; compare 1 Cor. 11:20-22?**

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The people ate, drank, and fasted *for themselves* and not for God. Isaiah documented the same problem in Israel long before the captivity. "Why have we fasted, and thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it? Behold, *in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure*" (Isa. 58:3, RSV, italics supplied). It seems that Israel had learned little between the times of Isaiah and Zechariah.

**The true fast is heart work.** "The outward signs of fasting and prayer, without a broken and contrite spirit, are of no value in God's sight. The inward work of grace is needed. Humiliation of soul is essential. God looks upon this. He will graciously receive those who will humble their hearts before Him.—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1150.

**How does this apply to you?** In the light of Jesus' teaching regarding

fasting (Matt. 17:21; 6:16-18; 9:14, 15), ask yourself whether you are carrying out your church activities as unto God or unto man. Which is more important to you, God's recognition or man's recognition and praise?

**TUE** 5. What did God's third question have to do with fasting? Zech. 7:7.

Before the Exile when "Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity," God, in His mercy, sent messages of warning and counsel designed to avert the calamities that later took place. Through His prophets He commanded mercy, justice, and kindness to the poor and helpless. Because the children of Israel ignored these counsels, misfortunes befell them. Their seasons of mourning, weeping, and fasting commemorated the calamities that came upon them. God wanted them to hear and obey His words, focusing on Him and what He can do, not on themselves and their sufferings.

True fasting in a spiritual sense is turning away from our own self-centered ideas, to listen to and digest God's words. Jeremiah describes the experience of eating the word of the Lord: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. 15:16; see also Eze. 3:1-3).

**Trust in Christ more valuable than fasting.** "All the fasting in the world will not take the place of simple trust in the word of God. 'Ask,' He says, 'and ye shall receive.' . . . You are not called upon to fast forty days. The Lord bore that fast for you in the wilderness of temptation. There would be no virtue in such a fast, but there is virtue in the blood of Christ."—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 189.

"The fasting which the word of God enjoins is something more than a form. It does not consist merely in refusing food, in wearing sackcloth, in sprinkling ashes upon the head. He who fasts in real sorrow for sin will never court display.

"The object of the fast which God calls upon us to keep is not to afflict the body for the sin of the soul, but to aid us in perceiving the grievous character of sin, in humbling the heart before God and receiving His pardoning grace."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 87.

6. What "former prophets" could Zechariah be referring to in 7:7? What counsels did God give through them? Summarize in your own words the counsel of each of the prophets cited.

1 Sam. 15:22 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 1:10-17; 58:3-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer. 25:3-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Joel 2:12, 13 \_\_\_\_\_

Amos 5:21-24



III. GOD'S EXHORTATION (Zech. 7:8-10; 8:16-19).

7. Study the following diagram of the four do's and don't's of God's exhortation as found in Zechariah 7.

God's Exhortation			
Do's	Reference	Don'ts	Reference
Execute true judgment	7:9	Oppress the widow, fatherless, stranger and poor	7:10
Show mercy and compassion	7:9	Imagine evil in your heart against your brother	7:10
Speak the truth	8:16	Imagine evil against your neighbor	8:17
Execute the judgment of truth and peace.	8:16	Love false oaths	8:17

**How do I measure up?** In examining my relationships with my family members, friends, and colleagues, do I find myself appropriating His grace to do His bidding?

8. What does it mean to execute true judgment? Zech. 7:9; 8:16.

We need to have the moral courage to uphold the right without partiality, irrespective of how high or low the positions of the individuals are with whom we are dealing. True judgment is based on truth, on facts, and on the special aspects of a given situation. Such judgment leads to peace.

**Truth comes from God.** "Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. . . . We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 68.

9. Compare God's exhortation recorded in Zechariah 7:9, 10; 8:16, 17 with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5). What is the principal element that they have in common?

The way we relate to others shows what we are like inwardly. In the inward life, in the imaginations of the heart, evil, murder, and adultery are committed. On the other hand, from the heart filled with God's love issues true devotion to God, forgiveness and service to all His children.

**10. What does God hate and why? Zech. 8:17.**

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Because God loves sinners so intensely He gave His Son to rid them of the characteristics He hates. Especially is He displeased when people hypocritically camouflage evil deeds, passing them off as righteous and covering them with apparent devotion to religious activities. In Isaiah 1:14 (RSV) He declares, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me, I am weary of bearing them."

**11. What spiritual implications are indicated in God's changing their fasts into feasts of gladness? How does that relate to loving truth and peace? Zech. 8:19.**

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God wanted His people to think of His mercy in restoring the Temple and Jerusalem. He did not want them to dwell on their past failures and His displeasure. He was with them, and the Temple and Jerusalem were well on their way to being completely rebuilt. Why, then, commemorate destruction while building was taking place? It was time to obey the word of the Lord and to celebrate His goodness in their behalf.

**The most important element in health.** "Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings—as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father's house?

"It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251.



**IV. THE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE (Zech. 7:11, 12).**

**12. What three bodily actions represented the people's response to God? Zech. 7:11, 12.**

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The word "adamant" is translated from the Hebrew word that refers to a stone of exceeding hardness. The people deliberately chose to ignore God. They were so indifferent to Him that His strongest appeal could not soften and penetrate their stony hearts. Gradually they separated themselves totally from Him.

13. What is the only solution to the stony heart? Eze. 11:19, 20; 18:31; 36:26, 27.
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#### V. GOD'S CHASTISEMENT (Zech. 7:12-14).

A true fast results in open communication between God and His people.

#### 14. Compare and contrast Zechariah 7:13 and Isaiah 58:9.

● Zech. 7:13 \_\_\_\_\_

● Isa. 58:9 \_\_\_\_\_

**Man's extremity is God's opportunity.** "The Lord has allowed matters in our day to come to a crisis, in the exaltation of error above truth, that He, the God of Israel, might work mightily for the greater elevation of His truth in proportion as error is exalted.

"With His eye upon the church, the Lord has again and again allowed matters to come to a crisis, that in their extremity His people should look alone for His help. Their prayers, their faith, together with their steadfast purpose to be true, have called for the interference of God, and then He has fulfilled His promise, 'Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am' (Isa. 58:9)."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 372.

#### THINK IT THROUGH:

Complete the following sentences:

1. For me the value of ceremonies and ordinances is \_\_\_\_\_

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2. A danger inherent in ceremonies and observances is \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Pure religion (James 1:27) is \_\_\_\_\_

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read Ellen G. White's comments on the Sermon on the Mount in *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 123-129, 134-137.

**SUMMARY:** The only acceptable fast before God, the only one that promotes a genuine relationship with Him, is the one that is God-centered and not self-centered, the one that rends our hearts and not our garments, the one that leads us to open our ears to hear and obey His voice.

# Messages of Hope

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Zechariah 8:1-23.**



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain" (Zechariah 8:3).

**GOD PLEDGES HIS WORD.** He undertakes to fulfill his promises in our behalf. Our hope is built on His solid word that what sin has destroyed He will restore for those who place their trust in Him.

## OUTLINE: Ten Messages of Hope

- I. First Message: God's great jealousy (Zech. 8:2).
- II. Second Message: God's presence among His people (Zech. 8:3).
- III. Third Message: Jerusalem, the city of peace and joy (Zech. 8:4, 5).
- IV. Fourth Message: The God of the impossible (Zech. 8:6).
- V. Fifth Message: God will save and gather His covenant people (Zech. 8:7, 8).
- VI. Sixth Message: "Let your hands be strong" (Zech. 8:9-13).
- VII. Seventh Message: God's call for social righteousness (Zech. 8:14-17).
- VIII. Eighth Message: Mournful fasts will become cheerful feasts (Zech. 8:18, 19).
- IX. Ninth Message: The powerful attraction of genuine religion (Zech. 8:20-22).
- X. Tenth Message: "God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

**GOD'S TEN PROMISES OF HOPE.** As the mouthpiece of God, Zechariah gave the delegation from Bethel and the leaders and people of Israel an optimistic portrayal of what Jerusalem would become. In His love and concern for His people, God painted a beautiful picture of what would happen if, from the heart, they would live as He instructed. His promises of hope were designed to encourage them to return to Him completely.

The promises to the returned exiles were conditional upon their wholehearted response. Because restored Israel failed to maintain its union with God, repeatedly spurning His counsels and diverging from the path of righteousness, the promises of national greatness centering in old Jerusalem could not be fulfilled to them. But the promises apply still to spiritual Israel (the Christian church), for whom they will ultimately be fulfilled in the great restoration, centering in a new Jerusalem.

Each of the ten messages of hope is introduced by the formula, "Thus saith the Lord." The entire divine presentation is introduced by the statement, "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying" (8:1). Zechariah chapter 8 contains the Lord's own words and sayings. He pledges the fulfillment of this Word.

God graciously forewarns us not to repeat the insubordination of ancient Israel. They did not cooperate fully with God's efforts to prepare the world for the first coming of Christ. Are we cooperating with the great work of our Lord in preparing the world for His second advent?



**I. FIRST MESSAGE: GOD'S GREAT JEALOUSY (Zech. 8:2).**

1. What is the main idea of the first message? What is the dominant word in this verse, and what is its spiritual significance? Zech. 8:2.

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**Divine jealousy.** God's jealousy is far different from the human jealousy with which we are well acquainted. We can be jealous of someone who is better or has more than we. But God is the best and has the most. He does not become jealous *of* us, but *for* us. His jealousy for us is as intense as His love. Zechariah 8:2 describes His jealousy as great and furious. God's infinite love and sympathy combines with His perfect justice to draw us to Himself, protect, and defend us against our foes.

**Consider.** What picture of God emerges in your mind when you learn that He freely expresses His "jealousy" toward you?

**A caring parent.** Picture a loving father and mother who are dealing with their wayward child. They are not at all passive or indifferent. They literally cannot sit still; they have to do something—they can do no less—to draw him back to them. Their great love moves them to action. They care, and they care passionately. Their concern presents a faint picture of our heavenly Father's great love and jealousy for us, His wayward children. What a great Father we have!

**A loving older brother.** When a young man's teenage sister was abused by a man who took advantage of her youthful foolishness and naiveté, the brother was heard to say, "I don't really care what she does with her life!" He was indifferent, not jealous for his sister. But Christ is different; He really cares what happens to us. That caring jealousy moves Him to act in our behalf.

**II. SECOND MESSAGE: GOD'S PRESENCE AMONG HIS PEOPLE (Zech. 8:3).**

2. What is the content of the second message? What does God promise to do for His people? Zech. 8:3.
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The loving jealousy of God for His people leads Him to dwell in their midst. God's love always seeks togetherness.

3. According to Isaiah what would happen in the "holy mountain?" Isa. 27:13; 65:25; 66:20.
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4. How will the prophecies of Zechariah and Isaiah regarding the "holy mountain" finally be fulfilled? Rev. 21:23-27.
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Two important virtues will be extolled in the promised Jerusalem: truthfulness and holiness (Zech. 8:3). The Hebrew word for truth used of the city in this verse means "stability," "trustworthiness," "faithfulness." The Revised Standard Version renders it "the faithful city."

The New Jerusalem will be the kind of city God had in mind. Its inhabitants will be faithful and holy. In the same way that God is faithful and holy, so His people will be.

**For Reflection.** How does knowing that God Himself longs for your companionship make you feel about Him and about yourself?

### III. THIRD MESSAGE: JERUSALEM, THE CITY OF PEACE AND JOY (Zech. 8:4, 5).

5. What two new elements are introduced to describe the future Jerusalem in this third message? Zech. 8:4, 5.
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Combining the two characteristics of the second message with the two characteristics of this third message, we have faithfulness that leads to holiness, holiness that leads to peace, and peace that leads to joy. Jerusalem would have been new and perfect had waywardness, uncleanness, strife, and mourning been replaced by faithfulness, holiness, peace, and joy. In the future the prophecy will be fulfilled by conditions that prevail in the New Jerusalem.

**What might have been.** "This promise of blessing should have met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as today the way is preparing for His second coming."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 703, 704.

"Jerusalem 'might have stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of Kingdoms, free in the strength of her God-given power' (DA 577). However, the promises were 'conditional on obedience' (PK 704), and Israel failed to fulfill the divine purpose."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1103.

6. Why does the prophet mention old men and women and young boys and girls? Zech. 8:4, 5.

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**God promises peace and security to youth and elderly.** In the Bible long life is presented as a supreme blessing (see Ex. 20:12; Prov. 3:2). The ideal is a life free from sickness, anxiety, and war, with death resulting from natural causes at a good old age. Old people are to retain vigor and the blessings of God. (See Isa. 65:20.)

The description of boys and girls playing happily in the streets presents a beautiful picture of peace and security. Jerusalem could have become a city in which the two age groups who are most vulnerable, old and young, would enjoy tender care and peace.

The prophecy could not be fulfilled, because God's ancient people did not fulfill the conditions. The fulfillment will be seen at the second coming of Jesus, when the faithful old and young will inherit an eternal city.

**For reflection.** Zechariah 8:4, 5 depicts a city of righteousness in which old and young are protected and respected. How do I, and how does my church, relate to children and the elderly? Do we provide for them an environment of peace and joy, in which they can have a sense of acceptance and fulfillment? Do we encourage the use of their talents? Do we make them feel worthwhile and needed?



#### IV. FOURTH MESSAGE: THE GOD OF THE IMPOSSIBLE (Zech. 8:6).

7. How do you explain the use of the word "marvellous" in the fourth message? To what does it refer? Zech. 8:6.

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The New International Version translates Zechariah 8:6: "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'It may seem marvelous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvelous to me?' declares the Lord Almighty." The word "marvelous" comes from a Hebrew word that means "to be difficult," or "to be distinguished, singular, wonderful, miraculous."

**Man doubts, but God produces.** "The fourth saying warns against allowing human reason to decide what God is likely to do. Two similar verses (Gn. 18:14; Je. 32:27) record incredulity in the face of marvellous promises. It is as difficult to believe the promises as it is to take seriously the threats of judgment. Evidently the population was so depleted that the thought of an abundance of people of all ages seemed too good to be true. Natural increase was inadequate. Only the Lord's intervention would replenish their numbers."—Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 150.

**Am I reacting as Israel did?** Is my lack of faith limiting God from doing seemingly impossible and marvelous things in my life?

**V. FIFTH MESSAGE: GOD WILL SAVE AND GATHER HIS COVENANT PEOPLE (Zech. 8:7, 8).**

8. According to the fifth message, what does God propose to do for His people? Zech. 8:7, 8.
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The east and the west countries can signify the entire world—from the land of the rising sun to the land of the setting sun. This promise will be fulfilled when Christ comes and gathers His faithful ones—spiritual Israel—from the four corners of the earth to inherit the New Jerusalem.

9. What does the second part of Zechariah 8:8 have to do with the covenant relationship between God and His people?
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God pledges that the covenant relationship will be renewed on the only basis that can succeed. God always keeps his part of the agreement. He is always true and righteous in His dealings with us. The fulfillment of the promises depends on our response. By choosing to maintain union with Him, will we be faithful and righteous?



**VI. SIXTH MESSAGE: "LET YOUR HANDS BE STRONG" (Zech. 8:9-13).**

10. How does this message begin and how does it end? What words are used? Zech. 8:9, 13.
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Verse 11 provides the transition between the past and the present. God reverses the negative message to a positive one.

11. Compare the former conditions with those which the Lord promises will prevail in Jerusalem restored. Zech. 8:10-13.
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God helped His people through the terrible circumstances that existed when the Temple foundation was laid. Now He assures them of His wisdom and strength to complete the task. God's words of hope and encouragement came at a time of great need when courage and hope were waning. When we are courageous, hopeful, and strong in the Lord, we will become a blessing, not a curse among the nations.

**How real is your faith?** At times when you are surrounded by adverse circumstances, do you believe that God is able and willing to reverse such conditions? At these times do you experience courage, hope, and strength in Him? If not, how can you have this experience?

**VII. SEVENTH MESSAGE: GOD'S CALL FOR SOCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS (Zech. 8:14-17).**

12. How do God's thoughts toward their fathers compare with His thoughts toward Israel and Judah in Zechariah's time? Zech. 8:14, 15; compare 1:16, 17; Jer. 31:28.
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Before He calls them to social righteousness God assures the people of His desire to bless them. Only as God remains active in our lives, giving us courage and hope, can we fulfill His moral and ethical demands. He always is willing to be active in our lives if we allow Him to be.

**VIII. EIGHTH MESSAGE: MOURNFUL FASTS WILL BECOME CHEERFUL FEASTS (Zech. 8:18, 19).**

13. How does the Lord turn mourning into rejoicing? Zech. 8:18, 19; compare Isa. 61:3; Matt. 5:4.
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Leave your burden at the foot of the cross. "God reveals to us our guilt that we may flee to Christ, and through Him be set free from the bondage of sin, and rejoice in the liberty of the sons of God. In true contrition we may come to the foot of the cross, and there leave our burdens. . . . To every stricken one, Jesus comes with the ministry of healing. The life of bereavement, pain, and suffering may be brightened by precious revealings of His presence. . . . He will lift the soul above the daily sorrow and perplexity, into a realm of peace."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 10-12.



**IX. NINTH MESSAGE: THE POWERFUL ATTRACTION OF GENUINE RELIGION (Zech. 8:20-22).**

14. What is the main idea in this ninth message? Why was the promise not fulfilled in the history of post-exilic Israel? Zech. 8:20-22.
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There is a powerful attraction in genuine religion. When Christ abides in the heart He diffuses love and power through us that attract others who come in touch with us. Like salt, we make them thirsty for what we have; and like sweet fragrance, we draw them to the Saviour. We must recommend our religion by its positiveness and attractiveness. We must present Christ with all His beauty and excellence so that everyone who meets us will have the greatest incentive to come to Him.

15. How will Zechariah's prediction finally be fulfilled? Isa. 2:2, 3; Rev. 21:7, 24-27.

X. TENTH MESSAGE: "GOD IS WITH YOU" (Zech. 8:23).

16. Why would ten men take hold of the robe of a Jew? Zech. 8:23.

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"The lesson is for the 'Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16). God is now accomplishing His purposes through His church on earth. . . . Its members are to disseminate the light of truth to all nations (Rev. 14:6). In their personal lives they are to make the religion of Jesus Christ so attractive that others will be drawn to surrender their lives to the Saviour. God's church is now to be a blessing to the world (Zech. 8:13)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1104.

#### WHAT IS MY INFLUENCE?

List below some of the things your church might do to be a blessing in your community:

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Study Isaiah 65 and 66 in connection with Zechariah 8. Read *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 716-721, 729-733.

**SUMMARY:** God is not slack concerning His promises. He is full of courage and hope for us. He is eager to dwell within us and to work through us to prepare the world to meet Christ when He comes again. God forbid that we should fail as post-exilic Israel failed in preparing themselves and others for Christ's first coming.

# Thy King Cometh

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 9:1-17.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9).

**CHRIST BRINGS PEACE.** At the heart of Zechariah 9, which deals largely with war and destruction, we have a beautiful picture of humility, peace, and strength in the person of Jesus Christ. He is depicted riding on an ass into Jerusalem to establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. This is a prelude to His second coming when He will ride on the clouds of heaven to establish His kingdom of glory.

## OUTLINE:

- I. God Our Defense (Zech. 9:1-6).
- II. A Universal Remnant for God (Zech. 9:7).
- III. God Will Encamp as a Guard (Zech. 9:8).
- IV. The First Advent of Christ (Zech. 9:9).
- V. The Second Advent of Christ (Zech. 9:10-17).

**A MESSIANIC CHAPTER.** Zechariah 9 stands out as a chapter that is Messianic in nature. It focuses on both the first and second advents of Christ. The Messiah is the central theme of the chapter. The well-known prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 clearly points to Him. He is represented in this prophecy as the humble King bringing peace and salvation during His first advent. The following verse alludes to the second coming of Christ in glory. He ends wars, brings peace, and establishes universal dominion over the entire earth.

**Zechariah's significance in New Testament times and today.** New Testament writers frequently quoted Zechariah in connection with the last week—known as Passion Week—of our Lord's life on this earth. (See Matt. 21:5; 26:31; 27:9; Mark 14:27; John 12:15; 19:37, and Rev. 1:7.) These passages were especially meaningful for the New Testament writers who related Old Testament prophecy to the life and mission of Jesus Christ. The same passages are spiritually significant to those who await the coming of the King of glory.

**The Jewish nation was not ready to meet Him,** and did not prepare the world to meet Him. The Christian church today comprises spiritual Israel. Will we learn from the experience of ancient Israel? Will we prepare ourselves and others for His glorious second coming? God grant that we will!

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## I. GOD OUR DEFENSE (Zech. 9:1-6).

1. What word is used to introduce the chapter? To what can the phrase "the eyes of man" refer? Zech. 9:1.

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The word *burden* is translated from the Hebrew word which can mean "an oracle," "a prophecy," "a prophetic saying." Literally it refers to the lifting up of the voice in utterance or song. In this chapter we are dealing with the Lord's utterances regarding the advents of the Messiah. He tells us what He will do for His people and the world. The word *burden* can be thought of as an introduction to the total collection of prophetic sayings in chapters 9 through 11.

The meaning of the expression "the eyes of man" is not clear. The sentence may mean that the Lord's eyes look upon Israel in particular and all people in general. "On the whole it is probably better to keep the more difficult reading and translate, 'For the Lord has his eye on all men as on the tribes of Israel.' . . . The alternative, 'The eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward the Lord' is less likely because (a) only the prophet saw this vision; (b) it is a constant human failing to refuse to look to the Lord; at the very beginning the Lord's purpose is shown to be universal in its scope."—Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 159. The Greek Old Testament (the Septuagint) translates the phrase, "for the Lord looks upon men, and upon all the tribes of Israel."

2. What does the Lord plan to do in defense of His people? Zech. 9:2-4.

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**Tyre and Sidon doomed in prophecy.** Tyre and Sidon were the great commercial and coastal cities of the Phoenicians. These two powerful cities were considered impregnable. When Alexander the Great suddenly rose to power in the fourth century B.C., both cities suffered. Alexander seized and destroyed them in 332 B.C. (See Ezekiel 26-28.)

The inhabitants of Tyre were capable and successful in commercial affairs. As a center of maritime trade, the city was famous for its wealth and influence. Well fortified against possible attack, it boasted of being one of the strongest and richest cities in the ancient world.

God's prophetic utterances do not overlook the evil committed by any nation, including that of His own people, Israel. In spite of all their boasted wealth and power, Tyre and Sidon were not really wise. Possessions do not make a person or a nation wise or strong. The god of materialism could not protect Tyre and Sidon in the time of their visitation.

3. What three negative feelings were the five cities of the Philistines to experience as a result of the Lord's actions? What three things were to happen to them? Zech. 9:5, 6.
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**The crucial questions.** As we await the second coming of our King, do we find ourselves depending on our own wisdom, resources, and success? How can we learn to depend more on Christ's wisdom and power instead of our own?

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## II. A UNIVERSAL REMNANT FOR GOD (Zech. 9:7).

### 4. What concept of the remnant of God do you glean from Zechariah 9:7?

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**Remnant is universal.** The term *remnant* was mentioned several times in the previous chapter, referring to "this people," meaning Israel and Judah and including peoples of other nations as well. The remnant not only includes the Philistines who respond to God but also some individuals from all nations. They will find their spiritual home in the New Jerusalem as part of God's remnant. (See Zech. 14:16.)

### 5. In Zechariah's discussion of the Philistines, what is the significance of the words "blood," "abominations," and "governor"? Zech. 9:7.

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The Hebrew word that is translated "governor" in the King James Version is translated "clan" in the Revised Standard Version. Both translations make sense, but the rendering of "clan," "family," or "tribe" is preferable in this context. The phrase "Ekron as a Jebusite" alludes to the Jebusites, the ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem, who were absorbed by Israel and became as another tribe in the Jewish nation. (See 2 Sam. 5:6; 24:18-25; Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:8, 21.) The inhabitants of Ekron could also have been absorbed if they had accepted Israel's God.

"And I will take his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth," refers to the heathen practice of eating religious sacrifices with their blood. (See Eze. 33:25; Lev. 17:10, 12.) These sacrifices were offered to idols and not only were an abomination before God but also strictly forbidden. When the Philistines would respond to God by leaving their idolatrous ways, they would become part of the remnant just as the Jebusites, who were the original Canaanite inhabitants of Jerusalem, became part of Israel. They would enjoy the same privileges as a native family in Judah.

**Are we seeking a remnant from those around us?** Who constitutes the true remnant of God in these last days? (See Rev. 12:17.) Is spiritual Israel today doing any better than ancient Israel in preparing a faithful remnant to meet King Jesus when He comes again? The majority of God's true children are members of other Christian churches. (See John 10:16; *The Great Controversy*, p. 390.) God's message is, "Come out of her, my people" (Rev. 18:4). Take a moment now to examine your feelings toward Christians of other persuasions. Do you see them as brothers and sisters in

Christ, or as “outsiders”? Spiritual arrogance could hinder our sharing the additional light of the three angels’ messages. Agree \_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_.



### III. GOD WILL ENCAMP AS A GUARD (Zech. 9:8).

6. What did God mean when He said that He would encamp about His house? What did He mean when He said, “For now have I seen with mine eyes”? Zech. 9:8.

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When Alexander the Great destroyed the nations and cities around Israel, the Temple and Jerusalem escaped destruction. (See Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI. 8:4, 5.) God watched over His people at that time as He had on many previous occasions. This prophecy will find its ultimate fulfillment at the second coming of Jesus and at the end of the millennium, when the Lord will protect His redeemed people from those who would destroy them. (See 2 Thess. 1:5-10; Rev. 20:7-10.)

As a vigilant watchman, God sees the condition of His suffering people. He knows exactly how and when to deliver. (See Ex. 3:7, 9.)

### IV. THE FIRST ADVENT OF CHRIST (Zech. 9:9).

7. What event in the life of Christ did Zechariah predict in Zechariah 9:9? Compare Matt. 21:1-11; John 12:14, 15.

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The good news of Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem occasioned great joy and celebration. He was hailed as the long-expected Prince of Peace, the Desire of Ages, whose coming was predicted by the ancient Hebrew prophets.

**Zechariah foresaw Jesus’ day.** “Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King to Israel. This prophecy is now to be fulfilled. He who has so long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David’s throne.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 569.

8. What does this Messianic prophecy tell us about Christ’s relationship with His people? Zech. 9:9.

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**Is He your King?** It is one thing to say that Jesus was *their* King who came to *them*. It is quite another thing to say that Jesus is *my* King who comes to *me* personally. Is He *your* King, sitting on the throne of your life? Has He come to *you*? Have you invited Him into your life, and do you experience His rulership there?

9. What kind of person would the coming King be? How is His character described? Zech. 9:9; compare Isa. 42:1-3.

**The righteous Messiah.** The Hebrew word that is translated “just” in the King James Version and “triumphant” in the Revised Standard Version literally means “righteous.” The word occurs frequently in the Old Testament. The translation “triumphant” (RSV) is probably derived from the idea that someone who is just and righteous is in the right (or vindicated), and therefore triumphant. However, the primary application here is to the character of the Messiah. He was the Righteous One. (See Jer. 23:6; 1 Cor. 1:30.)



10. What is implied by Jesus “riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”? What spiritual implications can be found in this act of Jesus? Zech. 9:9; compare Gen. 49:10, 11.

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The ass symbolizes lowliness, peace, and royalty. This beast of labor is used for peaceful purposes. The symbolism stands in vivid contrast to the war-horse, which stands for pride, force, violence, conquest, and war. In this one triumphant scene of His earthly life, the Saviour might have appeared escorted by heavenly angels and heralded by the trump of God; but such a demonstration would have been contrary to the purpose of His mission, contrary to the law that had governed His life.

**Jesus the saving King.** “Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession. It was not like that of the earth’s famous conquerors. No train of mourning captives, as trophies of kingly valor, made a feature of that scene. But about the Saviour were the glorious trophies of His labors of love for sinful man. There were the captives whom He had rescued from Satan’s power, praising God for their deliverance.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 572.

11. What characteristic of Christ’s are we especially urged to emulate? Matthew 11:29; Phil. 2:5-8.

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**No selfish ambition.** “Human nature is ever struggling for expression, ready for contest; but he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul. Self is yielded to the disposal of the Holy Spirit. Then we are not anxious to have the highest place. We have no ambition to crowd ourselves into notice; but we feel that our highest place is at the feet of our Saviour.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 15.

## V. THE SECOND ADVENT OF CHRIST (Zech. 9:10-17).

12. What prediction of the second coming of Christ did Zechariah make? Zech. 9:10.

After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem He wept over her and told the priests and Pharisees: "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. 23:39).

**Triumphal entry foreshadowed Second Advent.** "The triumphal ride of Christ into Jerusalem was the dim foreshadowing of His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, amid the triumph of angels and the rejoicing of the saints. Then will be fulfilled the words of Christ to the priests and Pharisees: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Matt. 23:39. *In prophetic vision Zechariah was shown that day of final triumph; and he beheld also the doom of those who at the first advent had rejected Christ: 'They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.'* Zech. 12:10. *This scene Christ foresaw when He beheld the city and wept over it.*"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 580 (italics supplied).

**THU** 13. What will the King of glory do when He comes again? Zech. 9:10-17; compare Rev. 6:14-17; 19:11-21.

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14. Explain the phrase "prisoners of hope." To whom does Zechariah refer? How are the "prisoners of hope" liberated? Zech. 9:11, 12.

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The hope of God's people rests on the blood of the covenant that seals the special relationship between Him and His people. This covenant was sealed with blood in Eden (Gen. 3:15; 4:4). Later it was renewed with Abraham (Gen. 22:18), and again with Moses (Ex. 24:7, 8). This blood covenant became known as the new covenant. It was sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God. (See Heb. 8:8-12; 9:11-15.)

**The stronghold and the pit.** The Israelites who had returned to their own land were still captives of sin. They could be set free from their spiritual bondage only through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The returned exiles thought they were prisoners of impossible circumstances, but the Lord's presence and blood covenant brought hope.

The Lord's work is to liberate from sin. Those prisoners who hope for deliverance and respond to the divine call will be delivered.

**Released by divine power.** "Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 378.

15. Who are symbolized by "the stones of a crown"? Zech. 9:16; compare Mal. 3:17.
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"The disciples of Christ are called His jewels, His precious and peculiar treasure. He says, 'They shall be as the stones of a crown.' 'I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.' Zechariah 9:16; Isaiah 13:12. Christ looks upon His people in their purity and perfection as the reward of all His sufferings, His humiliation, and His love."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 89. (See also *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 118.)

#### QUESTIONS ALL SHOULD ASK:

- Am I ambitious for power and supremacy? What does it mean to me to be childlike?
- Am I jealous of my colleagues who occupy a higher position than I? If so, how can I overcome this problem?
- Do I use other people as steppingstones to advance myself? What attitudes would Jesus' example suggest that I should adopt?

**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read the chapter entitled, "Thy King Cometh," in *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 569-579.

**SUMMARY:** Zechariah 9 vividly describes the work of the Messiah in His first and second advents. His faithful people will be delivered from their spiritual and physical enemies and restored to His eternal kingdom. The unbelieving will be rejected forever.

# The Good Shepherd

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Selected texts from Zechariah 10 and 11.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40:11).

**CHRIST THE TRIUMPHANT SHEPHERD.** Jesus Christ, the good and true Shepherd, greatly desires to lead all the sheep of His flock—protecting, keeping, and sustaining. The evil and false shepherds mislead many—abusing them and causing them utter destruction. Yet the good and true Shepherd will ultimately triumph in restoring and making the faithful remnant of the flock strong in Him.

## OVERVIEW:

- I. God Gives the Latter Rain (Zech. 10:1).
- II. The Impotence of Idols (Zech. 10:2).
- III. God Punishes the Evil Shepherds (Zech. 10:3).
- IV. God Visits His Flock (Zech. 10:3, 4).
- V. God Is With His People (Zech. 10:5-12).
- VI. Israel's Rejection of the Good Shepherd (Zech. 11:1-17).

**THE GOOD SHEPHERD'S CONCERN.** Zechariah 10 opens with an explanation of the reason for the blessings promised at the end of the previous chapter. The early and latter rains are sent by God as the source of life and nourishment for His people. These rains symbolize God's caring and blessing—physical and spiritual. The Good Shepherd is deeply interested in the care of the flock. He sends the needed showers of rain, causing the grass to grow for the sustenance of the sheep. Our good Shepherd sends the early and the latter rain of His Spirit, enabling the spiritual life of His people to germinate, grow, and mature for His glorious harvest.

**Choose your shepherd with care.** Zechariah 11 indicates that the flock rejects the Good Shepherd, choosing rather to follow evil leaders. Tragically, it seems that sometimes the only way for people to appreciate the Good Shepherd is for them to fall into the hands of evil shepherds, to be harassed and ravaged by them. Our Lord is the only Good Shepherd. He is the only One who sends the clouds, the rain, sustenance, and life. He endeavors to counter the efforts of false leaders who oppress, sell, and slaughter the sheep.

## I. GOD GIVES THE LATTER RAIN (Zech. 10:1).

1. What is the significance of the term "the latter rain," and what is its relationship to the growth and maturity of the flock? Zech. 10:1; compare Joel 2:23; Hosea 6:3; 10:12; Jer. 5:24.

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God promises His people abundant prosperity (Zech. 9:17). Now He invites them to ask for such blessings. In Palestine the early rain began the rainy season in the fall when the seeds were sown and rain was needed to help them germinate and grow. The latter rain came in the spring to mature the crop for the harvest.

The former rain is symbolic of the Holy Spirit as poured out on the disciples at Pentecost. This power will be poured out again on God's people as they endeavor to prepare themselves and others for the coming of Christ.

2. Upon whom does the Lord wish to pour out the blessings of the "latter rain"? Zech. 10:1.

3. What happened when the "former rain" fell upon the believers? Acts 2:1-4.

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**God's Spirit prepares us.** "The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. As the 'former rain' was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the 'latter rain' will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 611.

"The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen to harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. . . .

"The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

"Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 507.

4. What was the reaction of some who witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the "former rain?" Acts 2:13.

**The Spirit-filled will be called fanatics.** "Heavenly intelligences will come among us, and men will speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Spirit of God. But should the Lord work upon men as He did on and after the day of Pentecost, many who now claim to believe the truth would know so very little of the operation of the Holy Spirit that they would cry, 'Beware of fanaticism.' They would say of those who were filled with the Spirit, 'These men are full of new wine.' . . .

"But while we should be careful not to go into human excitement, we should not be among those who will raise inquiries and cherish doubts in reference to the work of the Spirit of God; for there will be those who will question and criticize when the Spirit of God takes possession of men and women, because their own hearts are not moved, but are cold and unimpressible."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 57.



5. What will be the result when the Holy Spirit is poured out in the "latter rain"? Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 1:8; Rev. 18:1.

**Power comes with the gift.** "Why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 22.

"Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit and power of God will be poured out upon His children."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 464. (See also p. 606.)

## II. THE IMPOTENCE OF IDOLS (Zech. 10:2).

6. Contrast the work of the Lord, the good Shepherd, with that of those who trust in idols. Zech. 10:1, 2.

7. What is the result of following false shepherds, idols, diviners, false dreamers, and comforters? Zech. 10:2.

**Are there idols in my life?** What "idols," false "diviners," "dreamers," and empty "comforters" do I depend on in a spiritual sense? How do they cause me to be helpless and troubled? What can the Good Shepherd do about that?

## III. GOD PUNISHES THE EVIL SHEPHERDS (Zech. 10:3).

8. Who are the "shepherds" referred to in Zechariah 10:3? Compare them with the shepherds spoken of in Ezekiel 34:5-11.

“The context seems to imply that these false shepherds were the apostate leaders of Israel, the princes, priests, and prophets whom God held chiefly accountable for all the woe that had come upon Israel in connection with the Captivity (Isa. 3:12; 9:16; cf. Jer. 2:8, 26, 27; 8:1; 2; 10:21; 32:32; Eze. 22:23-31; 34:2-10; etc.).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1108.

**False shepherds in Christ’s day.** “[The Pharisees] were not fulfilling the work of the true shepherd. The priests and rulers, the scribes and Pharisees, destroyed the living pastures, and defiled the wellsprings of the water of life”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 478.

**TUE** IV. GOD VISITS HIS FLOCK (Zech. 10:3, 4).

9. Why did God liken his flock to “his goodly horse in the battle”? Zech. 10:3.

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This is a miracle of transformation that God wants to actualize in our lives if we believe and act upon His promises. He will make us His instruments of spiritual victory. He will transform us from harassed, lost, weak, and shepherdless people to strong and invincible servants of Christ.

10. What are the four things that will come out of Judah? What do they represent? Zech. 10:4.

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The Jews understood Zechariah 10:4 to be a prediction of the coming Messiah. The Revised Standard Version translation reads: “Out of them shall come the cornerstone, out of them the tent peg, out of them the battle bow, out of them every ruler.”

**What Will Come Out of Judah? (Zech. 10:4)**

**The Cornerstone:** A figurative term for *prince* or *ruler*. A reference to the Messiah. Jesus came out of the tribe of Judah. There are other references that employ the term *cornerstone* in reference to Christ. (See Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20 and 1 Peter 2:6.)

**The Tent Peg or Stake:** A figurative term for *leader*. As the stake supports the tent, keeping it fast and secure, so Christ will give our lives security and confidence. (See Isa. 22:23.)

**The Battle Bow:** A figurative term for *warrior*. The Bible often refers to Christ as “the Lord of hosts.” He is the solid and reliable defense of His people.

**Every Ruler:** The Hebrew word may mean “governor,” “exactor,” or “master.” The rendition “ruler” (RSV) fits the context better than “oppressor” (KJV). (See Jer. 30:21.)

Is Christ my Prince, the cornerstone of my life? Is He the stake of my tent, and do I receive my support, security, and confidence from Him?

WED

#### V. GOD IS WITH HIS PEOPLE (Zech. 10:5-12).

11. What spiritual victories result from God's presence with His people? Zech. 10:5; Rom. 8:35-39.

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12. What will be the result of a close union between God and His people? Zech. 10:6-8, 12.

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When God is with His people, the fulfillment of His purposes for them is certain. The doors of hope, opportunity, and victory are wide open. He is the faithful Shepherd who *remains* with the sheep to tend them. By contrast, false *absentee* shepherds totally neglect them, harass them, and sell them for slaughter.

13. How did Jesus fulfill the promise of Zechariah 10:6? Matt. 9:36.

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**Christian compassion.** The religion of Christ is not only a religion of the mind but also of the heart. Many tend to neglect the fact that Christianity has a lot to do with compassion, sympathy, and kindness. It is above all a very practical religion that makes people feel the drawing power of Jesus' love and compassion. Where can such qualities be found if not in the lives of Christians? Oh, for a heart that feels like Christ's! Do you know what is our greatest sin? "The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 163.

14. What light does the phrase "as though I had not cast them off" shed on God's concept of repentance and forgiveness? Zech. 10:6.

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**God wipes out the past.** Often people do not forget, or do not want to forget, their negative past or the negative past of the people around them. *But God is different.* If we respond to Him, He forgets the worst things about us, remembering only the best.

THU

#### VI. ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD (Zech. 11:1-17).

Zechariah 11 depicts the rejection of Israel's only Hope despite the encouragement and promises of the previous chapter. The flock follows evil shepherds instead of the Good Shepherd, with tragic results.

15. What happens to those who insist on following false shepherds? Zech. 11:4-6.
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For selfish profit, the evil shepherds traffic in selling the sheep for the slaughter. What audacity to assume that God blesses their evil actions! Their consciences are seared because they sense no guilt for their mistreatment of the flock.

16. What are the names of the two staffs taken by the Good Shepherd, and what do they signify? Zech. 11:7.
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Zechariah was commissioned by God to act out the response of the Good Shepherd. He became a type of the Messiah, who would be mistreated and rejected by those whom He came to save. Zechariah's action symbolized God's final attempt to restore His wayward people.

The name of the first rod comes from the Hebrew that means "kindness," "friendliness," or "graciousness." The name of the second rod comes from the Hebrew word that means "rope" or "cord." The plural form means cords or bands, symbolizing union.

According to Psalm 23:4, the shepherd carried a rod and a staff—the rod to ward off attacks against the sheep and a staff with which to direct and guide the flock. The two key words are *defense* and *guidance*. We may interpret the rod, Grace, to mean God's power and goodness in His defense of Israel against its enemies. The staff, or bands, may be interpreted to refer to God's effort to lead His people into unity.

17. What did the breaking of the two staffs symbolize? Zech. 11:10, 14.
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Before God rejected the Jewish nation as a whole, He "cut off" the three evil shepherds (Zech. 11:8) in order to awaken His people to their desperate condition. The three shepherds possibly refer to the three types of leaders—priests, prophets, and kings. Many were unfaithful to Him.

The breaking of the staves denotes the withdrawal of God's gracious protection and leadership of His people. His covenant promises were forfeited by human choice.

How does God regard political and religious leaders today who are cruel and self-serving, and who lead people astray?

18. What very important event took place between the breaking of the two staves? Zech. 11:12, 13; Matt. 27:3-10.
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The rejection and betrayal of the Messiah by the Jewish nation was

symbolized by the wages Zechariah received—thirty pieces of silver.

“The quotation [in Matt. 27:9] . . . is chiefly from Zech. 11:13, with possible allusions to Jer. 18:2-12; 19:1-15; 32:6-9.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 543, 544.

**19. What does the foolish shepherd do to the flock? Describe his end. Zech. 11:16, 17; compare Rev. 19:20, 21.**

### WHAT KIND OF SHEPHERD AM I?

Almost everyone fills the role of a shepherd at times. Read the words below and consider the characteristics and actions of a true shepherd. Underline the words that should apply:

Manage	Examine	Discipline
Criticize	Judge	Comfort
Encourage	Support	Abuse
Care	Take advantage of	Preoccupied
Dominate	Protect	Coerce
Lead	Provide for	Manipulate
Drive	Sensitive to	Threaten

**FSD** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Read *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 476-484.

**SUMMARY:** God exhausts all the means at His disposal to restore His people, even sending His own Son. The two staves of the covenant were broken because of Israel's choice. Yet, in the very midst of gloom, God's Spirit remains with the faithful remnant, those who appreciate His work, wait upon Him, and acknowledge Him in their lives.

# The Lamb Slain

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 9:11; 11:12, 13; 12:10; 13:1, 6, 7.



**MEMORY TEXT:** "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1).

**YOUR HOPE IS IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD.** Christ, the Good Shepherd, loves His flock infinitely. In His incarnation He became one with us. How good it is to have a Shepherd who understands your weaknesses and struggles. Our greatest happiness now and eternally is in following where He leads.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Blood of the Covenant (Zech 9:11).
- II. Thirty Pieces of Silver (Zech 11:12, 13).
- III. Whom They Have Pierced (Zech 12:10).
- IV. A Fountain Opened (Zech 13:1).
- V. Wounds in His Hands (Zech 13:6, 7).

**THE SHEPHERD GAVE HIS LIFE.** In the previous lesson we contrasted the characteristics of the Good Shepherd with evil shepherds. Evil shepherds ignore, abuse, and kill the sheep. On the other hand, the Good Shepherd takes care even of the weakest and searches for the lost.

Beyond that, He so identifies with the sheep that He becomes one with them. Instead of taking their lives away, He gives His own life for them. He is the Lamb of God who shed His blood on Calvary for the cleansing and redemption of those who will follow Him. He was betrayed and wounded by the very people He came to save. The righteous judgment of God that was to fall upon the flock fell upon the Shepherd. As the Lamb, He provided the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice for His ungrateful people.

The words of William Cowper have timeless relevance: "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains."



## I. THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT (Zech. 9:11).

1. To what does the "blood of the covenant" refer? Zech. 9:11.

In its broader aspects the covenant refers to the promise made to humanity in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15) that the seed of the woman (Jesus) would bruise the head of the serpent (Satan). The covenant was sealed with the blood of the innocent lambs killed to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. The covering provided them symbolized the righteousness of Christ which is bestowed upon those who accept the sacrifice of Calvary.

**This covenant was renewed** to Abraham (Gen. 22:10-19) when God provided the sacrificial ram that was slain in place of Isaac. The renewed covenant between God and Abraham was sealed with the shed blood of the ram symbolizing the Lamb of God.

Again this covenant was renewed with Israel at Sinai and dedicated with blood. "Behold the blood of the covenant," Moses said after he sprinkled it on the people (Ex. 24:8).

**The covenant ratified.** When the Lamb of God became the sacrifice, and symbol met reality, the everlasting covenant was sealed. The terms of the covenant would certainly be applied to all those who had believed in the past and would believe in the future. (See 1 Cor. 15:17-22.) The blood of Jesus eternally ratified the agreement between God and His people. (See Heb. 8:8-12; 9:11-15.)

**God's covenant always new.** "Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new* covenant. . . .

"The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the 'second,' or 'new,' covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant. That the new covenant was valid in the days of Abraham is evident from the fact that it was then confirmed both by the promise and by the oath of God—the 'two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie.' Hebrews 6:18."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 370, 371.

**2. How far back was the plan of redemption formulated by God?**  
Rev. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:19, 20; Eph. 1:4.

The decision for Christ to die for the lost was *reached* before the world began and was *confirmed* at the cross of Calvary.

**Christ the surety.** "But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. . . . None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.

"Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by

Satan. They clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 834.

## II. THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER (Zech. 11:12, 13).

### 3. Where did the idea of thirty pieces of silver originate in the Scriptures? For what was the money used? Ex. 21:32.

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The present value of thirty shekels of silver is thought to be somewhere between \$8.75 and \$12.60. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 615, and vol. 4, p. 1111.) The price of a slave was the price paid for the Messiah, the Creator of the world.

### 4. Why does the Good Shepherd request His wages for shepherding the flock? What does the extremely low price say about the Jewish nation and its leaders? Zech. 11:12.

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The Good Shepherd asks for His wages because He wants the people's evaluation of His service. Their response reveals total contempt and ingratitude. By contrast with the false shepherds, He does not threaten or use force with the flock. He places Himself and the value of His work at their mercy.

When the Jewish leaders paid Judas thirty pieces of silver, they showed exactly what they thought of Jesus—total disregard, contempt, and ingratitude (Matt. 26:15; 27:3, 4). The payment of thirty pieces of silver was given when a slave died. When they paid Judas that sum for the betrayal, they showed their intention of taking the life of their Good Shepherd.

### 5. Compare the price paid for Jesus and the price He paid for humanity. 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

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The all-worthy Christ was treated as worthless by humankind, but He treated unworthy humanity as worth everything, even His life. Think of the contrast between the price of the thirty pieces of silver and the price with which Jesus purchased humanity! An unlimited quantity of silver and gold was not an adequate price for an individual.

**The value of a soul.** "Rich and poor, high and low, free and bond, are God's heritage. He who gave His life to redeem man sees in every human being a value that exceeds finite computation. By the mystery and glory of the cross we are to discern His estimate of the value of the soul. When we do this, we shall feel that human beings, however degraded, have cost too much to be treated with coldness or contempt. We shall realize the importance of working for our fellow men, that they may be exalted to the throne of God." —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 162, 163.

6. Where was Zechariah instructed to cast the thirty pieces of silver? What does the Lord mean by referring to the “goodly price” paid for the Good Shepherd? Zech. 11:13.
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“A change of one letter in the Hebrew gives the reading ‘treasury’ instead of ‘potter’ (see RSV). ‘Treasury’ is also the reading of the Syriac.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1111.

**The Lord’s irony.** The Lord’s abhorrence of the price they set for Him is evidenced by the strong irony He uses in referring to it. No, it is not a splendid price, far from it! It is an insult. It can be illustrated by the true story of a laborer who had spent an entire day repairing the house of his landlord. At the end of a day’s hard work, the laborer waited for his wages. Even though his job was well done, he received only a few coins. Feeling insulted by the landlord’s low opinion of his labor, he refused to accept the money. Casting it to the ground at the feet of the landlord, he walked away.

**TUE** III. WHOM THEY HAVE PIERCED (Zech. 12:10).

7. How was the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 fulfilled at the end of Jesus’ life? John 19:34-37.
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The Jewish leaders were so particular about Sabbath observance that they asked Pilate to break Jesus’ legs to ensure that He was dead. They wanted His body removed from the cross before sundown Friday. Here is a prime example of keeping the letter of the law, but not its spirit. The letter of the law without the spirit kills; legalism destroys. The Jewish leaders outwardly observed the Sabbath commandment while murdering the Lord of the Sabbath!

**Slain by human sin.** “But it was not the spear thrust, it was not the pain of the cross, that caused the death of Jesus. That cry, uttered ‘with a loud voice’ (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46), at the moment of death, the stream of blood and water that flowed from His side, declared that He died of a *broken heart*. His heart was broken by *mental anguish*. He was slain by the *sin of the world*.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 772 (italics supplied).

**A sobering question.** What about us? Do we hurt people around us in the process of being religious, by keeping the letter of the law, but not its spirit?

8. How do you explain the outpouring of the spirit of grace and supplication upon Israel? Why will they mourn? Zech. 12:10, 11.
-

**Sorrow for sins brings revival.** “. . . the prophet is here envisioning a far-reaching spiritual revival, brought about by a new glimpse of the sinfulness of sin, and characterized by an earnest search for the righteousness of Christ. Looking upon the ‘pierced’ Messiah, seeing in Him the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types, perceiving as never before the marvelous love of God in the gift of His Son, men would deeply mourn over their past defects of character. . . . [See Acts 2:36, 37.]

“However, the words are to meet yet another fulfillment. There seems to be an allusion to Zech. 12:10 in Matt. 24:30 . . . and in Rev. 1:7. . . . The word translated ‘wail’ in Rev. 1:7 is the same as the one translated ‘mourn’ in Matt. 24:30, and represents the reading of the LXX [Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament] in Zech. 12:10. The mourning here described pictures the experience of those who rejected Christ at His first advent. When they shall see Him in all His glory at the second advent, they will realize the full import of their deed (see DA 580). Doubtless ‘the most violent opposers of His truth and His people’ (GC 637) in other ages are also to be included in the prediction here made.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1113. (See *Early Writings*, p. 179.)

**Are we in danger of rejecting Christ?** “In this generation there are many who are treading on the same ground as were the unbelieving Jews. They have witnessed the manifestation of the power of God; the Holy Spirit has spoken to their hearts; but they cling to their unbelief and resistance.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

WED

#### IV. A FOUNTAIN OPENED (Zech. 13:1).

##### 9. When would the events of Zechariah 13:1 occur?

Zechariah 3:9 speaks of the iniquity of the land being removed in “one day.” It is referring to the same day mentioned in Zechariah 13:1, the day when Christ died once for all humanity. Because He suffered the penalty for human sin, His atoning blood provided the means by which all guilt can be removed from those who believe. (See 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:17.) The day mentioned in Zechariah 13:1 is the day on which Jesus was pierced (Zech. 12:10). In a sense there had always been a fountain open for forgiveness and cleansing, because Jesus is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Before the cross, men looked forward by faith to the Saviour who would shed His blood for the forgiveness of their sins.

Praise be to God! On Calvary the fountain once opened was never to be shut!

**The cleansing fountain.** “When the soldier pierced the side of Jesus as He hung upon the cross, there came out two distinct streams, one of blood, the other of water. The blood was to wash away the sins of those who should believe in His name, and the water was to represent that living water which is obtained from Jesus to give life to the believer.”—*Early Writings*, p. 209.

10. Compare the following verses. State briefly the main idea in each:

- Lev. 17:11 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 1:7, 8 \_\_\_\_\_
- Heb. 9:13, 14, 22 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 John 1:7 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rev 7:14 \_\_\_\_\_

### V. WOUNDS IN HIS HANDS (Zech. 13:6).

11. What relationship do you see between the following three predictions of Zechariah? Zech. 12:10; 13:1; 13:6, 7.

\_\_\_\_\_



12. Who is the person questioned in Zechariah 13:6? What are the wounds in His hands? Compare John 20:25, 27.

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“In its context the question concerning these wounds seems to be addressed to the converted false prophet (Zech. 13:5, 6). Some interpreters have applied this text to Christ as predictive of His scourging and wounds received at the hands of those who should have been His friends (see Matt. 27:26; Mark 14:65; 15:15; Luke 22:63; John 19:1, 17, 18). This must be done by secondary application or by making a break after Zech. 13:5 and by connecting v. 6 with v. 7, which is clearly predictive of Christ (Matt. 26:31).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1115.

Zechariah 13:6 seems to begin a new thought: the wounding of the Messiah. Verses 6 and 7 seem to belong together. The piercing of His side (12:10) and the opening of the fountain (13:1) lead logically to the subsequent question, “What are these wounds in thine hands?” (13:6). Christ personally applied the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7 to Himself (Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27).

**The scars will remain.** “They will again behold that face, bright as the noontday sun, and will seek to flee from before it. Instead of that shout of brutal triumph, they will wail because of Him.

“Jesus will present His hands with the marks of His crucifixion. The marks of this cruelty He will ever bear. Every print of the nails will tell the story of man’s wonderful redemption and the dear price by which it was purchased. The very men who thrust the spear into the side of the Lord of life will behold the print of the spear and lament with deep anguish the part which they acted in marring His body.”—*Early Writings*, p. 179.

“Even the manner of His death had been shadowed forth. . . .

“One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands?

Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.' ”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 226.

### WHAT IS MY RESPONSE TO THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

- By the way I am living now, what value do I place on the life and work of the Good Shepherd in my behalf? What value do I place on people around me? How do I show it?
- Do I lack the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness to God and to others in my daily life? Do I tend to take things for granted, and expect others to serve me? If so, how can I change?

Write your response in the form of a prayer to Jesus:

Dear Jesus:

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**FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** “Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ ”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. Also read *Early Writings*, pp. 125-127; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 576, 577, 718, 722.

**SUMMARY:** Before the creation of the world, God made provision for all of us to be saved through Christ’s blood. The everlasting covenant between God and humanity was made eternally sure at the cross. Christ experienced everything that sinners deserve in the presence of a holy and sin-hating God. A fountain was opened for forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration. Are we washed in the blood of the Lamb? He loves us. Heaven itself can bestow nothing greater, nothing better. Trust Him!

# The Victorious King

**THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** Zechariah 14:1-21 and selected verses from Zechariah 12 and 13. .



**MEMORY TEXT:** "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9).

**TRIUMPH AND VINDICATION.** The faithful remnant will be refined as gold, and Jerusalem will be secure and strong in the Lord, her true defense. The triumphant King will descend on the Mount of Olives with His saints to judge the wicked, eradicate evil, and establish His kingdom over all the earth.

## OUTLINE:

- I. The Day of the Lord (Zech. 14:1, 4, 9).
- II. The Lord is Jerusalem's Strength and Defense (Zech. 12:5-9; 14:3).
- III. The Remnant Refined (Zech. 13:8, 9).
- IV. His feet on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:2-11).
- V. The New Earth (Zech. 14:12-21).

**RESTORATION IN CHRIST.** Throughout this quarter we have studied the way in which the Messiah endeavors to save and restore His people. Zechariah 14 describes His final act of restoration as He brings the great controversy between good and evil to an end. This chapter directs our attention to the third coming of Christ immediately after the millennium.

As we study some of the events leading to the great day of the Lord, we need to examine carefully our experience with Him. Is Jesus our daily strength? Are we allowing Him to refine us as His precious remnant? Are we preparing to be citizens of the New Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God?

**Interpret prophecy carefully.** Caution is in order when Zechariah 14 is studied. Care must be taken to avoid unwarranted conclusions and defective interpretations. "Seventh-day Adventists believe that, generally speaking, the promises and predictions given through the Old Testament prophets originally applied to literal Israel and were to have been fulfilled to them on the condition that they obey God and remain loyal to Him. But the Scriptures record the fact that they disobeyed God and proved disloyal to Him instead. Accordingly, what He purposed to do for the world through Israel of old He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today, and many of the promises originally made to literal Israel will

be fulfilled to His remnant people at the close of time.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 25, 26.

Not every aspect of Zechariah 14, which God intended to fulfill in the experience of literal Israel, will apply in the end-time application. Obviously circumstances in the New Jerusalem will not be entirely identical to those which would have existed in Jerusalem if Israel had remained the chosen people of God. Nevertheless, the redemption of spiritual Israel from a world of sin is a valid secondary application of the prophecy.

**SUN**

**I. THE DAY OF THE LORD (Zech. 14:1, 4, 9).**

1. The expression “day of the Lord” occurs frequently in Scripture. What will happen on this day? Isa. 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1; 2 Cor. 1:14; 2 Peter 3:7-10.

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The Bible writers use the term “day of the Lord,” or similar expressions, to mean the time when God intervenes in the affairs of this world in order to execute judgment on the wicked and deliver His people from bondage and destruction. The local, historical day of the Lord may refer to the occasion on which God’s judgments were poured out upon His own people in order to chastise them and draw them back to Him. In its end-time application, the day of the Lord is the time when God will defeat all world powers, punish the wicked, ultimately redeem the faithful.

In the New Testament the day of the Lord refers to the second coming of Christ to resurrect the righteous from their graves (John 6:39), to purify the earth with fire, and to establish His eternal kingdom (2 Peter 3:7-14).

2. Study the following passages in Zechariah and indicate what “in that day” refers to in each verse:

- Zech. 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_
- Zech. 9:16 \_\_\_\_\_
- Zech. 12:8, 9 \_\_\_\_\_
- Zech. 13:1 \_\_\_\_\_
- Zech. 14: 1, 4, 9 \_\_\_\_\_

The most frequent and significant expression in the last chapters of Zechariah is the phrase “in that day.” It is evident that chapters 12–14 are especially concerned with end-time events.

**MON**

**II. THE LORD IS JERUSALEM’S STRENGTH AND DEFENSE (Zech. 12:5-9; 14:3).**

3. Why do God’s people not have to despair when they are under attack? Zech. 12:5, 6, 8, 9; 14:3.

The real might of ancient Israel was always found in God. Their trust and confidence in Him, their response to His will ensured that He would fight for them. (See 2 Chron. 20:15.)

**Promises awaiting fulfillment.** “These promises of conquering might were to have met fulfillment in the remnant of Judah. It was hoped that after their return from captivity they would cooperate fully with the purposes of Heaven. A nation thus stayed upon God is invincible.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4 p. 1112.

“That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today. . . . Never has the Lord been without true representatives on this earth who have made His interests their own. These witnesses for God are numbered among the spiritual Israel, and to them will be fulfilled all the covenant promises made by Jehovah to His ancient people.”—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 713, 714.

**Where am I in relation to God’s purposes?** Am I one of God’s true representatives today as a part of spiritual Israel? Do I make His interests my own? Am I learning from the failings of ancient Israel, or am I repeating their mistakes?

### III. THE REMNANT REFINED (Zech. 13:8, 9).

A remnant refined and purified will meet the victorious King on the day of the Lord and live with Him forever.

#### 4. How does the Lord purify His people in preparation for His end-time appearing? Zech. 3:2; 13:9.

The word *remnant* refers to those who *survive* an ordeal or a calamity, and those who remain faithful to God in the midst of persecution and apostasy.

In Zechariah 3:2, the “brand plucked out of the fire” conveys the idea that other branches were burned to ashes. But this brand remained and was plucked by God from almost certain destruction. The remnant of God’s people are mentioned in Zechariah 8:6, 11, 12; 9:7. The final section of the book also alludes to the remnant. Zechariah refers to the “third part,” the “residue,” and the ones that are “left” (Zech. 13:8, 9; 14:2, 16).

**Following Christ is not an easy religion.** It requires total commitment. Tribulation and testing are integral parts of being a follower of Christ. The fire burns the straw and takes the impurities out of the silver and gold. The remnant that is refined as silver and gold and sustained through union with Jesus will be the only group that will be prepared to meet Jesus when He comes.



#### 5. What is the significance of the terms “two parts” and “third part”? Zech. 13:8 and 9.

“Zechariah here gives a forecast of conditions in terms of how events would have occurred had Israel cooperated with the plans and purposes of Heaven. . . . A large number, though not all, would have accepted the Messiah. His death would have been followed by times of great distress, a time of cutting off for those unwilling to accept Him, and a time of purification (v. 9) for those who were His followers. The proportion here given (two-thirds cut off and one-third left) need not be taken in the absolute sense, though doubtless then as later the majority would refuse God’s proffered salvation (Matt 22:14).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1115.

**6. What did Jesus predict would be the lot of some who would follow Him? Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12; John 15:20; compare 2 Tim. 3:12.**

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“God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength to others. . . . The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which he will give us in exchange.

“God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

**IV. HIS FEET ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES (Zech. 14:2-11).**

**7. How is Zechariah 14 to be interpreted? Is the return of the Jews to Palestine in this century, followed by the establishment of the modern state of Israel, the fulfillment of the prophecy?**

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“Chapter 14 is a description of events in connection with the second coming of the Messiah in terms of how this spectacular event would have come about if the Israelites who returned from captivity had fulfilled their destiny. . . . Inasmuch as they turned again and again from their high privileges and ultimately rejected the Messiah (Acts 3:13-15), God turned from them. He is now accomplishing His purposes through the Christian church. . . . Verses 4, 5 describe violent physical changes in the earth’s surface to accompany the divine intervention to destroy the enemy nations. The detailed picture is in terms of how these events would have worked out if Jerusalem had stood forever (see PK 46, 564; DA 577 . . .). Certain features will now be fulfilled at the time the New Jerusalem makes its descent at the end of the millennium. However, not all the details must be so applied (see GC 663).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1116, 1117.

“The present-day return of the Jews to Palestine and the establishment of the modern state of Israel do not imply such a reinstatement, either pre-

sent or future. Whatever the Jews, as a nation, may do, now or in time to come, is in no way related to the former promises made to them. With the crucifixion of Christ they forever forfeited their special position as God's chosen people. Any idea that the return of the Jews to their ancestral home, that is, to the new state of Israel, may in any way be related to Bible prophecy . . . is without valid scriptural foundation."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 33.



8. How do you explain the sudden shift from the nations attacking Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:2 and the Lord's intervention in behalf of Jerusalem in Zechariah 14:3? Compare Micah 4:8-13.

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There is a faithful remnant within a rebellious Jerusalem. We may conclude that Christ's professed people will be tested and tried until a faithful remnant remains.

**A two-way movement.** "In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 41.

9. Who will accompany Jesus when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives? What will happen to the mountain when He descends? Zech. 14:4, 5; Jude 14, 15. Compare Hab. 3:6; Micah 1:3, 4.

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Zechariah 14:4 refers to the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven at the end of the millennium (Rev. 21:2, 3, 10). The saints or the "holy ones" (RSV) accompany Christ (v.5). The word *saints* is translated from the Hebrew word that literally means "holy ones." This word is applied in the Old Testament to both men and angels. (See Deut. 33:2, 3; Psalm 30:4.) At the end of the millennium Christ will come to earth accompanied by the holy angels and with the redeemed of all ages whom He took to heaven at the Second Advent. (See John 14:1-3.)

**A place hallowed by Christ's presence.** "As the place of His ascension, Jesus chose the spot so often hallowed by His presence while He dwelt among men. Not Mount Zion, the place of David's city, not Mount Moriah, the temple site, was to be thus honored. . . . From this mountain He was to ascend to heaven. Upon its summit His feet will rest when He shall come again."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 829, 830. (See also *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662, 663.)

10. What evidence is there that the Lord's descent upon the Mount of Olives will be His third coming, at the conclusion of the one thousand years?

Consider the following points:

- Jesus comes to earth not only with His angels but also with those saints who had been resurrected in the first resurrection and those who had been translated without experiencing death. These two groups of saints had spent 1,000 years in heaven with Him. (Compare Zech. 14:4 and 5 with Rev. 20:4, 5; 1 Thess. 4:16-18.)
- The earth will be desolate during the millennium. The earth will be made new after the millennium. (See Zech. 14:6-8; Rev. 21:23; 22:5.)
- Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem. (See Zech. 14:8; Rev. 22:1.)
- Jerusalem will dwell in security and there will be no more curse. (See Zech. 14:11, 21; Rev. 21:27; 22:3, 15.)
- The Lord will become King over *all* the earth. (See Zech. 14:9; Rev. 21:3-5.)

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#### V. THE NEW EARTH (Zech. 14:12-21).

11. What will the Lord do to the nations that attack Jerusalem and to Satan, their leader? When will this occur? Zech. 14:12; Rev. 20:7-10.

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“Then at the close of the one thousand years, Jesus, with the angels and all the saints, leaves the Holy City, and while He is descending to the earth with them, the wicked dead are raised.”—*Early Writings*, p. 53.

“Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset.” “In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 664, 673.

12. What will be the conditions in the New Jerusalem after the purification of the earth? Zech. 14:16, 20; Rev. 21:27; 22:3, 4.
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13. What was the significance of the feast of tabernacles? Zech. 14:16; Lev. 23:34, 39, 40.
-

“The Feast of Tabernacles was not only commemorative but typical. It not only pointed back to the wilderness sojourn, but, as the feast of harvest, it celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the earth, and pointed forward to the great day of final ingathering, when the Lord of the harvest shall send forth his reapers to gather the tares together in bundles for the fire, and to gather the wheat into His garner. . . . But when the ransomed of the Lord shall have been safely gathered into the heavenly Canaan, . . . they will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Christ’s great work of atonement for men will then have been completed, and their sins will have been forever blotted out.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 541, 542.

**WHAT SPECIAL BLESSING HAVE YOU GAINED FROM THE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH?**

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**(FR)** **FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:** Compare Ezekiel 38 and 39 with Zechariah 14. Read “The Controversy Ended” in *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662-678.

“I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seemed to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are having the last message. My accompanying angel cried out with awful solemnity, ‘Get ready! get ready! get ready! for the fierce anger of the Lord is soon to come.’”—*Early Writings*, p. 119.

**SUMMARY:** In His love and mercy, God has revealed to us, who live in history’s last hour, what we need to know to be among those who enter the Holy City. Now is the time to heed His entreaties and allow Him to purify us for His kingdom.

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# Lessons for First Quarter, 1990

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the first quarter of 1990 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of this series is "Call to the Kingdom."

## **FIRST LESSON: "Unto Us a Son Is Given"**

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 1 and 2.

MEMORY TEXT: Isaiah 9:6.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God came to dwell among us in the person of Jesus. His purpose was to provide the healing remedy for sin. His victory over sin and death makes our victory possible. For this reason the Lord established the kingdom of grace on earth.

### OUTLINE:

- I. The Genealogy of the King (Matt. 1:1-17).
- II. The Birth of the King (Matt. 1:18-25).
- III. The Childhood of the King (Matt. 2:1-23).

## **SECOND LESSON: "The Messiah Comes"**

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Matthew 3 and 4.

MEMORY TEXT: Matthew 3:11.

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Christ's mission is ours. Jesus began to spread the truth about His kingdom on earth through preparation, anointing, testing, preaching, and preparing others for service. We should follow His pattern as we seek to do our part in ushering in His kingdom of glory.

### OUTLINE:

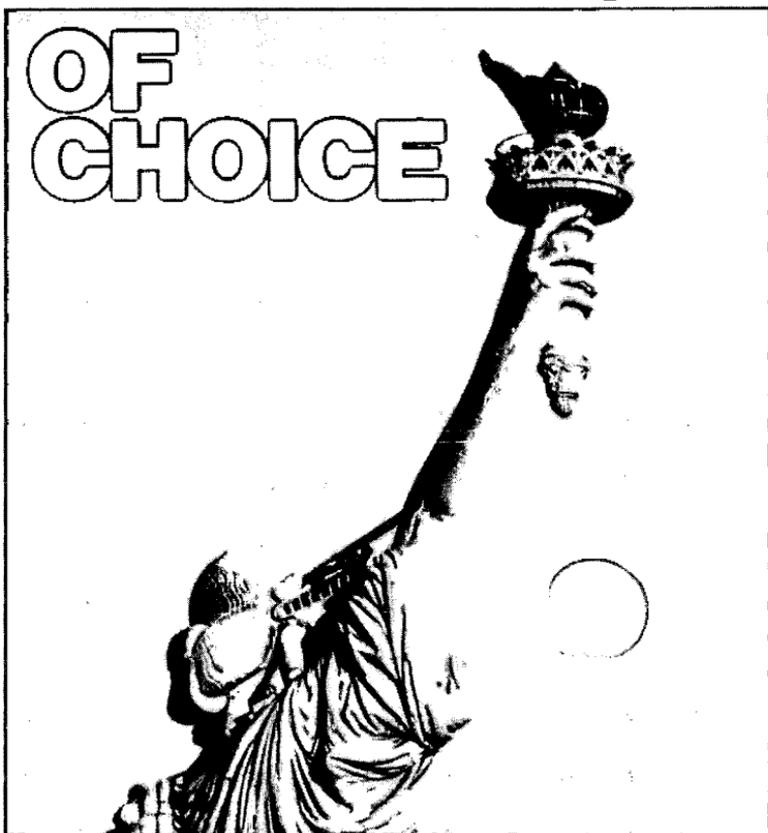
- I. The Preparation for the King (Matt. 3:1-12).
- II. The Anointing of the King (Matt. 3:13-17).
- III. The Testing of the King's Character (Matt. 4:1-11).
- IV. The Beginning of the King's Work (Matt. 4:12-25).

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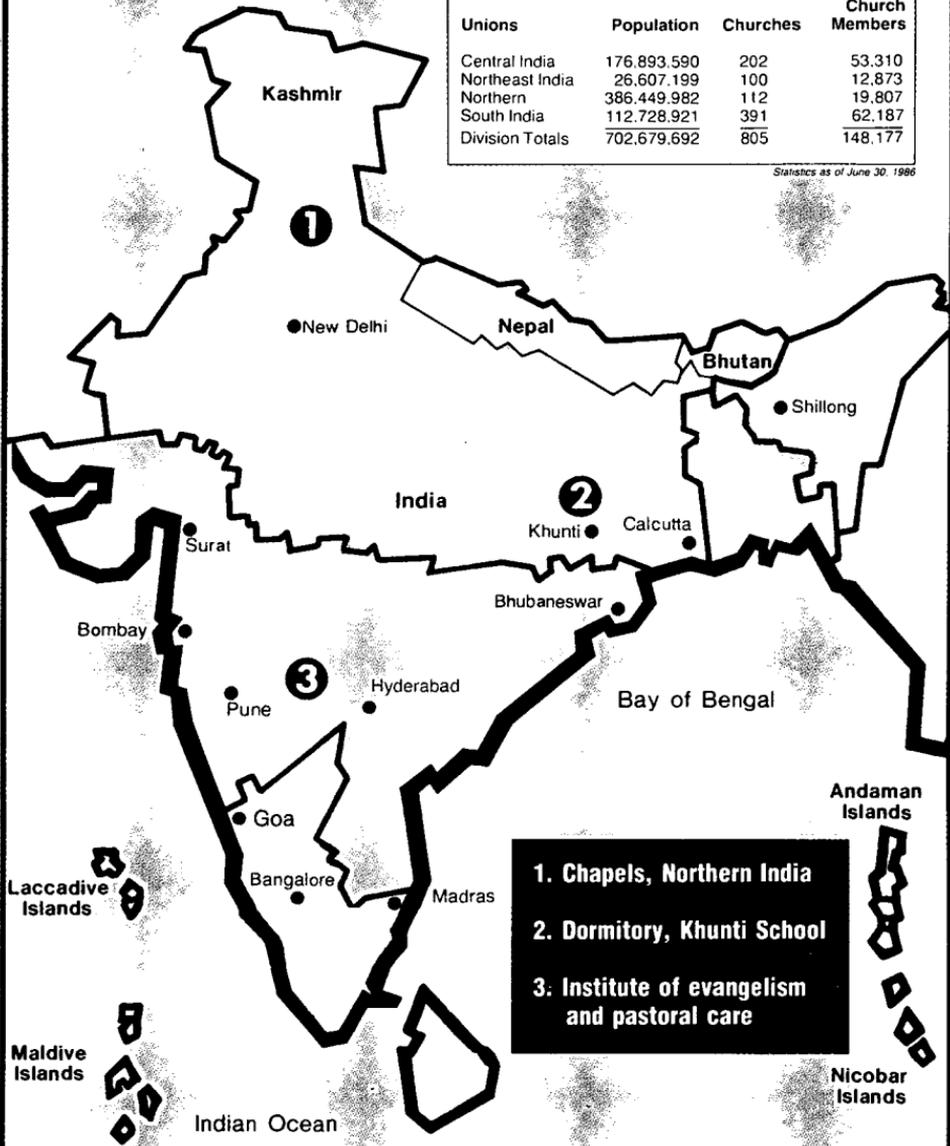
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# SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members
Central India	176,893,590	202	53,310
Northeast India	26,607,199	100	12,873
Northern	386,449,982	112	19,807
South India	112,728,921	391	62,187
<b>Division Totals</b>	<b>702,679,692</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>148,177</b>

Statistics as of June 30, 1986



- 1. Chapels, Northern India
- 2. Dormitory, Khunti School
- 3. Institute of evangelism and pastoral care