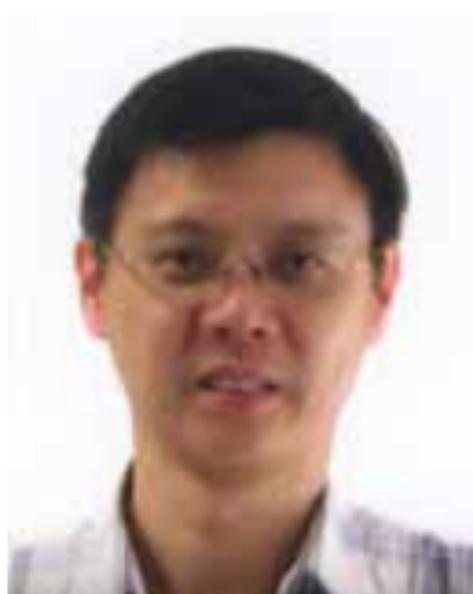


July to September 2009

**“Grow in Grace,
and in the
knowledge of
our Lord and
Saviour Jesus
Christ”**

by
Lek Aik Wee

About the Author



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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare says, “Open Thy gate of mercy, gracious God! My soul flies through these wounds to seek out Thee.” The book of Zechariah opens to us the gate of God’s mercy. It is God’s step-by-step book of encouragement for the afflicted and repentant. The secret of God’s blessings is in the Person of Israel’s Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Israel returned to their dilapidated homeland in Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity in Babylon. The gloom that surrounded the people of God threatened to cause them to give up their faith! There was great economic depression facing the returnees. There were powerful enemies around that sought to devour them. They were in a precarious situation. The returnees were on the brink of abandoning God to rebuild their physical lives at all cost. God sent His prophet Zechariah to arouse them out of their self-indulgence. While Haggai emphasized the rebuilding of the Temple, Zechariah focused on their spiritual transformation. The older folks wept when they saw the pathetic state of the rebuilt Temple. Yet Zechariah had to awaken them to look beyond the externals to the spiritual, beyond the present to the future, that they may see the very presence of God in their midst, leading and guiding them.

We often see with our physical eyes and conclude that the situation for us is hopeless! But God has given to us spiritual eyes to see through His good and comforting words to uplift our hearts and to show to us our future hope and glory with Christ. The events today are zooming toward Christ’s Second Coming. What should we do as Christians? How should we order our lives? May the study and meditation on this book of Zechariah challenge us to greater zeal for the work of God.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 1

ZECHARIAH 1:1

HAGGAI 1:1

*“O visit me with
Thy salvation.”*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DATES

Zechariah is best known as the prophet called to minister comfort and hope in the post-exilic period. His message was a challenging voice that roused Israel to rebuild their spiritual lives as they rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem. The Temple was the centre and symbol of their faith. It was to put them once more on the path of devotion to their Lord. Zechariah was from a priestly family. His father was Berechiah and grandfather Iddo. His contemporaries were the elderly prophet Haggai, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest (Ezra 5:1-2; Zech 3:1; 4:6, 6:11). Haggai began his ministry two months earlier in the 6th month (Hag 1:1).

God spoke through Zechariah at a specific point in history: after 70 years of captivity and exile in Babylon. It was the 8th month called Heshvan (November) in the Jewish calendar, a rainy month when wheat and barley were sown. It was the second year of Darius Hystaspes' reign, emperor of Persia. The year was 520 B.C. Observe that the dating is based on the reign of a foreign king, so the returnees were under foreign domination. The older returnees had much to reflect on as they pondered upon God's dealings with their forefathers and in their own generation. Israel was forever cured of idolatry and profoundly penitent for past backslidings. It was a new beginning.

Are there certain times in your life when God specifically touched your heart through His written Word? God has specific work for each one of His children on earth. Are you actively walking according to His will? It was during my second year in university when I came to know the Lord. Proverbs 3:5-6 spoke to me as I learnt that I cannot order my life, but God can. John chapter 1 is precious because I realized that Jesus Christ is the living and true God who came from heaven to die for my sins to give me eternal life. I pray the Lord will keep me walking daily with Him.

THOUGHT: “As Thou hast sought, so let me seek, Thy erring children lost and lone.”

PRAYER: Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.

THURSDAY, JULY 2

ZECHARIAH 1:1

PSALM 25:6-7

*“Remember me, O Lord,
with Thy favour.”*

THE MERCIES OF GOD (I)

Zechariah means “The Lord remembers” based on the same form of the imperative in Psalm 25:7 “...remember thou me for thy goodness’ sake, O LORD.” It is an urgent plea that God forgets not His own people. How do we know that God will remember us? It is according to God’s tender mercies and loving kindness.

The tender mercies of God describe the mercy of God that includes the element of compassion. The root verb is “love” (*raham*). It is the outworking of God’s love for His people. It is derived from the noun “womb.” The picture of God’s love for His people is likened to the unborn baby nourished in the mother’s womb. The umbilical cord supplies the oxygenated, nutrient-rich blood to nourish the unborn baby. The unborn baby is fully dependent on the life-line of the mother. This is how much we are dependent on our Creator, who is also our Sustainer and most importantly, our Saviour. We are lost and helpless, estranged from God, when we choose to walk our own way.

The loving kindness (*hesed*) of God speaks of His mercy, goodness, kindness and faithfulness. It expresses His loyalty and devotion to the solemn promises in His Word. The steadfast love of God will keep His covenant promises with Israel. He does not forsake neither does He forgets His children. The Lord spoke through Zechariah to the discouraged Jews in their devastated homeland to pick up courage to rebuild the Temple. (The rebuilding stopped 15 years earlier, in 535 B.C.) The people were like a bruised reed and smoking flax. The compassionate Lord will not allow them to be broken nor quenched.

Is your family experiencing sufferings and afflictions of illness, deaths and other distresses? The ancient prophet has a good message of God’s unfailing love for you. We cannot see the hand of God but the knowledge of His loving heart stills us through every trial of life.

THOUGHT: Mercy imitates God and disappoints Satan.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be still and know that You are God.

FRIDAY, JULY 3

ZECHARIAH 1:2

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-9

*“Teach them thy sons,
and thy sons’ sons.”*

THE MERCIES OF GOD (II)

The Lord is Israel’s covenant God. He created the nation of Israel to be His national witness. Israel is the guardian of the Holy Oracles of God. These are His eternal, unchangeable and everlasting words. Israel’s privileged position in the sight of God is written for posterity by Moses in Deuteronomy 4:7-9: *“For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons’ sons.”*

But Israel when they entered the Promised Land, sinned by going after the Canaanite gods. As a result, the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom of Judah forsook the Lord their God and judgment fell upon them (2 Chron 33:1-10, 2 Kgs 21:1-16). Judah was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. For seventy years, they were exiled in Babylon. God did not forget Israel despite their waywardness. It grieved the heart of God when His people knowingly sinned against Him. The years of exile were years of soul searching in a foreign land.

There was a man who was jobless for two years. He was so discouraged that he stopped going to church. Staying alone and single, he became so despondent that he unplugged his telephone line and decided to cut himself off from the world. The Lord in His mercy restored him into fellowship when he went back to church for worship, and partook of the Lord’s Supper again. The hymns of Zion restored his ailing heart. The Lord also gave him a job in the midst of severe economic recession. The Lord remembers His own.

THOUGHT: “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently.”

PRAYER: “Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lord, lead me to Calvary.”

SATURDAY, JULY 4

ZECHARIAH 1:3

HAGGAI 1:1-11, MATTHEW 6:33

*“Seek ye first the kingdom of God
and His righteousness.”*

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

The background of the book of Zechariah is given in Ezra 1-6 and Haggai 1-2. The exiles first returned from captivity to Jerusalem in 536 B.C. (Ezra 1-2). The altar was erected and the foundation of the new Temple laid in 535 B.C. (Ezra 3). However, the work of the Temple was stopped from 535 B.C. to 520 B.C. due to opposition (Ezra 4). The work of the Temple resumed in 520 B.C. (Hag 1, Zech 1) and was completed in 516 B.C. (Ezra 5-6).

The returnees were exhorted by Haggai to rebuild the Temple that has stalled for the past 15 years. The admonitions were given in Hag 1:4, 6-11: *“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?...Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.”* The returnees have laboured for physical prosperity in the past 16 years yet not prospering. The Lord has withheld His blessing because their desire for material prosperity was at the expense of fulfilling God’s will for their lives. Zechariah sounded the alarm to awaken them out of their slumber before judgment comes!

THOUGHT: The Great Commission is yet unfinished.

PRAYER: Lord, help me not to build my home at the expense of Your Kingdom.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 5

ZECHARIAH 1:3-4

ISAIAH 45:9-13

*"Today if ye will hear his voice,
harden not your hearts."*

NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! ... Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? ... Thus saith the LORD... I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded" (Isa 45:9,12). The "*LORD of hosts*" (Zech 1:3) describes the God of action. He is the commander of all powers, both material and spiritual. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. It is the Lord of hosts that spoke thrice in verse 3 (53 times in this book) for His people to repent from their sins and backsliding. God has the power to create and the power to destroy. Surely we His creatures must tremble at His wrath when we are not on the Lord's side.

We recall that the Indian Ocean undersea earthquake of December 26, 2004, has an epicentre off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. From that epicentre is triggered a series of devastating tsunamis along the coasts of most landmasses bordering the Indian Ocean, killing more than 225,000 people in eleven countries, and inundating coastal communities with waves of up to 30 meters (100 feet). It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in history. Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, and Thailand were hardest hit. With a magnitude of between 9.1 and 9.3, it is the second largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph. It triggered other earthquakes as far away as Alaska. It is a wake-up call. The Bible speaks clearly that before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, there will be earthquakes in diverse places. The warning sign intensifies and provides a constant reminder that His Second Coming is soon and He is returning as Judge. There is only one solution for men to escape the wrath of the Lord of hosts. It is in the ark of Jesus Christ. The Lord of hosts speaks to you today, *"Turn ye unto me...and I will turn unto you."*

THOUGHT: *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*

PRAYER: *"Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."*

MONDAY, JULY 6

ZECHARIAH 1:5

PSALM 78:1-8

*“For the gifts and calling of God
are without repentance.”*

SETTING OUR HEARTS ARIGHT

Keeping our hearts aright is a moment-by-moment battle. Zechariah admonished the children of Israel not to follow the bad examples of their fathers who turned not from their evil ways. God sent His prophets time and again to warn Israel to flee from idolatry and immorality. They despised these admonitions. The world today is filled with idolatry and immorality, ready for God’s judgment. Are our ears dull of hearing that we cannot hear? When we insist on going the way of sin, God will deal with us according to our sins.

Biblical history provides good lessons for us. We must rehearse the good heritage of godly virtues for our emulation. I came across an out-of-print book “Character Sketches for Boys and Girls” that teaches us cardinal Christian virtues. One of the biblical teachings is “Be right, then go ahead.” This saying is full of practical wisdom. If you are wrong, better not go ahead; if you are right, do not waste a moment in going ahead. Consider before you act. Having considered and made sure that you are on the right track, action is now a solemn duty.

The Bible provides for us the answer to all our spiritual and also physical needs. “It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe. Its doctrines are binding, its precepts binding, its histories are true!” (Author unknown) Have you truly consulted the Bible today? Is your quiet time a rush or a relish?

THOUGHT: Remind me of the wonderful work of salvation He has begun in my life, knowing that He also will perfect it.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to set my heart aright, and my spirit steadfast with You.

TUESDAY, JULY 7
ZECHARIAH 1:1-6
LUKE 1:13-17

*“Behold the Lamb of God,
which taketh away the sin of the world.”*

COME BACK TO THE LORD

Jesus is the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world. All who come in faith is thoroughly cleansed. John the Baptizer was raised to make ready a people for the Lord in His first coming. We are God’s herald to sound the message of repentance for the remission of sins before His Second Coming. Are we true to our Lord’s commission?

The spirit of God rested upon John as upon Zechariah, to point the people back to God. The older generation who had beheld the glory of the first Temple wept when they saw the new Temple. It was so lacking in the external glory of the former. Nevertheless it was not the externals that counted. What mattered was that they were fulfilling God’s will for their lives. Are you?

Re-consecrate your lives to the Lord once again with these words penned by Rev Timothy Tow (sung to a Korean tune). Gracious words beckoning us to repent where we have fallen.

*Oh come unto the Lord,
Oh come back to the Lord,
Our Lord is waiting for
Your return both night and day;
He is anxiously waiting for you
With His doors kept open wide,
As if He is waiting in the night,
For His lost child to come back
home.*

THOUGHT: No matter how hard hit, how beaten I may be, the Lord’s hands will comfort me greatly, they will touch and will heal me.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to forsake my sins and return to You.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

ZECHARIAH 1:6

HAGGAI 1:12-13

*I'm a spiritual hart
and not a camel!*

SEEKING SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

Zechariah prophesied from 520 to 518 B.C. spanning from Zechariah chapter 1 to chapter 8. Many years later, when apostasy set in again, he wrote chapter 9 to chapter 14. The Temple was completed in 516 B.C. after 4 years. One hundred or more years after that, the prophet Malachi brought God's final words of warning and promise before the inter-testament era of 400 years. Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi are also known as the restoration prophets. Do you know that the New Testament quotes and alludes to the Book of Zechariah 41 times! The Book of Zechariah is "the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic, and the most eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament" (International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia). It is a difficult yet most rewarding to study.

The Lord had predicted that Israel would fall, yet she would not be totally eradicated. When we sin against God, He sees and He knows. We cannot escape the eyes of God. While the Lord tarries, may we take the opportunity to repent and return to Him.

Spurgeon made a good observation concerning our spiritual need when he wrote commenting on Psalm 42:1 "As the hart panteth after the water brooks...". "A camel does not pant after water brooks, because it carries its own water within. But the hart does, because it has no inward resources. After being hunted on a hot day, it has no inward supplies; it is drained of its moisture. So are we. We do not carry a store of grace within of our own on which we can rely. We need to come again and again and again to the divine fountain and drink of the eternal spring. Hence it is because we have a new life, and that life is dependent on God, and has all its fresh springs in Him, therefore we pant and thirst after Him." (Edited)

The people did hearken to the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah for they "*did fear before the LORD*" (Hag 1:12). They arose and built.

THOUGHT: I need spiritual nourishment.

PRAYER: Feed me, Lord, with Your Living Bread!

THURSDAY, JULY 9
ZECHARIAH 1:7-11
MATTHEW 28:18-20

*“Lo, I am with you always,
even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

VISION 1: A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Here begins the first of a series of 8 night visions. They are like windows that let in light to an otherwise dark house. The returnees, tasked with the rebuilding of the second Temple were a discouraged lot. In their darkness, God had to show them some light to encourage them to arise and build. It is perhaps for this reason the night visions were given. Zechariah testified, *“I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white”* (Zech 1:8).

The interpreting angel explained to Zechariah that the man riding upon a red horse is the *“angel of the LORD”* (v 11). This is the pre-incarnate Christ, the second person of the Trinity, before He was manifested in the flesh, the great Head of the Church. The myrtle tree is prized for its fragrant leaves. Its leaves give the richest fragrant odour only when bruised or crushed. This is a picture of the persecuted returnees, a small remnant of nearly 50,000 returning to Jerusalem surrounded by massive, hostile enemies. Even the insignificant group of Samaritans in the north became a really potent force to resist the returnees in their rebuilding project. This vision is a symbolic picture of Christ in the midst of His children in all their afflictions. Notice the myrtle trees that were at the bottom of the valley signifying the lowly state of Israel. Christ standing among the myrtle tree signifies His presence with them in their distresses.

Remember Jesus said to His disciples these comforting words before His ascension in Matthew 28:20, *“Lo, I am with you always.”* Dearly beloved, are you in some kind of affliction and feel that you are at a low point in your life with problems so overwhelming? Remember this first vision. Jesus is with you! Fear not. Persevere on!

THOUGHT: Only Jesus, only Jesus, only He can satisfy, all my burdens are turned to blessings, when I know my Lord is nigh.

PRAYER: Lord, thank You that You are with me.

FRIDAY, JULY 10

ZECHARIAH 1:7-12

ISAIAH 43:2

*“The Divine presence of God
is a comfort to the saints.”*

VISION 1: HIS ABIDING PRESENCE

What a beautiful picture of the abiding presence of our Lord dwelling with His people even when we are at the bottom of our lives. It is a picture of great comfort. Remember in Pilgrim's Progress, Christian arrived at a fire-place in a house where he saw a man pouring water constantly on the fire but it did not extinguish? He was brought to the back of the fire-place in another room. There he saw a man pouring oil to keep the flickering fire aflame. The interpreter explained to Christian that the man pouring oil is Jesus Christ. He is the one that pours the oil of grace to keep the heart of faith aflame always even though Satan, the man in front of the fire-place keeps pouring water. Jesus is at the back of the fire-place, He may not be visible to us in our affliction, but He is there sustaining us by His grace! The angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees may not be fully visible yet there is no doubt that He is there.

Christ abides with us even in our sufferings. He will yet deliver us from our current impasse. It is far from the truth that God hears not the cry of His children. We observe that the angel of the Lord rides a red horse. Why red? It signifies bloodshed and calamity. Hear carefully the words of the angel of the Lord speaking to the Lord of hosts in verse 12, *“Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?”* The second person of the Godhead pleading with the first person, God the Father, to show mercy on His children! This is the role of Jesus as our great high priest at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 8:1). Jesus fulfilled that intercessory role in the Old Testament as the pre-incarnate Christ. Will not God show mercy when His children cry out to Him for mercy? He certainly will deliver!

THOUGHT: Great is Your faithfulness!

PRAYER: May You in Your mercy deliver me, dear Lord!

SATURDAY, JULY 11
ZECHARIAH 1:10-11
MATTHEW 10:29-31

“Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

VISION 1: GOD KNOWS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES (I)

“And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth” (Zech 1:10).

Zechariah saw that the other horses following the red horses were speckled and white, sent by the Lord to survey the earth, walking the length and breadth of it. Our Lord knows all things! We know that. Why does He then need to send His angels to survey the earth and report to Him the situation? The report is given in Zechariah 1:11 *“And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.”* The nations of the earth seemed to be in a state of peace when God’s children are suffering! Does Jesus not care? Oh yes, He cares. He wants His children to understand that He does know and He cares about their predicament. The sending of the angels to survey the earth affirms that God is aware and He cares. He is not silent to the cry of His dear children! When the house doth sigh and weep, and the world is drowned in sleep, yet my Lord does not sleep, He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Let us be encouraged by the comforting truth from the words of the hymn “Does Jesus Care?”

*O yes, He cares – I know He cares!
His heart is touched with my grief;
When the days are weary,
The long nights dreary,
I know my Saviour cares.*

THOUGHT: Jesus cares enough to be present with me.

PRAYER: Renew me, Father, in knowledge of Your loving care.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 12

ZECHARIAH 1:12

PSALM 13

*"I will never leave thee
nor forsake thee."*

VISION 1: GOD KNOWS OUR CIRCUMSTANCES (II)

God's children have to learn what it means to trust in the Lord's mercy. In Psalm 13, the psalmist sought His God because his current dire predicament has reached the point of desperation, he felt that he had been forgotten by His God. Perhaps it is because of relationship problems, or perhaps it is because of sickness that threatens our life or those of our loved ones. Perhaps it is due to loss of a loved one, or prolonged job loss. Do we feel we are abandoned by God? This is the psalmist's testimony in times of depression, the feeling is so real. Does God abandon His children? No! This is the lesson that God wants to teach His children. Psalm 13 is the prayer of the psalmist as he wrestled with His Lord to understand his predicament. He asked the Lord "*How long*" four times in Psalm 13:1-2. He seemed to have reached the limit of his endurance. Alas, men ought always to pray and not to faint. The transition from sorrow (v 1-2) to supplication (v 3-4) and then to succour (v 5-6) requires the exercise of patience and faith. The psalmist learned to encourage himself in the Lord (1 Sam 30:6) through his personal experience. This is what every child of God learns – to appropriate help from His Word through prayer.

The prophet Zechariah saw in verse 12 the heavenly scene of great comfort, Jesus (the angel of the LORD) interceding on behalf of Israel with the Father (LORD of hosts) to show mercy to Israel. May we know that Jesus, our great high priest is interceding for us unceasingly in heaven at the right hand of the Father. What a glorious picture of hope for every depressed soul that we are not alone in our affliction. Alone yet never lonely!

THOUGHT: Cast my burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain me.

PRAYER: Keep my sight straight, Almighty God. Let me see only You in my life. Make me aware of Your presence every day, and never let me turn my eyes from You. Be the vision of my life. Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 13

ZECHARIAH 1:13

JOHN 14:1, 27

“Let not your heart be troubled...”

VISION 1: WORDS OF COMFORT

“And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words” (Zech 1:13). God the Father is speaking here answering the interpreting angel, giving good words and comforting words. This should also exemplify us as ambassadors for Christ. We have a ministry of reconciliation entrusted to us. When we attend a vigil service, we are often lost for words to comfort the bereaved family. It is good to give them the Word of God.

For example, John 14:1, 27: *“The Lord Jesus Christ said, Let not your heart be troubled; Ye believe in God, believe also in Me. Peace I leave with you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* And also Psalm 23, the shepherd’s psalm.

Zechariah needed good and comforting words for his ministry. The angel’s message for Zechariah is that He has not forsaken them but is consistent in His care for them. He was angry with the nations that afflicted Israel. He will yet cause Jerusalem to prosper again (v 14-17).

We too need good and comforting words while we sojourn in this weary land. Certainly our security is not in the material things of life but in the gospel of life, for it is the power of God to uplift and to free every soul in bondage.

THOUGHT: Many are in need of words of kindness and love from me.

PRAYER: O Lord, bless my lips with praise and singing. Protect me from any unkindness I might inflict on another person. Help me to treat others as You would treat them. Amen.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

ZECHARIAH 1:14-16

ISAIAH 42:13-14

*“Then will the Lord be jealous
for His land, and pity His people.”*

VISION 1: GOD’S JEALOUSY

We often think that jealousy is a bad trait, something that is not a fruit of the spirit. When the Old Testament speaks of a jealous God, it is God’s way of expressing His love for His children. This is a declaration of God’s unfailing love for Israel. The intensity of that love and jealousy can be observed from the root verb in the Hebrew intensive Piel stem. It signifies the fierce determination of God to tolerate no rivalry whatsoever. The use of the phrase literally translated “I am jealous...with jealousy” provides the emphasis: “I am very jealous.”

God will not ever tolerate anything that will damage or distort that love relationship, based on the unilateral covenant relationship He made with Abraham (Gen 15:12-21). Anyone that undermines or distorts the relationship will face the wrath of God. Here, God is provoked to jealousy for His city, Jerusalem. This reaction results in His extending mercy to His people (Joel 2:18, Zech 8:2) – *“I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies”* (v 16). God is fully aware of the worldwide oppression of the Jews and He will soon arise to take vengeance on their foes.

God will undertake to make right the wrongs done to His people. Have you any grievances? Bring them to Jesus. He is able to help!

THOUGHT: God is jealous of sharing His glory with another.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to give all my heart to You.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

ZECHARIAH 1:16-17

2 KINGS 21:11-15

“The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.”

VISION 1: PROMISE OF FUTURE BLESSINGS

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.” (Zech 1:16-17)

What a marvelous picture of the restored city of Jerusalem. It shall be prosperous again. God will not only comfort but fulfil His promise to yet choose to favour Jerusalem again. How does it apply to us? The Church of God shall yet triumph over every obstacle and vanquish every foe. This is the result of the intercessory prayer of the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ, the Head of the Church, in verse 12.

The stretching of the line over the city had meant its destruction in 2 Kings 21:13. Israel had done wickedly to sin the sin of idolatry. When the iniquities of the Amorites were full, Israel was sent to destroy them. When Israel's iniquity was full, Babylon was sent to destroy them. Now, after 70 years of captivity (God's appointed period of chastisement), the returning remnant was given a new lease of life. Here, the line is the measuring line of the builders of the city.

The phrase *“be spread abroad”* is in the future tense in the plural from the Hebrew root verb meaning “to disperse,” “to scatter,” “to overflow,” describing abundant prosperity to come. We often equate prosperity with material blessings. It is beyond material blessings, it is peace and joy in the heart. What a glorious picture of hope for the discouraged and weak builders to pick up courage and to press on! Poor yet joyful!

THOUGHT: I am to seek true riches and true joy!

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to persevere in renewing my mind daily to conform to Your perfect image.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

ZECHARIAH 1:18-21

JAMES 5:16

*“The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much.”*

VISION 2: FOUR HORNS AND FOUR CARPENTERS

A horn is a symbol of power. The power of the horn is in its effectiveness as a defensive weapon. Horns are pointed bony structures on the heads of male sheep, goats, deer, cattle, oxen. They give the animal a regal look and provide such an impressive endowment that their imagery was widely employed to represent power and pride. Therefore, the idiom “to lift up the horn” is to be proud of conscious strength. “To have horns coming out of the hands” is to have power in one’s hands.

The number “*four*” alludes possibly to the four cardinal points of the compass that includes every possible direction. The enemies of God’s people come in all directions. Wherever the people of God turn, there is a power to oppose them. Such was the situation of the Jews then: with the Assyrian, Chaldean and Samaritan on the north, the Egyptian on the south, the Philistine on the west, and the Ammonite and Moabites on the east. They were encircled by foes. It is still the same for Israel today.

To counter the enemies of the Church, Rev Ting Li Mei, “the praying saint of China,” formed prayer bands. Each prayer band came together as a praying circle. His converts all over China made up these prayer bands. Their motto was “Trusting the Lord (we) get victory.” In Rev Ting’s own words, “we are surrounded by thousands and ten-thousands of angels.” This is the picture of the four carpenters that broke the four horns into pieces. For every enemy, there is an instrument that God raised to counteract it. Hence, although on all sides there were enemies to oppose the erection of the Temple and the completion of the city, God provided a neutralizing counteracting power adequate to destroy them all. What a tremendous boost of morale for God’s ailing children. All who endeavour to serve God will face the Adversary’s wrath. Pray unceasingly!

THOUGHT: The Church’s corporate prayer meeting is God’s appointed powerhouse to counteract all enemies of the Church.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to attend my church prayer meetings faithfully.

FRIDAY, JULY 17

ZECHARIAH 2:1-5

PSALM 126

*“He that goes forth and weeps,
bearing precious seed,
shall doubtless rejoice.”*

VISION 3: THE FUTURE GLORY OF JERUSALEM

This third vision is a continuation of the first in Zechariah 1:16-17. The measuring line signifies the blessings of God in the enlargement of Jerusalem. The stretching forth of a line refers to the work of rebuilding the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. The man with the measuring line in his hand is the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Christ. In the first vision, the pre-incarnate Christ was sitting on the red horse signifying His abiding presence with His children. Now Zechariah saw Him holding a measuring line in His hand, as the Architect of architects. The purpose is to measure Jerusalem. By way of application, with regard to the growth of the Church, Christ the Head is the Author and Definer of this enlargement.

The angel that talked with Zechariah is the interpreting angel (Zech 1:9). He was met by another angel who instructed the interpreting angel to “*run*” in order to describe the future glory of Jerusalem to the young man Zechariah. The urgency to uplift a downtrodden heart is the command to “*run*.” Do you know of someone in trouble amidst the economic crisis? This is the urgent message from the Lord to lend a practical helping hand of encouragement and hope.

This is a vision of the Millennial Kingdom when Christ will rule for a thousand years with peace on earth. The Prince of Peace (Isa 9:6) who is also called Lion of the tribe of Judah (Rev 5:5) will destroy all of Israel’s enemies to establish His undisputed global rule from Jerusalem. His saints will rule with Him. The presence of God will guard the city and be her walls. There will be no need for defense with Jesus’ rule, all will be at peace. Jerusalem will be a glorious picture of abundant prosperity and populace (Isa 49:19-20, Ezk 38:11). What an encouragement to those with feeble hands sowing the gospel seed. Sow in tears and reap in joy.

THOUGHT: With Jesus is present hope and future glory.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for revealing the glorious future that gives us strength to work hard for You today.

SATURDAY, JULY 18

ZECHARIAH 2:6-9

PSALM 17:8

*“He who gives us teeth
will give us bread.”*

THE APPLE OF HIS EYE

*“For thus saith the LORD of hosts;
After the glory hath he sent me unto
the nations which spoiled you: for
he that toucheth you toucheth the
apple of his eye.” (Zech 2:8)*

God loves Israel with an everlasting love. The pupil or apple of the eye is very precious. This expression is used to describe a person who is very dear to God (Ps 17:8; Zech 2:8).

A wayward child is chastised by a loving father. This is always done to correct sin that is heinous in the sight of God. God made a way back for Israel after 70 years of captivity. The human yoke was lifted. The oppression will not go on forever without relief as Israel cried out in utter despair. It is out of love that the rod is used. Israel is precious to God and that is why they have to be pruned and trimmed so that the next growth will be even greater.

When we see a beautiful garden in an estate, we admire its beauty and praise God for His wonderful creation. Blooming flowers and sprouting shoots budding are the result of the careful work of the gardener. Observe that the gardener has to exercise consistent care to water the plants daily, adding fertilizers and pruning, choosing the type of plants most suited to give the overall beauty in the garden. The weeds that harm the plants will be removed by the gardener with great passion. The word “*touch*” in this context means “to harm.” God will not allow His children to be bullied without protecting them like the pupil of His own eye. Shaking the hand (v 9) is an expression of His power to vindicate. God Himself undertakes to protect His precious and vulnerable children. The Lord uses such an intimate term of endearment to emphasize His great love for His people.

THOUGHT: God is a God of promise. He keeps His Word to protect His children, even when that seems impossible.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You for this great privilege to be Your child under Your protection.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 19

ZECHARIAH 2:10-13

PSALM 100

*Joy is to behold
God in everything.*

SING AND REJOICE

“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.” (Zech 2:10)

Looking on the bright side is the thrust of these verses. A single bitter word may disquiet an entire family for a whole day. One surly glance casts a gloom over the whole family, while a smile, like a gleam of sunshine, may light up the darkest and weariest hours. Like unexpected flowers, which spring up along our path, full of freshness, fragrance and beauty, do kind words and gentle acts and sweet dispositions make glad the home where peace and blessing dwell. The men who disturb and distress the world are usually not those born and nurtured amid the blessed influences of Christian homes, but rather those whose early life may have been a scene of trouble and vexation, who started wrong and whose course is one of trouble and disaster.

The command to Israel to sing and rejoice is most needful amidst weariness and toil. God blesses the cheerful person. Over and above every other social trait stands cheerfulness. Man recognizes the cheerful influence in a woman more quickly than dazzling genius or enslaving beauty. The overarching cause for rejoicing, Zechariah observed from the vision, is God's presence indicating His care and love. This is the divine recipe of sunshine in one's life no matter what the outward circumstance may be. This is the abundant life that Jesus promised to all His disciples.

Dear friends, the harder the task, the more need of singing. A hopeful spirit will discern the silver lining in the darkest cloud, for in all our planning and doing, with all its attendant discouragements, shines the light of Divine promise and help. God will give the increase! Press to the mark!

THOUGHT: “I have no understanding of a long-face Christian. If God is anything, He must be joy.”

PRAYER: O Lord, let joy be the echo of Your life within me.

MONDAY, JULY 20

ZECHARIAH 3:1-2

MATTHEW 17:14-21

*“Of two evils, pass up the first,
and turn down the other.”*

VISION 4: POWER OVER THE DEMONIC WORLD

“And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 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?” (Zech 3:1-2)

You will notice that the visions are all connected by the conjunction “and” to paint a beautiful motion picture of a most loving God who looks not only at the big picture but also the details. From a big picture, the vision now zooms in on the details.

As high priest, Joshua represented Israel before God. What distinguished him from all other men was his unique privilege to enter the Holy of Holies once a year to offer sacrifice on the Day of Atonement. The Temple was under construction. The day is coming that the Temple rites will be performed. Even the high priest himself needed to be cleansed. Israel as a nation needed to be cleansed from their unrighteousness. Zechariah saw Satan opposing Joshua the high priest accusing him before the angel of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ. Did he succeed? No! Our Lord defending Joshua rebuked Satan. Jerusalem is God’s chosen city for the habitation of His chosen people, Israel. Satan resists the will of God to rebuild Jerusalem in an effort to thwart God’s plan. Will he succeed? Certainly not!

The returning remnant to Jerusalem, after 70 years in Babylon, has suffered much and is still suffering. They are like a piece of half burnt wood snatched out of a fire. A little longer, it would be too late to salvage any part of it. Our Lord Jesus with righteous anger defended Israel against the onslaught of Satan to bring Israel down. Jesus has power over the demonic world, Satan being the chief. What tremendous comfort to know that we can call on Jesus who is able to defend us against the all evil spiritual forces of this world.

THOUGHT: *“And Jesus rebuked the devil; he departed out of him.”*

PRAYER: May I always come to You, Lord Jesus, for You are God.

TUESDAY, JULY 21

ZECHARIAH 3:3-5

EPHESIANS 4:22-24

*“ye put on the new man, which after
God is created in righteousness and
true holiness.”*

VISION 4: FORGIVENESS & RECONSECRATION

There was a black spot on one of the walls of the room Martin Luther (the 16th century reformer) occupied during his imprisonment. When suffering from great depression, he declared on 14th May 1521: “I do see myself insensible and hardened, a slave to sloth, rarely, alas! praying – unable to utter a groan for the Church, while my untamed flesh burns with devouring flame.” One night, during his mournful solitude, the great reformer dreamt that Satan appeared to him with a long scroll, in which were carefully written the many sins and transgressions of which he was guilty from his birth, and which the evil one proceeded to read out, mocking that such a sinner as he should ever think of being called to do service for God, or even of escaping himself from hell. As the long list was being read out, Luther’s terrors grew, and his agonies of soul increased. At last, however, rousing himself, he jumped up and exclaimed: “It is all true, Satan, and many more sins which I have committed in my life which are known to God only; but write at the bottom of your list, *“The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sins”* and grasping the inkstand on his table he threw it at the devil, who soon fled, the memorial of it being left in the ink-splash on the wall.

The mystery of God’s salvation plan is revealed here for us. Joshua the high priest stood before our Lord in filthy garments signifying the filthiness of sin that plagued the nation of Israel. It is interesting that in verse 2 we see that it was our Lord Jesus that chose Jerusalem as His capital for all eternity and Israel, His people. Do they deserve it? No! They were thoroughly guilty breaking the commandments over and over again. Yet for the promise He had made to Abraham, He will enable Israel again to inherit the land. The sin-stricken conscience is forgiven, depicted by a change of garment, a time of re-consecration! The full priestly gear was placed on him - a clean garment and a pure, clean headwear (mitre). What a moment of joy!

THOUGHT: He that demands mercy, and show none, ruins the bridge over which he himself is to pass. (Thomas Adams, 1612-1653)

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul!

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

ZECHARIAH 3:6-7

2 TIMOTHY 2:22-26

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.”

VISION 4: DUTY AND HONOUR

“And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.”
(Zech 3:6-7)

Jesus warned Joshua to live a life of obedience, doing his sacred duty as the representative of Israel before God, as a judge and a keeper of God’s house. He will be rewarded by God when he faithfully and diligently do the duties entrusted to him.

Apostle Paul gave young Timothy good counsel of exemplary conduct when he said, *“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”* (2 Tim 2:22).

AW Tozer made this interesting observation about Christian conduct, “Christians have fallen into the habit of accepting the noisiest and most notorious among them as the best and the greatest. They too have learned to equate popularity with excellence, and in open defiance of the Sermon on the Mount they have given their approval, not to the meek, but to the self-assertive; not to the pure in heart who see God, but to the publicity hunter who seeks headlines.”

Can we say that we become Christians by our strength? Certainly not! God first put His love upon us to honour us as cleansed vessels. Therefore, it is our duty to endeavour in the paths of holiness that we may be fit vessels for the master’s use.

THOUGHT: Holiness is not freedom from temptation, but power to overcome temptation.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be holy as You are holy.

THURSDAY, JULY 23

ZECHARIAH 3:8

MARK 10:45, LUKE 1:78

*“The Son of man came not
to be ministered unto,
but to minister.”*

VISION 4: MY SERVANT THE BRANCH

God the Father declared His plan for the salvation of mankind introducing His servant – the Branch. The “*Branch*” “*tsemak*” is a special Hebrew expression describing the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (Isa 4:2, 11:1; Jer 23:5-7, 33:15; Zech 6:12). A branch is an offshoot, sprouting from a tree. Jesus is an extension program of the Triune God into this earth. He is the same nature representing the Father perfectly (Heb 1:3). Luke describes beautifully for us, “*Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us*” (Lk 1:78). This is God’s solution for the cleansing of Israel’s sins and our sins.

John the Baptizer proclaimed as he saw Jesus coming to him in John 1:29 “*...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” Jesus Himself testified, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). He is the exact representation of the Father in John 14:7, “*If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*”

The “*fellows*” sitting with Joshua are the fellow priests serving with Joshua the high priest in the Temple, witnessing these good and comforting words proclaimed. We too are witnessing the unfolding drama of God’s redemption plan. How exciting as we look back with hindsight at the first advent of Christ. He came not as a King but as a Servant to save a people that despised Him. What glorious condescension!

Dear friends, may we come to Jesus for He can understand our feelings, grieves and sorrows of life because He was made a servant, suffering humiliation and persecution to save the very ones who plotted to kill Him, “*to give His life a ransom for many.*” As many as believed in Him, O rebels, let us come with grateful acknowledgement for all He has done for you and me.

THOUGHT: They serve God well, who serve His creatures.

PRAYER: Give me a servant’s heart, dear Lord.

FRIDAY, JULY 24

ZECHARIAH 3:9

REVELATION 5:6

*Christ has turned all
our sunsets into dawns.*

VISION 4: BEHOLD, THE STONE WITH SEVEN EYES

This Branch is also called the stone and upon the stone shall be seven eyes. Revelation 5:6 interprets for us the meaning of the seven eyes, “*And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*” It speaks of the knowledge and omniscience of God beholding those that did the good and the evil. His eyes were watching over the building efforts. How is this related to removing the iniquity of that land in one day?

Dearly beloved, it is going to take the Branch and the stone and the eyes to solve this infinite problem, Israel’s sin! This will be a key theme in the later chapters of the book of Zechariah. How is the iniquity of Israel going to be dealt with? If we look ahead to Zechariah 13:1, this is the solution, “*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.*” This is the blood of Christ shed once for all on the cross. Remember the hymn we sing when we have the Lord’s Supper: “There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.” It was the day our Saviour bled and died that the Father removed the iniquity of the land.

When I was young, I used to go with my uncle and his family to Pulau Ubin staying in a chalet by the sea. We children would go swimming. Not far from shore is this piece of solid rock that stood steadfast, defying the onslaughts of the waves and tempests. In the cleft of that rock you can take shelter; and in its calm summit you could even build your house. The solid rock broke the waves that came and, as a child, I marvelled at the strength of the rock. May we be reminded that Jesus is that Rock of Ages, sustaining and keeping us by His unfailing grace. He knows our every sorrow and is able to succour us!

THOUGHT: Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

PRAYER: Let my tears not blind me that I cannot see Your mercies.

SATURDAY, JULY 25

ZECHARIAH 3:9-10

EXODUS 19:5-6

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

VISION 4: THE FOUNDATION STONE

The encouragement to Israel is that God is watching intently and will see them through to completion of the Temple building project. This is seen in the picture of the stone which is the basic material for building and the seven eyes upon the stone signifying God’s complete presence with them. The theme for this vision is the cleansing of Israel’s sins. The Temple is the place where the high priest will make atonement for the sins of Israel. The inscription on this foundation stone was given by God Himself, *“I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”*

The removal of the guilt of sin (the land will experience the forgiveness of sin in one day) was first alluded to when Joshua was cleansed with the removal of his filthy garments (v 4). The word *“filthy”* literally means *“befouled with excrement.”* This is a significant day in the history of Israel for who can remove the defilement of sins but God. And the word *“iniquity”* means *“to bend”* or *“to twist”* suggesting a perversion or twisting aside of what is right. God’s imputed righteousness is signified by the change of Joshua’s garment. Israel is to fulfil God’s purpose for them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6).

In the Far Eastern Bible College (Singapore), there is a foundation stone that was laid on 28th April 1962. It is located just outside the FEBC Bookroom. The burden of the founding principal to fulfil the Pauline mandate *“And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also”* (2 Tim 2:2) led to the college’s humble beginning. Does God have a good plan for FEBC? Yes, as long as Jesus remains the foundation stone of all her endeavours. May the Lord help FEBC to remain faithful to her calling in the training of men and women to preach the end-time gospel message to the ends of this earth!

THOUGHT: Jesus is the theme of every worthy endeavour.

PRAYER: May You prosper Your college, O Lord.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 26

ZECHARIAH 3:10

MICAH 4:1-4, 1 KINGS 4:25

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

VISION 4: SITTING UNDER THE VINE AND FIG TREE

Sitting under one's vine and fig tree is a proverbial description of prosperity and contentment. Every man is at peace with his neighbour. This is a picture of the future millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. He will rule from Jerusalem for 1000 years. There shall be no more wars, peace will prevail among the nations. Why does the prophesy look so far ahead in time?

In our present world, plagued with economic turmoil, unemployment and hunger, this futuristic vision brings hope and comfort of a better tomorrow to God's people now as it did to the builders of the temple in Zechariah's time.

This is a blessed doctrine that our fathers of the Bible-Presbyterian movement held to since its founding in 1937. This conviction of a literal millennium, a coming 1000-year rule of Christ on earth, is most biblical. The Reformed covenantal church after the tradition of Calvin does not teach this precious truth perhaps because the nation Israel was non-existent in the 16th century. We speak from hindsight having lived in an era that witnessed the resurrection of modern Israel on 14th May 1948. I remember watching a series on the history of Israel from ancient to modern day by "Friends of Israel" at the Sunset Gospel Hour. My heart was strangely warmed with a kindred spirit with the Jews. My prayer is that Israel will one day acknowledge their Messiah – Jesus who 2000 years ago at Calvary won the victory over sin and death is indeed the Messiah that has come! May the Lord remove the blindness and grant to us spiritual sight to behold this wonderful 4th vision that God gave to Zechariah for us.

THOUGHT: As I turn my eyes upon Jesus, the problems of this earth will truly grow strangely dim.

PRAYER: Prepare our hearts, Lord, to be princes and princesses in our Lord's kingdom on earth. May that day come quickly!

MONDAY, JULY 27

ZECHARIAH 4:1-6

COLOSSIANS 1:9-14

*“Strengthened with all might,
unto all patience and
longsuffering with joyfulness.”*

VISION 5: THE CANDLESTICK AND TWO OLIVE TREES

Do we serve God by doing much without praying? I know that it is shamefully true of me oftentimes. But in the apostle Paul, we find a man who is not only astonishingly active, serving his Lord all over the Gentile world, but also a contemplative and real model of intercessory prayer. We can see how he combined these two important aspects of his spiritual journey. We can see through Scriptures how this man remembered in prayer so many people, even praying in depth for believers he had never met. I am challenged from the example of this passionate, prayerful Christian leader.

This 5th vision of Zechariah was meant to help the builders to be labourers together with God and not rely on their own strength. Zechariah was asleep when he was awakened by the interpreting angel. The angel was nudging him to rehearse what he saw. Zechariah saw a candle-stick of gold with a bowl on the top, having seven lamps, and each lamp furnished with seven feeding tubes, making forty-nine channels in all, and two olive trees standing beside the candlestick. From the two crowded branches the clustering olives were pouring a constant supply of golden-colored oil into tubes that led into the bowl. This makes the lamps self-sustaining.

The prophet inquired about the meaning of this vision, and after some delay, was told that it conveyed the truth that in carrying on the work of rebuilding the Temple, it was not by human power, but by the strength of God. The delay heightened the curiosity of the inquirer.

This is a picture of the source of strength for Christian service: *“not by might nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts”* (v 6).

THOUGHT: I must walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to rely on You this day to fulfil Your will for my life.

TUESDAY, JULY 28
ZECHARIAH 4:1-14
PHILIPPIANS 2:16

*“Holding forth the word of life;
that I may rejoice in the day of Christ.”*

**NOT BY MIGHT NOR BY
POWER BUT BY MY SPIRIT**

Zechariah saw a special candlestick, which the Jews call the Menorah. It is of solid gold and very precious. The candlestick had seven branches. This 5th vision signifies the completion of the Temple. The Manarah is a significant furnishing in the tabernacle and temple. It is to shine forth as light and witness to the world of the living and true God. Israel is to be the light of the world by their worship of Him, reflecting God's light, just like the Church today.

Every church is symbolized by a lamp into which God puts the light which is to be reflected and spread abroad. Holding forth the word of life is the sacred mandate of every local church. The Holy Spirit is the power that energizes the church in her efforts of missions and evangelism.

The candlestick is lit by the oil supplied by the two olive trees, the lifeline to keep the light burning. It is to give constant light. The olive tree takes a long time to mature but will become very profitable. It symbolizes a provision of continuous supply. Olive oil is thus a beautiful emblem of the rich and ever fresh presence and grace of the Spirit. The two olive trees describe the two leaders Joshua and Zerubbabel (v 14) in which the Holy Spirit abides and energizes for every God-honouring endeavour. Through them, God equipped His people to complete the rebuilding, despite shortages.

May we be a fit temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, shining for our Lord.

THOUGHT: The fresh graces of the Spirit will shine forth unhindered.

PRAYER: Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but I will remember the name of the Lord my God.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

ZECHARIAH 4:7-10

ACTS 1:8

“hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

VISION 5: WHO ART THOU, O GREAT MOUNTAIN?

The question in verse 7 is rhetorical, filled with irony. The mountain of life, any big obstacle that threatens to undo us, is no match for the Holy Spirit that fills and leads and guides us. With God's Spirit in us, no obstacle is too great. The people's lethargy and weakness would soon give way to the Holy Spirit, and the mountain would become level ground. The last stone called the capstone is placed by Zerubbabel on the completed Temple to shoutings and crying of jubilation, *“Grace, grace.”* The fundamental application of the word grace is “an unmerited favour or regard in God's sight.” They were not rejoicing for their own abilities or national might that brought the Temple to its completion, but the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. This is the same spiritual power that filled the frightened disciples to become bold preachers of God's Word at Pentecost (Acts 2).

Zechariah saw in the vision Zerubbabel holding the plumbline for the labourers as they set the final stone in place, squaring it with the rest of the structure. The people who saw the pitiful foundation being laid were the same ones who rejoiced when at last the final stone crowned the second temple. The seven eyes on the stone seen earlier in Zechariah 3:9 were the watchful eyes of God that presided over the building efforts to its completion. Ezra 6:13-15 describes the completion of the Temple.

The advancement of God's kingdom will not be hindered but will receive His watchful care until His Kingdom is established. This is the lesson for us today. Believers responding to God's call in any area of service can take comfort in this vision of encouragement. The Holy Spirit works in tandem with His good and comforting words which God gives encouraging them to press on till victory.

THOUGHT: They travel lightly whom God's grace carries.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be dependent on You today, and every day.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

ZECHARIAH 4:7-10

PSALM 43:1-5

*“Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted within
me?”*

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS (1)

“And You Visited Me” is a book that contains testimonies of God’s blessings on the Prison Fellowship organized by Louise Purvis.

This ministry is well described by J.D. Miller (1904) when he wrote, “Christ is building His Kingdom with Earth’s broken things. Men want only the strong, the successful, the victorious, the “unbroken,” in building their kingdom: but God is the God of the unsuccessful, of those who have failed. Heaven is filling with earth’s broken lives, and there is no *bruised reed* that Christ cannot take and restore to glorious blessedness and beauty. He can take the life crushed by pain and sorrow and make it into a harp whose music shall be all praise. He can lift earth’s saddest failure up to Heaven’s glory.”

An inmate Alan Fraser testifies, “On a November night in 1978 I made the biggest mistake of my life. I was out ‘on the town’ and drinking quite heavily, as usual. Then I ran out of money. But it didn’t matter because I knew how to get more – and I didn’t care how I got it. Walking down a dark street I saw someone coming towards me. On the spot I decided I was going to take his money. I was carrying a knife so I set upon the man and stabbed him severely. There was so much hatred in my heart for everybody that I really didn’t care what happened to me. But the laugh was on me – the guy didn’t have any money. The only thing he was carrying was a Bible – and he offered it to me. I threw it back at him in disgust. Later that night I was arrested and the next day charged with ‘possession of an offensive weapon’ and ‘attempted murder.’ I was sentenced to eight years imprisonment. In the courtroom, Kenneth spoke out. ‘I’m sorry you’ve got such a long sentence,’ he said. ‘I’ll pray for you.’ I started my sentence in Aberdeen and later transferred to Perth for three years. Later on I was moved to Dungavel prison. And this was where I began to recognize that God had an interest in my life.”

THOUGHT: God never puts anyone in a place too small to grow in.

PRAYER: Lord, I realize that afflictions are but the shadow of Your wings.

FRIDAY, JULY 31

ZECHARIAH 4:7-14

PSALM 42:1-11

“hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS (2)

Alan Fraser continues his testimony, “I started to go to the meetings, but I was often quite disruptive. Sometimes I said terrible things to the Fellowship leaders, but in the end I realize that they loved me anyway. I couldn’t understand it – I had never known or been shown that kind of love before. I went back to the dormitory and felt deeply troubled within myself.

One Friday evening I told Pat (a leader of the Fellowship) everything that had happened on that November night back in 1978. It didn’t change the Christian love that showed in her face. The only thing I can remember her saying was: ‘You know enough, Alan.’ I knew what she meant.

I went back to the dormitory but I never slept a wink that night. The next day I went down to the chapel, still deeply troubled within myself. I couldn’t understand why I suddenly felt so dirty. ‘Oh God, help me,’ I whispered. ‘Make me clean.’ And He did! Deep inside I felt an instant sense of release – release from the past; release from guilt; release from my own thoughts about myself. As I sat there I had a wonderful feeling of actually knowing Jesus and experiencing a relationship with Him. There was no doubt in my mind that Jesus had saved me and I knew that He is still alive. Tears just poured down my face and I felt no fear or anxiety at all. Next day I saw the mate who had told me about the Fellowship group. ‘I’ve become a Christian!’ I said excitedly. ‘Jesus has forgiven me! And He’ll forgive you too...’

Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel, the governor, were the leaders of the building project. They were entrusted with the task of rebuilding the spiritual life of Israel. It began with the completion of the Temple where worship was to be restored.

THOUGHT: *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”*

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for this new life in Christ.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 1

ZECHARIAH 5:1-4

ACTS 10:34-43

*“and be sure your
sin will find you out.”*

VISION 6: A FLYING ROLL

Zechariah saw a flying roll or scroll (*megillah*) that is more than 30 feet in length and 15 feet in breadth, rushing through the air. A cubit is defined as the length of a man's arm from the elbow to the extremity of the middle finger. The verb “*flying*” is a participle that denotes a continuous action of “floating.” The scroll though inanimate is showing itself “alive.” It was written on both sides with judgments (curses) for every one that stole and everyone that swore falsely by God's name. It pursued the culprit in the comforts of his home, punishment was exacted upon that house. Remember the warning by Haggai in Haggai 1:4 “*Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*” The warning is also in Zechariah 1:3 to repent from their self-indulgence. This is a solemn picture of judgment upon God's people who transgress His laws. This is a picture of God's wrath pursuing the unrepentant of God's children. God does not respect persons in judgment, there is no escape. Every one who transgresses will be punished.

The Word of God “*is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Heb 4:12). But when we refuse to acknowledge our iniquity and persist in our sins, this vision tells us there will certainly come a time of reckoning and it comes suddenly! Sometimes we distinguish between big and small sins! “I am late for work by just 15 minutes, it is no big deal!” Dear friends, it is not all right. God knows that we are cheating though our employer may not know. Can we get away with impunity for the sins that we have committed? We cannot! It is a reference to God's people, who have transgressed His law, receiving their just reward. May we examine our hearts this day truthfully.

THOUGHT: Have I confessed my sins in contrition?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to judge myself.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 2

ZECHARIAH 5:1-4

PROVERBS 11:1

*"A false balance is
abomination to the Lord."*

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY (1)

"An honest man is the noblest work of God" so says Alexander Pope. "Honesty is the best policy" so says Benjamin Franklin. "If a man really thinks that there is no distinction between virtue and vice, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons" says Ben Johnson. "Make yourself an honest man, and then you may be sure there is one less rascal in the world" says Thomas Carlyle.

Proverbs 11:1 offers the hearer two contrasting thoughts. The first part describes what is wrong and the second, the correct. The reference to the action is whether it pleases the Lord. Using deceit to gain is not good in the eyes of the Lord. Although no man may see, God sees. This proverb reminds us that God hates deceit.

"A gentleman jumping from a bus in the city of New York, dropped his pocket-book, and had gone some distance before he discovered his loss; then hastily returning, inquired of every passenger whom he met, if a pocket-book had been seen. Finally, meeting a little girl ten years old, to whom he made the same inquiry, she asked: 'What kind of a pocket-book?' 'Is this it?' 'Yes, that is mine.' He opened the book, counted the notes, and examined the papers. 'They are all right,' said he; 'Had they fallen into other hands, I might never have seen them again. Take, then, my little girl, this note of a thousand dollars, as a reward for your honesty, and a lesson to me to be more careful in future.' 'No', said the girl, 'I cannot take it. I have been taught at Sunday school not to keep what is not mine, and my parents would not be pleased if I took the note home; they might suppose I had stolen it.' 'Well, then, my girl, show me where your parents live.' The girl took him to a humble place in an obscure street, rude but cleanly. He informed the parents of the case. They told him their child had acted correctly." (Read the rest of the story in tomorrow's reading.)

THOUGHT: Honesty is a fine jewel, but much out of fashion.

PRAYER: Grant to me, Lord, the passion of being truthful.

MONDAY, AUGUST 3

ZECHARIAH 5:1-4

NEHEMIAH 5:1-13

“but a just weight is his delight.”

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY (2)

The girl’s family was poor, it was true, but their pastor had always told them not to set their hearts on rich gifts. The gentlemen told them they must take it, and he was convinced they would make a good use of it, from the principle they had professed. The pious parents then blessed their benefactor. They paid their debts, which had disturbed their peace, and the benevolent giver furnished the husband and father employment in his occupation as a carpenter, enabling him to rear an industrious family in comparative happiness. This little girl became the wife of a respectable tradesman of New York, and had reason to rejoice that she was taught aright in early life and practiced what she learned.

He who says there is no such thing as an honest man, you may be sure, is himself a false deceitful fellow. Cicero believed that nothing is useful that is not honest when he said, ‘He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely; but he that perverteth his ways shall be known.’ Another worthy advice from a godly man, ‘In all your dealings with your neighbour treat him generously – *‘good measure, pressed down and running over’* – and you will not lose by it at the end.”

The years in captivity had caused Israel to forsake God’s laws. The basic trait of integrity was sold for filthy lucre. The Jews in Jerusalem were slack in their giving towards the support of the Temple. The Levites and the singers had to work in the fields. Although Nehemiah was not a leader of the Temple, he was courageous as a layman to rebuke the Jews confronting them with their sin of withholding their tithes when he recorded “*Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place*” (Neh 13:11).

THOUGHT: Honesty is praised, but left to shiver?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, give me courage to be honest.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

ZECHARIAH 5:5-8

MICAH 6:10-15

“The integrity of the upright shall guide them.”

VISION 7: AN EPHAH (1)

An ephah was a measuring basket used for dry measure by the Jews. The ephah equaled three-fifths of a bushel or in metric measure, twenty-two litres. The ephah was a measure used often when preparing sacrificial offerings or food. Israel was to keep honest measures as a part of her righteousness. Micah observed her rebellious and unrighteous practices. Israel had shortened her ephah (Mic 6:10). The business practices of God’s people were to be based on true weights and measures in the marketplace. Is this your practice?

A young man had volunteered, and was expecting daily to be conscripted. One day his mother gave him an unpaid bill together with some money, and asked him to pay it. When he returned home at night, she said: “Did you pay that bill?” “I really don’t remember, mother; you know I’ve had so many things on my mind.” “But you said you did.” “Well,” he answered, “If I said I did, I did.”

He went away, and his mother took the bill herself to the shop. The young man had been in town all his life, and what opinion was held of him this will show. “I am quite sure,” she said, “that my son paid this some days ago. He has been busy since, and has quite forgotten about it; but he told me that he had, and says if he said then that he had, he is quite sure he did.” “Well,” said the man, “I forgot about it; but if he ever said he did, he did.” Was that not a grand character to have? His word was trusted!

Honesty is the best policy. But no man can be upright amid the various temptations of life unless he is honest for righteousness’ sake for it pleases his Lord. Dear friends, in the long run, character is better than capital.

THOUGHT: Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to build an honest character that glorifies Your Name.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

ZECHARIAH 5:5-8

PROVERBS 11:3

*“but the perverseness of transgressors
shall destroy them.”*

VISION 7: AN EPHAH (2)

A study showed that many American merchants, whose revenues outrank those of princes, owe their colossal fortunes principally to a character for integrity and ability. Integrity has been their guide. When you lay the foundations of character broad and deep, build them on a rock, and not on sand, the rains may then descend, the floods rise and the winds blow; but your house will stand. But establish a character for loose dealings, and lo! Some great tempest will sweep it away. Now consider the price that man has paid for his success. His advertisements are all deceptive; his cheap prices made possible by inferior products. Sow that wicked man's seed, and you will reap that wicked man's punishment. Cheat, lie, be unscrupulous in your assertions – let it not be named among Christians. Yours is a clear conscience, a pure mind, rectitude within and without. Do not envy the cheat and the wicked with their ill-gotten fortunes. He has paid his price; you do not choose to pay it.

The United States of America is the only nation in modern history founded by men who firmly believed God was supreme, both in government and in the lives of men. She has her beginning in the hearts of men and women who had been willing to suffer, lose all they had, and even leave the lands of their birth for the cause of the Gospel. God had greatly blessed America since 1776 and by 1940 it has become one of the world's most prosperous nations. But the God who had so greatly blessed the land was becoming less and less a part of that country's life. Daniel Webster, one of early America's great statesman-orators, had warned the nation against turning from God. He said, “If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity.”

What about my country and my business?

THOUGHT: Honesty is looking at painful truths in the face.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to deal a truthful measure in my business.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

ZECHARIAH 5:5-8

JAMES 5:1-7

*“Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth,
and been wanton.”*

VISION 7: WOMAN SITTING AMIDST THE EPHAH

The interpreting angel speaks to Zechariah, commanding him to lift up his eyes and see. The “*ephah*” that goes forth through all the earth represents business transactions, global commercialism. Zechariah saw a woman in the midst of the basket. There was a “*talent of lead*” that was lifted up. The word “*talent*” means “a circle” or “something round” (2 Sam 12:30). It was a unit weight usually in silver or gold. Here it means a round weight, serving as a cover to a bushel basket. The talent was the largest measure of weight and it was made of lead, the most common heavy metal which is employed in all commercial transactions for weighing out money. The prophet saw a talent of lead that is lifted up from its position as a cover on the ephah (v 8).

He beheld a most unexpected sight - one woman sitting comfortably in the middle of the ephah. The word “*sit*” has the idea of sitting quietly, contentedly, and remaining in a relaxed position, or “dwelling” comfortably in a place. The woman was apparently enjoying the luxury and wealth of commercialism. She evidently flourished in the center of godless commercialism and mammon-worship. Her sitting or dwelling in the midst of the ephah implied the woman’s intimate contact with worldly wealth and commerce, by which she was supported and in which she delighted. “*This is their resemblance throughout all the earth*” (v 6) speaks of the multiplying of this false measure everywhere. Is this not a picture of the godless rich men of the earth today? This woman is defined as “*wickedness*” (v 8). This is the word for “lawlessness,” there is no fear of God in their heart. This is the sad picture so precisely painted by James of the last days before the coming of the Lord.

THOUGHT: God has given us commandments and rules as guidelines for living a victorious Christian life.

PRAYER: Lord, You see into my very soul. Please help me to be honest with You. Let my every wicked thought be removed. Cleanse my heart, so that I can turn from the things that are an abomination in Your sight.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7

ZECHARIAH 5:5-8

REVELATION 18

*“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen,
and is become the habitation of devils.”*

VISION 7: ECONOMIC BABYLON (1)

The godless commercialism, the inordinate love of gain is seen by Apostle John in Revelation 18. The Satanic world system will make way for the establishment of Christ’s millennial kingdom. The time of judgment is nigh.

“I have been around for a while,” said Paul Volcker, 81, who was chairman of the U.S. central bank between 1979 and 1987. “I’ve seen a lot crises, but I’ve never seen anything quite like this. I think we almost inevitably face a considerable recession.” Volcker was speaking at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy on 14th October 2008. The U.S. has announced a series of measures to mitigate the effects of a credit crisis that has spread globally and sparked the biggest stock sell-off since 1933. The crisis that began in the U.S. housing market has become a global problem that requires a global solution, Volcker said. It underlines “disturbing and unsustainable” trends in the global economy, especially in America, he said. The U.S. was spending more than it was capable of producing and, as a result, has a very large current account deficit with other countries - China in particular. Volcker said the current crisis was brought about in part by financial engineering, in which credit instruments were “sliced and diced” into complex derivatives and sold to so-called sophisticated investors who often did not understand them. Even the bankers selling the products did not have the needed expertise to analyze the risk.

This unrestrained selling of defective products to others is most heinous and unscrupulous. In the name of making money, anything goes. May Christians not be sucked into this system of greed and such dishonest transactions.

THOUGHT: Only the Holy Spirit can restrain the sins of the spirit.

PRAYER: Lord, may You be merciful to protect Your children.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 8

ZECHARIAH 5:8-11

REVELATION 18, ACTS 1:6

*“Lord, wilt thou at this time restore
again the kingdom to Israel?”*

VISION 7: ECONOMIC BABYLON (2)

The current economic meltdown is the result of not applying the principle of integrity in business dealings. An ordinary American can buy a house for US\$1M and be given a loan of US\$1.2M. He spends the US\$200k. If interest is added, the loan amount can balloon to US\$1.6M. The assumption made by the lenders is that the value of the house will appreciate. When this did not happen, such debts were then restructured and sold to investors around the world. This is sheer wickedness, outright dishonesty. Singaporeans bought in to US\$500M of the collapsed Lehman Brothers.

Lehman Brothers was the fourth-largest investment bank in the United States. It was considered one of Wall Street's biggest dealers in fixed-interest trading and was heavily invested in securities linked to the US sub-prime mortgage market. In its June to August 2007 period, the bank said it would make write downs of \$700m as it adjusted the value of its investments in residential mortgages and commercial property. One year later, on this figure soared to \$7.8bn, which in one week resulted in Lehman reporting the largest net loss in its history. The bank also admitted that it still had \$54bn of exposure to hard-to-value mortgage-backed securities. As a result, Lehman saw its share price plummet more than 95%. Despite having access to cash reserves, worried investors pummeled the firm's shares in one week after talks to raise billions of dollars from outside investors ran into a brick wall. The selling of these mortgage-backed securities to many countries outside of America is a step of great dishonesty. When the Bible, prayer and the ten commandments were thrown out of many schools in America for more than 60 years, this is the result!

No kingdom of Israel can be restored (Acts 1:6) without the removal of the ephah of godless commercialism both from the millennial nations as well as from Israel herself.

THOUGHT: If I am honest with myself, I shall be honest with others.
PRAYER: Lord, help me not to be a partaker of Babylon's sins.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 9

ZECHARIAH 5:8b-11

GENESIS 11:1-9

*"This day will your
soul be required of thee."*

VISION 7: TWO WOMEN WITH WINGS

"...And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven." (Zech 5:8b-9)

In verses 8 and 9, Zechariah saw the casting of the lead over the mouth of the bushel basket. And he saw two women described as having *"the wind...in their wings...like the wings of stocks,"* as escaping, taking the ephah with them between themselves. Women with wings are associated with the woman characterized as wickedness and lawlessness in verse 7. They seemed to be protecting and sheltering the woman in the ephah from divine judgment which is about to overtake her. The lawless woman is transported *"between the earth and the heaven"* to *"the land of Shinar"* which is first described as Babel, where the people *"built a city and a tower, whose top reaches unto heaven,"* and made themselves a name. There the woman in the ephah will continue her evil activities. Genesis 11 reveals that religious and spiritual corruption and confusion originate in Shinar in rebellion against God. It is interesting to note in Revelation 18:23 that her merchants were the great men of the earth, for by sorceries were all nations deceived. Could this possibly allude to America?

On 11th September 2001, when the twin towers of Wall Street were toppled, it was a warning from God, howbeit by the hand of terrorists, of divine judgment upon this godless commercialism. But the people persisted in building this worldly economic empire. In September 2008, we saw the collapse of world commercial systems similar to the Great Crash of 1929 that led ultimately to World War Two. Is momentum building up for World War Three?

THOUGHT: Jesus must come again!

PRAYER: Lord, help me to re-order my life from this evil system.

MONDAY, AUGUST 10

ZECHARIAH 6:1-8

MATTHEW 24:37-42

*“But as the days of Noe were,
so shall also the coming of the Son of
man be.”*

**VISION 8: FOUR
CHARIOTS AND
TWO BRONZE MOUNTAINS**

This final vision will complete the cycle in the series of eight night visions and connect back with the first in the series. It involves four chariots with horses of red, black, white and spotted coming between two bronze mountains. The interpreting angel revealed that these four chariots were the four spirits of heaven which go forth to the earth (v 5). Chariots are instruments of war signifying that the spirits were sent forth to execute divine judgment upon the nations of the north and of the south.

Remember in the previous vision, the woman characterized as wickedness pervaded the whole earth in godless commercialism, seemingly escaping judgment. Not so! The black horses were going forth from the north to the south, the directions for traveling in and out of Israel. If the colours were of any significance, perhaps red symbolizes war and bloodshed, black designates death and famine, white speaks of triumph and victory, and spotted denotes pestilence and plagues (Rev 6:1-8).

Bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, is the material of the two mountains. In Scripture, bronze is commonly used as a symbol of divine judgment upon sin (Num 21:9, John 3:14, Ex 27:2, John 12:31-33). God’s wrath after being executed on the woman transported to Babylon (Zech 5:5-11, Rev 18:2, 10; 19:1-3) is appeased in the land of the north (v 8) and will then come to rest. In the first vision God was angry with the nations that felt secure (Zech 1:15). In this vision we see just retribution (Rev 19:2, 15-19). A glorious hope for every oppressed soul, a day of relief will come, endure on!

THOUGHT: I must share the hope of the gospel with all who have been “burnt” by this godless world and are in trouble.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to take time to be a blessing to someone, free me from the entanglements of this world to devote fruitful time for His cause.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 11

ZECHARIAH 6:1-8

2 PETER 3:3-7

*“Then shall two be in the field;
one shall be taken, and the other left.”*

VISION 8: JUDGMENT WILL COME

The nations of the earth were complacent and at ease in the first vision. Here in this last vision, God was going to mete out judgment. The world today seems to be oblivious of the coming judgment warned by Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:7, *“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”* They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage as in the days of Noah before the flood. The first judgment was by water, a global flood, the second global judgment will be by fire.

The world continues with their merry making. In 2005, Paul Volcker, the former Federal Reserve Chairman, had sounded alarm bells in an annual economic summit. As to why the “brilliant” minds in Wall Street are not taking heed, it is because “these brilliant minds were making money.” One top banker said to him, “As long as the music plays, we will continue to dance.” In the past 10 to 15 years, there has been an enormous increase in the income of the top 1 per cent. He said, “It is futile to find an economic solution to a social problem – it is that of greed. You are never going to get rid of it. It has always been an issue.” Dear Reader, may we proclaim the gospel, for the days are indeed perilous!

God’s judgment will certainly come is the conclusion of this eighth vision. This vision is speaking to professed believers who still persist in sinking more time and energy to build a foundation in this world that will ultimately be burned up. The riches of this world have wings that fly away. Many of the very rich are suffering from the losses they have gained. How can a church grow if her leaders are involved in these carnal activities that suck up their time and vitality? They seem so legitimate. Our Lord Jesus warns in Matthew 24:42, *“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.”*

THOUGHT: *“Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”* (Matt 24:41)

PRAYER: Let me not be drunk with wine, but fill me with Your Spirit.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 12

ZECHARIAH 6:9-11

REVELATION 3:7-11

*“His eyes were as a flame of fire,
and on his head were many crowns.”*

THE HONOUR OF A CROWN

“Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest.” (Zech 6:10-11)

We observe the end of the eight visions and the scene changes with the Lord instructing Zechariah to perform a symbolic act. He was first to accept the offerings from the three exiles, who brought gold and silver from Babylon to help the exiles who had returned under Zerubbabel. From these gifts, a crown was to be made for Joshua the high priest. Josiah had lodged these three visitors in his home. Zechariah was to go to the home of Josiah the same day to collect the gifts. The phrase *“the same day,”* suggests the urgency of the task. The word *“crown”* is in the plural, whereas logically Joshua as high priest can put on only one crown at a time. Perhaps it alludes to the worthiness of the priest to be consecrated. Our Lord in His Second Coming had on His head *“many crowns”* (Rev 19:12). He has endured all things for our sake! He is worthy of the great honour. We cannot fully fathom the rich significance and spiritual beauty of the truth set forth in this symbolic transaction except to acknowledge the unworthiness of Joshua and the great mercy of God in cleansing him. He could not help in making himself one bit holy! God did it all.

The church in Philadelphia (Rev 3:7,8) was a faithful church – though they had little strength, they were courageous to obey God’s Word and not deny His name in the hour of their temptation. They were promised a crown in honour of their faithfulness. We are saved for a purpose, to glorify Him by our lives. We may not do anything spectacular, but when we walk simply in obedience and faith according to His Word, it is a life most pleasing to Him!

THOUGHT: *“But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” (Matt 10:33)*

PRAYER: Help me to endure suffering for Your truth’s sake, O Lord!

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13

ZECHARIAH 6:12-15

ISAIAH 2:1-4

“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn to war any more.”

THE SYMBOL OF TRUE PEACE

The crowning of Joshua the high priest had prophetic symbolism, for in the future there will be a man named “*Branch*” who would branch out from His native people and land, the seed of David, the seed of Abraham. He will build the Temple of the Lord. The fact that Joshua was crowned is significant because he was a priest, yet crowned a king (v 13), never before.

Israel’s king is forbidden to function as a priest. Uzziah the king that lived at the time of Isaiah was struck with leprosy for intruding into the priest’s office to offer burnt sacrifices. He died a leper. The crowning of Joshua was symbolic of a future event as seen by the fact that the crown that Joshua was crowned with was not left on his head but placed in the Temple as a reminder of the Lord (v 14).

The Branch, the name given to our Lord Jesus Christ, will be the King-Priest of Israel, combining the priestly office and the kingly office of rulership. Jesus at His Second Coming will set up His millennial kingdom on earth ruling from Jerusalem, being the King and also operating from the Millennial Temple (Ezek 40-48). The nations of the world will come to pay tribute to Him. There will be true peace because He will exercise gracious yet sovereign control over the nations. All rebellion will be quelled by the judgment of plagues and withholding of rain.

True peace will only come to this troubled world when the Prince of Peace rules in the hearts of men. When will that day come? May it be soon! For every war and conflict that arises between nations since time immemorial, it is for the sovereignty over earthly possessions or due to hunger. Our Lord when He rules will provide the necessary blessings upon the nations to prosper their ways to ensure peace.

THOUGHT: Only the gospel can bring peace to man’s troubled heart.

PRAYER: There’s a peace in my heart that the world never gave, a peace it cannot take away. Thank You, Lord!

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14

ZECHARIAH 6:12-15

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-32

*“Take, eat: this is my body,
which is broken for you:
this do in remembrance of me.”*

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

“And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.” (Zech 6:14)

The crown was not made to be given to Joshua. The coronation of Joshua was a brief ceremony. This crown was to be preserved as a memorial by the Hebrew host, Josiah and members of the Babylonian delegation. There is a variation in the names “*Heldai*” (v 10) and “*Helem*” (v 14). “*Josiah*” appears here as “*Hen*” which means “graciousness.” It is common to have two names in Bible times. For example, Uzziah was also called Azariah. Perhaps this is the reason. The crown was to be kept as a “*memorial*” for remembrance in the Temple of the Lord. The word “*memorial*” is from the root word “to remember” which is also the name “Zechariah.” A memorial is that which preserves the memory of something; anything that serves to keep in memory. It serves symbolically to remind Israel of the eight night visions culminating in Joshua’s coronation. It looks forward to the fulfillment of the eventual crowning of Messiah as millennial King-Priest.

Zechariah was given this permanent memorial to keep alive God’s promised grace upon Israel. So also is the Lord’s Supper, given as a memorial to show forth the Lord’s death till He comes. There is a looking backward to what Christ had done on the cross in gratitude for the remission of our sins and a looking forward to His Second Coming to receive His Church. It is also inward looking of self-examination. Where we have fallen, it is a time of repentance and renewal. Dear brethren, have you been missing the Lord’s Supper as a baptized Christian? Have you been a Christian for a long time yet not baptized and thus not partaking of this means of grace? Do consider to take a stand to honour Christ.

THOUGHT: “I sing Thy power to save!”

PRAYER: Renew me, Lord, as I remember Your suffering for me.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15

ZECHARIAH 6:12-15

REVELATION 10:1-6

*“The man named Branch will build
the LORD’s temple.”*

BEHOLD THE BRANCH

This Messiah “*shall build the temple of the Lord*” (v 12-13), which was distinct from the temple that the returnees were then building. It included the Millennial Temple (Ezek 40-48), the coming of the incarnate Temple of our Lord with men (Jn 1:14; Rev 21:3), and “*the church of the living God*” (1 Tim 3:15; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5). One day all three of these elements shall gloriously come together! Then shall the Branch, our Lord Jesus Christ, rule as King and Priest; then shall the Church and state be joined together in a reign of peace this earth has not yet seen.

John Calvin was called to pastor the Church-State in Geneva in 1536. Calvin had been preaching against all the vices that abound in the city. In July 1537, the Council of the city of two hundred required all citizens to assent to the Confession of Faith in the Church of St. Peter. In November the Council even declared that all who would not take the oath of abiding by the order be banished. Here was the Church governing the State, like the theocracy of Old Testament times. When Calvin refused to serve the Lord’s Supper to members of the City Council, it inflamed the people to the point that in 1538 the town council voted against his co-labourer Farel and asked both he and Calvin to leave the city.

When our Lord reigns on earth for one thousand years, Satan will be bound (Rev. 20:2). Only then will peace be lasting and all rebellion will cease, for all will be in subjection to the Supreme Ruler over all the earth. There will be obedience. Our Lord’s rule is a gracious one that men and women willingly subject themselves to Him. What a glorious future for Israel and the Church!

THOUGHT: “So till He comes, I’ll watch and pray rejoicing.”

PRAYER: Refresh my weary soul by Your promise this day, O Lord.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 16

ZECHARIAH 7:1-7

MATTHEW 6:16-18

*“When you fast,
is it really for the Lord?”*

THE MOTIVE FOR FASTING (1)

In Zechariah 7, it was two years (4th year of Darius' reign) after the coronation of Joshua the high priest and the eight night visions concerning the future of Israel. Chisleu corresponds to the month of December. The four messages given to Zechariah covering chapter 7 and 8 were in anticipation to a question on fasting posed by a delegation sent to the house of God (v3-4). The name “*Sherezzer*” is a Babylonian name, meaning “protect the king.” And “*Regemmelech*” is a Hebrew name which means “king's friend.”

The Jews had instituted a fast in the fifth month, soon after arriving in Babylon during the captivity, to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. The question was this, “*Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself (fasting), as I have done these so many years?*” The Lord's answer was a rebuke that they observed the fast in the fifth and seventh month (both instituted by people, not by God) for themselves and not for God. Jesus likewise taught fasting should be secret and not a showmanship in Matthew 6:16-18, “*Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*”

Fasting is a laying aside of common necessity and pleasure so that more time, concentration of effort, and undivided attention may be given to prayer, worship, and the study of God's Word. This may especially apply during some time of special need or a crisis situation (Acts 14:23). The chief interest is the worship of God Himself, and this, Israel had neglected. Israel's fasting was more a ritualistic conformity for themselves, a mere form of religiosity (v 6).

THOUGHT: Is there biblical warrant for fasting in this present age?

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to devote time to examine my walk with You.

MONDAY, AUGUST 17

ZECHARIAH 7:6-7

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

“I humbled my soul with fasting.”

THE MOTIVE FOR FASTING (2)

Fasting is an exercise of self-humiliation, not for self-interest, but for God’s glory; not for legalistic asceticism, but an act of loving service to render the body more susceptible to the higher interests of the soul in the worship of God. Such self-humiliation would have been highly profitable and would be according to the teachings in the New Testament: 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”*

The missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, observed this with regard to fasting, “In Shansi I found Chinese Christians who were accustomed to spend time in fasting and prayer. They recognized that this fasting, which so many dislike, which requires faith in God, since it makes one feel weak and poorly, is really a divinely appointed means of grace. Perhaps the greatest hindrance to our work is our own imagined strength; and in fasting we learn what poor, weak creatures we are—dependent on a meal of meat for the little strength which we are so apt to lean upon.”

Fasting reminds us that we are sustained by *“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matt 4:4).

Fasting is not an end in itself. It is a means by which we can worship the Lord and submit ourselves in humility to Him. We do not make God love us more than He already does if we fast, or if we fast longer. Fasting invites God into the problem we may be facing in our walk with Him. Then in the strength of God, victory is possible.

THOUGHT: The best of all medicines is resting and fasting. (Benjamin Franklin)

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to fast in a way that is pleasing to You.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 18

ZECHARIAH 7:8-10

MATTHEW 5:8, PSALM 26:1

*“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.”*

A PURE HEART

These are the words of the Lord to Zechariah which were to be rehearsed in the ears of Israel, Zech 7:9-10: *“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”*

The words of Howard A. Walter in the hymn “I Would Be True” serve a good reminder to us to consider our ways before the Lord.

*I would be true, for there are
those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are
those who care;
I would be strong, for there is
much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is
much to dare;
I would be brave, for there is
much to dare.*

*I would be friend of all—the foe,
the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the
gift;
I would be humble, for I know my
weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and
love and lift.
I would look up, and laugh, and
love and lift.
I would be faithful through each
passing moment;
I would be constantly in touch
with God;
I would be strong to follow where
He leads me;
I would have faith to keep the
path Christ trod;
I would have faith to keep the
path Christ trod.*

The pure in heart sees God. He sees the perfection of God in the land of the living. He dares to be true and sincere. He dares to care for the uncaring and dares to love the unlovable.

THOUGHT: Dare to be true, nothing can ever need a lie.

PRAYER: Give me, Lord, a pure heart.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 19

ZECHARIAH 7:8-10

TITUS 2:11-14

“Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments.”

THE BLESSED HOPE

The blessed hope of a Christian is the hope of eternal life (Tit 1:2, 3:7) in the light of the Second Coming of Christ.

Christ's return is a blessed hope to the Christian because it is firstly a salvific hope. The grace of God is the unmerited favour of God. It comes to rescue man from the greatest possible evil, namely the curse of God upon sin which is death, and to bestow upon him the greatest benefit, namely, the blessing of God for soul and body throughout all eternity. Male or female, rich or poor, all are guilty before God and from them all God gathers His people. Aged men, aged women, young women, young men, and even slaves should live consecrated lives, for the grace of God has appeared bringing salvation to men of all these various groups and classes. Grace will not bypass the aged because they are too old, nor women because they are women, nor slaves because they are merely slaves. It dawns upon all, regardless of age, sex, or social standing.

It is a sanctifying hope (Titus 2:12). Christians are to separate themselves from the ungodly influences of the world. We are to live godly lives by our (1) attitude, with the exercise of self-control and temperance (2) conduct, with honesty and integrity (3) affection and devotion to God. By the teaching of the grace of God, we can live victoriously to honour our Lord.

It is an imminent and glorious hope (Titus 2:13) which is the culmination of the grace of God. Christ can come any time, we are to be vigilant and watchful. It is lastly a Christ-centered hope (Titus 2:14) based on the finished work of Christ. Let it not be named among Christians to oppress the widow and the fatherless and the stranger and the poor but showing mercy and compassion meting out justice without partiality.

THOUGHT: *“He bids me walk in pathways strait and narrow.”*

PRAYER: Grant me, Lord, Your grace to walk in the narrow road that leads to everlasting life.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20

ZECHARIAH 7:11-14

DEUTERONOMY 8:11-20

*“Beware thou forget
not the Lord thy God.”*

AN ADAMANT STONE

The stubbornness and hardness in the heart of God’s people was likened to an “*adamant stone*” (v 12). It describes a refusal to repent. The hardness of the stone or flint is the emphasis here. For the people refused (v 11) to obey the law of God. The intensity of their refusal is denoted in the intensive stem of the Hebrew verb. “*Pulled away the shoulder*” is a pictorial description of their backslidden state, insisting on their way. “*Stopped their ears*” is an expression from the verb “be stubborn” or “be rebellious” which means “make dull, make insensible.”

It is not the unbelievers that this message is directed but to God’s people, having the Word of God yet not appropriating it in their head and heart. The expression to “walk the talk” can be used to describe professing Christians who live exemplary lives. Here, Israel was neither walking right nor talking right. A sad state!

The longsuffering of God has a limit. Israel in their stubbornness had crossed the line. We cannot repent too soon because we do not know how soon it may be too late! God is love but is also the Judge. Out of His love for His people, He had to chastise them to wake them up from their drunken state. The prophet relates the 70 years of captivity as a reminder to God’s people that He will punish if they continue in their sins. Have we been running our lives according to our own lusts? Let us repent! Have we been running our lives according to our own proud heart? Let us also repent! God has seen the rebellious heart of His people and has given the warning. Hence we are to take heed before it is too late.

THOUGHT: “More holiness give me, more sorrow for sin.”

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, grant me a heart of flesh to repent of my waywardness as You have pointed out to me from Your Word.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 21

ZECHARIAH 8:1-3

GENESIS 6:5-7

“Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth.”

O JERUSALEM – A CITY OF TRUTH?

“Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury” (Zech 8:1-2). God may punish His wayward children but He does not disinherit them. God demands from us nothing less than our whole heart and He will not be content with our divided allegiance. As the husband cannot tolerate the estrangement of his wife’s affections to a rival, so God cannot allow us to give our affection supremely to any other.

“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” (Zech 8:3). God’s presence in Jerusalem where she is called a city of truth and a mountain of holiness is yet future. As we survey the history of Jerusalem, as long as mortal sinful men rules Jerusalem, it will not be called a city of truth and a mountain of holiness. Only when Messiah rules, under God’s jurisdiction will truth and holiness prevail.

Cities around the world today live under the constant threat of terrorist attack. The city that is featured most prominently for terrorist attack is none other than Jerusalem. The intensity of attacks escalates and the ruthlessness of the terrorists intensifies. The wickedness in the heart of men must grieve our Lord as in the time of Noah. May the Lord help us to be little citadels of truth and holiness, bearing witness of the regenerative work of God, looking forward to the day our Lord Jesus Christ will come in glory to establish His millennia kingdom on this earth ruling from His city of truth and mountain of holiness, O Jerusalem, when Messiah is come!

THOUGHT: Hope is a vigorous principle; it sets the head and heart to work and animates a man to do his utmost for His Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to occupy in Your will till You come.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 22

ZECHARIAH 8:1-6

LUKE 15:11-24

“Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.”

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

In Zechariah 8, the prophet turned his attention from the history of the people to the present and extending to the future. When God’s people repent of their sins, there is a time for restoration, fasting will turn to feasting.

Oftentimes, we think that our sins are too great, Jesus’ blood cannot wash away! May the Lord forgive us for such foolish thoughts! When we humble ourselves in repentance, God forgives. The prodigal son became sober from among the swine, in a most pitiful state. He thought in his heart, *“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”* (Lk 15:18-20)

The scene of God’s restoration of a repentant sinner is described in Luke 15:21-24, *“And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”* There is great rejoicing in heaven for every repentant sinner. A strong message of hope that will lift the soul of every depressed and dejected child of God to come home! How is your relationship with your parents? Is it estranged due to some conflict, misunderstanding and sin? May the Lord help us to make right!

THOUGHT: “Right actions for the future are the best apologies for wrong ones in the past.” (Tryon Edwards, 1809-1894)

PRAYER: Grant to me, Lord, the courage to obey Your Word.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 23

ZECHARIAH 8:4-8

ISAIAH 2:1-4

“Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth.”

A STAFF IN HIS HAND FOR VERY AGE

Not many people live to a ripe old age. The prosperous elderly in his old age during the time of the millennium is described here by Zechariah. The elderly today carrying a staff or “tongkat” is not a common sight. But in the millennium, it will be a common sight. To live to the ripe old age as Mahalaleel (830 years old) or Methuselah (807 years old) or Lamech (782 years old) is a future reality in the millennium. Every Israelite will be a believer in the millennium, a partaker of millennial blessings. There will be no terrorists or Skud missiles to deal with. Today, countries in the world are gearing up for an aging population from the baby boomer generation, many elderly care centers are being set up to care for the needs of an aging population. In the millennium, the elderly are cared for by our Lord Himself.

Jerusalem will be greatly enlarged by God's intervention and creation, the streets will be bursting at their seams, full of young people playing in the streets. The streets are not terror-stricken where people are demonstrating to topple an incompetent government, but the old man shall sit gazing on the scenes of peaceful beauty before him, with his aged companion by his side, to enjoy with him the refreshing breeze that comes cool and sweet from the distant sea. Before him and around him are the merry shouts of children playing in their happy childhood.

Such a picture strikes the Jewish mind with peculiar force. There is peace and prosperity and the presence of God in their midst (v 8). True blessedness can only come when God is the Ruler. True blessedness can come to the Christian today when God is his Ruler. God's Word is the blueprint for a blessed life right here and now. Are we appropriating it?

THOUGHT: They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to believe Your Word and trust Your grace.

MONDAY, AUGUST 24

ZECHARIAH 8:9

MATTHEW 25:14-30

“For unto every one that hath shall be given, and they shall have abundance.”

LET YOUR HANDS BE STRONG

Zechariah now directly encouraged the returnees charged to re-build the Temple having been given a picture of the future prosperity of Jerusalem. Ezra 5:1-2, *“Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.”*

The record of the foundation of the Temple being laid is given in Haggai 2:18, *“Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider it.”*

The hands of the people were weak because of the tremendous physical rigour of the work and the mental pressures from enemies who threatened their very lives. Are you involved in a ministry that has a glorious past and is now a far cry from its heyday? Take courage! God does not look at the size of the ministry but at the faithfulness of the worker. The Lord’s reward is not based on the magnitude of the work but the diligence and faithfulness of the worker. The man who was given 5 talents by his Master was given the same reward as the man given 2 talents. Or are you involved in a ministry that is still very small even after many years of hard work. Be not dismayed, take courage! The new Temple will not rival Solomon’s Temple but God’s blessing for His faithful workers will not diminish one bit. Therefore, pluck up your courage and plod on!

THOUGHT: *“Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.”* (Matt 25:30)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to work while it is still day!

TUESDAY, AUGUST 25

ZECHARIAH 8:10

EPHESIANS 6:10

*“I have again purposed
to do good to Jerusalem.”*

FAITH AND HOPE IN GOD

Zechariah urged the builders to carry forward the great work of the Temple with faith and hope in God. God will bless their work as they persevere to complete it. *“For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.”* (Zech 8:10)

There was severe economic depression in Israel. Jobs were scarce where *“there was no hire for man nor any hire for beast.”* Amidst such a discouraging economic outlook, Zechariah urged the people to persevere with the Temple project. Crime rate also increased and travellers faced security risk. There was civil unrest for every man was against his neighbour.

The financial crisis that began at the close of 2008 has taken its toil on companies around the world. The severe credit crunch when banks were reluctant to give out loans resulted in cash flow problems for many who depended on such loans to sustain their daily operations. Coupled with reduced orders, it is causing massive layoffs and pay cuts. During economic recession, many building projects are often abandoned half-way. Crime rates also rise as jobless rates increase.

It is in such depressing times that Zechariah was asked to encourage the faltering builders not to give up! It is the will of God that the Temple be rebuilt. It is the same with the work of the gospel which must continue in spite of economic afflictions. The work becomes harder because of the physical torment the people will have to put up with. There is less available to sustain themselves and their families. The vision in Zechariah 8:1-9 gave hope for the future prosperity of Jerusalem. This encouraged the builders to endure present suffering to strive on with the work to completion.

THOUGHT: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.”

PRAYER: Grant me, O Lord, more grace and faith to do Your will.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26

ZECHARIAH 8:11-12

DEUTERONOMY 11:11-19

*“I will give you the rain of your land
in his due season.”*

GOD’S BLESSING ANNOUNCED

In the face of economic hardship with scarcity of jobs coupled with high crime rate and civil unrest, Zechariah announced the future prosperity of the returnees. The providential care of God upon His seed was carefully delineated for the encouragement of the builders to press on and not give up. The wrath of God upon Israel for their sins of idolatry resulted in their captivity for 70 years. Now, this was changed. The remnant would experience the Lord’s changed dealings. God promised to end His disciplinary and chastening activity and to bless His people. This was the first good news. Next, the Lord promised them prosperity – *“For the seed shall be prosperous.”* The word for *“prosperity”* is the word *“peace”* or *“shalom.”* The vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase. How can this be possible? This is possible when God intervenes, *“the heavens shall give their dew.”*

This was the same promise God gave to Israel by the pen of Moses before they entered the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 11:11-12, *“But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.”* However, it was conditional upon their obedience, Deuteronomy 11:13, 16-17: *“And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul... Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD’s wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.”* Israel had to learn from the past and not repeat their folly. Will we?

THOUGHT: “Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him.”

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to order my life aright before You.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 27

ZECHARIAH 8:13

PSALM 27:1-14

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?”

FEAR NOT, LET YOUR HANDS BE STRONG

Fear cripples! A German proverb makes this observation, “Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is.” The builders were exhorted not to fear but let their hands be strong. Our strength comes from God. Psalm 27 provides us the antidote for overcoming fear.

- 1 Acknowledging the Giver of Overcoming Faith (v 1-6)
 - a. Extolling Who God is!
 - i. HE is my light and my salvation. (v 1a)
 - ii. HE is the strength of my life. (v 1b)
 - b. Putting mine enemies in their place in my heart (v 2-3)
 - c. Setting my priority in the worship of God (v 4)
 - d. Rejoicing in His deliverance (v 5-6)
 - i. HE hides me (v 5)
 - ii. HE lifts me (v 6)
- 2 Persisting in the Prayer of Faith (v 7-12)
 - a. Cry to God for mercy (v 7)
 - b. Resolve to seek God as our only help (v 8-9)
 - c. Where human help fails, divine help never fails (v 10)
 - d. Guidance sought (v 11)
 - e. Grievance brought to the throne of grace (v 12)
- 3 Strengthened by Faith (v 13-14)
 - a. God’s goodness received by faith (v 13)
 - b. Patience in trial begets overcoming strength (v 14)

In the matter of bringing up children, when they are sick, fear often grips the parents’ heart. May we not falter but pray in faith for wisdom to overcome every difficulty!

THOUGHT: Relinquishment of burdens and fear begins where adoration and worship of God becomes the occupation of the soul.

PRAYER: Grant me, Lord, more faith to trust in Your promises.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28

ZECHARIAH 8:13-17

PROVERBS 20:10, 23

*“I have set the Lord always before me:
because he is at my right hand, I shall
not be moved.”*

GOD’S LAW REITERATED

God has promised to do good unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. He put it clearly that their conduct must be exemplary. *“These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD”* (Zech 8:16-17). It is by our conduct that we can bear forth a good witness of our faith. For example, if we are selling noodles, be sure that our noodles are genuinely good with ingredients worth what our customers pay for. Such honest dealing pleases God. Will the noodle stall not prosper? Customers would come back because of the honest dealings of the stall owner. It is an opportunity to bear a good testimony of the God that is the source of our principle of business and blessing.

Lying and deceit cause strife, discontentment and fights. This is precisely the reason for the turmoil that plagues our world today as it did during Zechariah’s time. God’s people must not fear to obey God’s Word and to live an honest life before Him and men. The true character acts rightly. There was a boy, well trained by his parents, who when asked why he did not pocket some pears when nobody was there to see, replied: “Yes, there was; I was there to see myself; and I do not intend ever to see myself do a dishonest thing.” This is a simple but not inappropriate illustration of principle, or conscience, dominating in the character, and exercising an active power regulating his life. Without this dominating influence, our character has no protection, but is constantly liable to fall away during temptation. And every such temptation succumbed to, every act of meanness or dishonesty, however slight, causes self-degradation. He is then pursued by a secret uneasiness, by self-reproach or the workings of what we call conscience, the prompting of the grieved Holy Spirit, which is the inevitable doom of the guilty.

THOUGHT: Dare to be true!

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live well, acting justly and rightly.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 29

ZECHARIAH 8:18-19

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16

*“Holding forth the word of life;
that I may rejoice in the day of
Christ.”*

FROM FASTING TO FEASTING

This was the answer to the question on fasting posed by the delegation to the House of God in Zechariah 7:3, *“And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?”*

They shall no longer fast. Their fasting shall be changed to cheerful feasting, *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace”* (Zech 8:19). Although the original question spoke of fasting only in the fifth and seventh month, here all the fasting even in the tenth month should be abolished. These fasts were to become a joyful season and times of great happiness.

The fast of the fourth month commemorated the capture of Jerusalem (Jer 52:6-7). The fifth month commemorated the burning of the House of God, the king's house and the houses in Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8-10). The seventh month for the massacre of Gedaliah (Jer 41:1-10) and the tenth month for the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25:1, Jer 52:4). The heavy hand of God had been lifted. It was a time for celebration. So far from the continuance of these days of fasting, they were to be changed into days of festivity, for great would be the blessing on the people. When God makes the sunshine, the tears are dried up, and when God's blessings come upon us, the memory of sorrows should be used only to enhance our present joy.

However, the warning of God remains that they are to *“love truth and peace.”* God will bless but not in spite of man's wickedness. We are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, shining as lights in the world.

THOUGHT: The joy of the heart colours the face.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to show forth a cheerful countenance.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 30

ZECHARIAH 8:20-23

PSALM 67:1-7

*Then the nations will know that God
is for the Jew.*

MILLENNIAL BLESSINGS

“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.” (Zech 8:23)

This is a description of the fullness of millennial joy. The Jewish national fasts would not only give way to feasts, the Gentiles shall also seek God. Notice that the phrase “*the LORD of hosts*” is repeated 16 times in this chapter alluding to the power of God to act and bring to pass all that He has promised to bless Israel. What honour and privilege God bestows upon His own.

By way of application, as it is this day, there are literally men of all nations, and kindreds, and tribes, and people, who are laying hold of the skirt of Him that is a Jew, and casting in their lot with those whom God chose to be a people for Himself, and resting on the truth of that crucified Jew, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Israel, by living a life in the presence and fear of the Lord, was to experience the fullness of God's blessings. In this way they were to startle the nations to attention, arouse their inquiry, and draw them like a magnet to Jerusalem and to the Lord. In the same way, Christians are to live exemplary lives as a witness that God is indeed with us! This is the missionary spirit that accompanies the enlargement of Israel and the Church, the desire for the salvation of others by the testimony of our lives.

In the millennium, Israel will again lead the nations to the knowledge of the Lord and the nations will worship and serve the Lord. Jesus Himself will rule from Jerusalem, the true city of peace.

THOUGHT: “We have returned to Jerusalem never to part from her again.” (Moshe Dyan, June 7, 1967)

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be a friend of Israel.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

ZECHARIAH 9:1-8

PSALM 121:1-8

*“Behold, he that keepeth Israel
shall neither slumber nor sleep.”*

PROTECTED BY THE LORD

Zechariah 9 to 14 detail the prophetic program of Israel and the Gentile nations, especially in relation to the person and work of the coming Messiah. It has distinctive Christological emphasis, with particular focus on the betrayal, humiliation, suffering and death of Christ. These chapters represent the most quoted sections of the prophets in the narratives of the Gospels. This great prophesy of the Messianic future involves two prophetic oracles or “burdens” (Zech 9:1, 12:1). In the Old Testament, “burden” refers to some announcement from God that is heavy with judgment.

The first prophetic oracle (Zech 9-11) delineates the judgment through which Gentile world powers over Israel will finally be destroyed. Israel will come into full blessing with strength to overcome its enemies. The second oracle (Zech 12-14) deals with the divine purging through which Israel herself will be sifted and purified in the final struggle with the nations. Israel will be transformed into a holy, priestly nation at the second advent of the Messiah.

Zechariah 9:1-8 is most likely a description of the conquest of Alexander the Great, the Greek general. This can be seen from history. We know that Alexander destroyed many cities, but not Jerusalem. He threatened the city but never carried out his threats. Before the general arrived, the Jewish high priest had a dream which he felt was from God, and in the dream he was told to dress in his robes and meet Alexander outside the city. With him went the priests in their white robes. The scene dazzled Alexander. He claimed also to have dreamt of the same scene. Alexander entered Jerusalem peacefully and never harmed the people or the city in any way. The Lord’s protection over the little nation of Judah is described in Zechariah 9:8, *“And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.”*

THOUGHT: The Lord is my keeper.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for Your protection over Your people.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

ZECHARIAH 9:1-4

EZEKIEL 28:1-10

*“And the world passeth away,
and the lust thereof.”*

GOD’S INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT (1)

This section is a description of God’s judgment upon the nations surrounding Israel. Hadrach is a town in the north-western part of Lebanon, mentioned only in Zechariah 9:1, where it is grouped with Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, and Sidon. Alexander the Great was God’s instrument to carry out these judgments. Syria and Palestine fell to his lightning conquests after the battle of Issus in 333 B.C. over Darius and the Persians. Zechariah 9:8a is fulfilled concerning Jerusalem, *“And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth.”* The Macedonian armies of Alexander the Great passed by the city of David without laying siege to her.

The prophecy against Tyre is given in Zechariah 9:2b-4, *“Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.”*

Tyre of Phoenicia was singled out for special mention in this prophecy. Nebuchadnezzar spent 14 years trying to conquer the city and gave up. Her prosperity and worldly wisdom constituted a ‘standing moral difficulty’ for the Jews. Why should this city, devoted so unscrupulously to the pursuit of wealth, go unharmed, while God’s people were afflicted with one calamity after another? This island kingdom had built a fortress or citadel of great strength and has seemingly an impregnable position. Her pride against God is described vividly in Ezekiel 28:1-10. When the city resisted Alexander, he besieged it for seven months, building a vast mole to the island which remains to this day. It was a monument to the execution of Divine wrath upon the proud, luxurious and idolatrous city!

THOUGHT: The pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world.

PRAYER: Keep me, Lord, in humble dependence upon You.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

ZECHARIAH 9:5-8

JEREMIAH 47:1-7

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Jesus.”

GOD’S INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT (2)

No doubt Alexander the Great ravished the Philistine cities in Palestine. Ashkelon saw the coming judgment of God, and feared. Gaza shall also be severely distressed, and for Ekron, her hope turned to shame: Gaza’s king perished, and the city of Ashkelon was removed from its ancient place, ceasing to exist. Moreover, a child of illegitimate birth shall dwell in Ashdod as a result of the ravishes of war. Ashdod lost her native population as a result of Alexander’s conquest.

Four of the five cities of Philistia are mentioned here: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod. Only Gath is omitted. Only Gaza is mentioned in the annals of Alexander’s conquest as a stout, impregnable fortress that fell after five months of siege. The king was slain. The pride of the Philistines was subdued. Zechariah saw that they were being delivered from the idolatrous abominations of the Philistines that were a bad influence upon Israel. “...*take away his blood out of his mouth and abominations from between his teeth*” refer to the polluting foods and other practices of idolatry. These pagan customs shall be purged away for they were detested and abominable. The Philistines purged of their idolatry will be amalgamated with the people of God as did David when he took Zion from the Jebusites.

Alexander marched down to Jerusalem, according to Josephus, and demanded of the Jewish high priest Jaddua the payment of tribute which the Jews had customarily paid to the king of Persia. The high priest refused to break his agreement of loyalty with Darius. Alexander, in a rage threatened to inflict a severe punishment on Jerusalem as soon as Tyre and other Philistine strongholds were fallen. Because of the similar dreams which Alexander and the high priest had, the Jews were kindly treated. The priests who ordered Jerusalem to make sacrifices to God and pray for deliverance gave thanks for a marvelous deliverance according to the prophecy of Zechariah.

THOUGHT: Jesus lives to make intercession for me.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for praying for me in heaven.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

ZECHARIAH 9:9

MATTHEW 21:1-10

*“Fear not, daughter of Sion:
behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an
ass’s colt.”*

1st ADVENT OF CHRIST IN HUMILITY

Zechariah 9:9 is the prophecy of Jesus’ First Coming in humility. Riding on a donkey is a sign of humility as contrasted with the grandeur and glory of His Second Coming riding on a white horse with the heavenly armies symbolizing great military power. Before Solomon’s time, the princes of Israel rode on donkeys (Jud 5:10, 10:4). It was only from Solomon’s time, that kings rode on horses. In the coronation of Solomon, he rode on David’s mule (1 Kings 1:38). The King of kings who is infinitely holy came riding on a donkey to save the unholy at His first advent.

Jesus paid the price in full by His life and death for the purchase of our redemption. Jesus came as our substitute. The sins of all mankind since the fall so heinous in the sight of God will be borne by the lowly Messiah. Men throughout the world and in all ages have this hope over their greatest enemy – physical and eternal death in the everlasting torment of hell fire.

We cannot fully fathom the condescension of God in the person of His only begotten Son but we can bow in gratitude and thanksgiving that He made the way possible for us to be reconciled to our Maker. The humility of Christ sets for us the example as to how we are to approach the Thrice Holy God. Jesus taught this blessed way of humility in the Sermon on the Mount. His first public discourse and His first words were, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* The brokenness of spirit to realize our sinfulness is pleasing in God’s sight. This is contrasted with the pride of the world characterized by the self-sufficient attitude of the inhabitants of Tyre who were so proud of their own strength.

THOUGHT: “Humility, that low, sweet root from which all heavenly virtues shoot.” (Thomas Moore, 1779-1852)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to know my total depravity and to recognize my sins before You and to repent of them.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

ZECHARIAH 9:10

ISAIAH 9:4-6, ROMANS 11:25-27

*“There shall come out of Sion
the Deliverer, and shall turn
away ungodliness from Jacob.”*

**2nd ADVENT OF CHRIST AS
GLORIOUS KING**

*“And I will cut off the chariot from
Ephraim, and the horse from
Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall
be cut off: and he shall speak peace
unto the heathen: and his dominion
shall be from sea even to sea, and
from the river even to the ends of
the earth.” (Zech 9:10)*

From deep humiliation and affliction of Messiah at His first advent in verse 9, Zechariah was then directed to the glory that will follow the Second Coming of Israel’s Redeemer-King. These prophecies were given not only for Jerusalem and Israel but for the whole earth. We are today living in days just before the rapture. It can come anytime (1 Thess 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:51-58). Unbelieving Israel will be sorely tried and purified before Messiah comes to save them to establish His Millennial Kingdom from Jerusalem. The rule and reign of Messiah in power and glory is given here. Israel’s King will announce peace and end all hostilities.

Ephraim and Jerusalem (Isa 7:1-2) speak of the disunited Israel that will give way to a united Israel under the Messiah. Peace will prevail in all the lands of the earth. Messiah will speak true peace to all the nations who will “kowtow” or pay obeisance to Him. His dominion will be global from “*sea even to sea*” and “*from the river even to the ends of the earth.*” With the economic meltdown of global financial systems today, job losses abound and a credit crunch causes many companies to shut down for want of cash flow. Individuals who have been living on borrowed money will suffer as banks tighten lending. Famines inevitably lead to hunger and force men to go to war. The many weapons of mass destruction that fall into wicked hands can cause untold misery and suffering. Truly, Jesus must come quickly!

THOUGHT: *“Surely I come quickly.
Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*
(Rev 22:20).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to be watchful and ready for Your return!

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

ZECHARIAH 9:11

GENESIS 15:17-18

“And so all Israel shall be saved.”

A GRACIOUS ETERNAL COVENANT

This gracious eternal covenant with Israel is sealed by blood. It is a covenant that cannot be broken for God does not lie, although Israel proved unfaithful. By this covenant is the promise of deliverance for His people, Israel. They were like prisoners or bondmen confined in a dried-up pit or well where there is no water, doomed to perish. Remember Joseph, called the dreamer by his jealous and angry brothers, who was thrown into a pit with no water (Gen 37:24). God's promise to Israel is traced back to the covenant sealed by the blood of broken animals. He promised Abram in Genesis 15:17-18 to give his seed the Promised Land that would span from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates. At that time, Abram was old and childless. God promised to make his seed as numerous as the stars in the heaven.

At this juncture of Israel's history, she was likened to a nation that was at the brink of collapse by the sheer weakness of her position in the Promised Land - only 50,000 returnees, surrounded by idolatrous, hostile and wealthy Gentile world powers. The first person "I" was God Himself, who spoke in the past tense what He will do in the future to send forth deliverance. We saw in verse 9 the scene of the first advent of Messiah as a lowly King and in verse 10 a dramatic change of scene to the time of Messiah's second coming establishing world peace and dominion. In verse 11 is described His deliverance of Israel out of every perilous situation. I have a map showing the aerial threat of surrounding nations to Israel during the Gulf War of 1991. Iraqi missiles fell on Israel. Jerusalem was 400 km and 35 minutes away from Iraq by air. Although 4,000 Israeli apartments were totally destroyed, only one civilian was killed. The God of Israel is the Almighty Creator Jesus Christ who will continue to fulfil His promise of deliverance even to unbelieving Israel. Recall also the deliverance of the Jews from the holocaust of the Second World War that exterminated 6 million of them but failed to annihilate Israel.

THOUGHT: Once saved, always saved.

PRAYER: O Lord, be merciful to Your people Israel that still reject You.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 6

ZECHARIAH 9:12

JOB 42:4-10

*"Our great God and our
Saviour Jesus Christ."*

A GRACIOUS CALL TO REPENTANCE

Israel was commanded by an urgent entreaty to return to *"the strong hold."* This *"strong hold"* released them from their bondage. The word *"hope"* has a definite article attached. The hope of Israel is in their Messiah prophesized in verses 9 and 10.

When God's people repent of their sins, He will graciously and immediately pardon. Israel will be recompensed with double blessings. Job was restored all that he had before the afflictions befell him, only after he forgave his three friends who falsely charged him. God's wrath on his friends was averted only after Job prayed for them. Job prayed for his friends after he first forgave them for falsely accusing him. This is our privilege as God's children. We are instructed to pray for those who spitefully afflict us. An unforgiving heart causes us no rest and our prayers are not received by God. What comfort for God's people to know that we have a God who is most willing and eager to bless His repentant and obedient children.

The call to repentance is sounded throughout the book of Zechariah. It is still the greatest need today for God's people to forsake every form of idolatry and to give Him our wholehearted devotion by a life of self-control and honesty. The hope of the Christian is a sanctifying hope (Tit 2:11-14). Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. Messiah will come again to settle accounts with His creation. May we be found watching and working for His Kingdom!

THOUGHT: " *...denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*" (Titus 2:12)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to come back to You today.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

ZECHARIAH 9:13-17

LUKE 10:1-20

“And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people.”

ISRAEL IN TRIUMPHANT CONQUEST

The scenario is somewhat startling for the weak and ailing people of Israel to imagine that God would arm them and enable them to do battle. Israel was to become an aggressor, a nation armed with God’s strength in unity (a description of Judah and Ephraim going forth to battle side by side). Judah was ready and Ephraim’s quivers full – *“as a sword of a mighty man.”* *“The LORD shall be seen over them”* - God shall be fighting Israel’s battle as the commander-in-chief, drawing out the battle plan. Israel would strike with such swiftness and speed at the behest of her commander’s trumpet. Greece (*“Javan”*), race of the Ionian, the nation that plagued Israel and the surrounding nations would themselves be attacked by Israel.

God would defend Israel from every counter-attack causing them to triumph – *“they shall devour.”* Safety did not lie in their innate strength but in God Almighty. Sling stones provided the catapult that subdued the enemy, not sophisticated but effective for her purpose as did David with Goliath. Fighting the Lord’s battle is indeed one of courage, yet it is humble dependence upon Him that gives the victory. Then is described the scene of celebration of victory by way of eating and drinking alluding to the fullness of God’s blessing. The image of abundance in the very presence of God – *“as the corners of the altar,”* is a fitting picture of temperance in the midst of rejoicing – *“make a noise as through wine.”* It is not a picture of over indulgence.

The figure of God as shepherd and His people as His flock is a loving picture of care and protection. The foolish sheep is every bit dependent upon His shepherd. Jesus’ disciples were described as lambs going forth with the gospel (Lk 10:3) among wolves. Alas, the labourers are few, but they are the precious few – precious stones of a crown. As an ensign, the gospel upon His land must be lifted up! The goodness and the greatness of His ability to make our life beautiful for all who serve Him must be experienced. Will you not give your life for Him?

THOUGHT: *“... the labourers are few.”* (Lk 10:2)

PRAYER: Lord of the harvest, please send forth Your labourers.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

ZECHARIAH 10:1-3

MATTHEW 6:11, 33

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

DUTY AND BREAD

The promise of provision comes to Israel who walks in humble dependence upon God by doing His will. To farmers, rain is life and abundance since vegetation and crops depend upon it. Prosperity is measured by God giving rain on the earth and waters on the field at the right time. Therefore, rain is God’s act of provision. Israel is to seek God’s favour by asking of the Lord, an imperatival entreaty that all Israel must seek. Do we often forget the Giver in time of abundant provision? This is a solemn reminder. The king of idols (*teraphims*) speaks trouble, sorrow and wickedness and the diviners speak deceit. I remember in childhood going with my mother to visit the medium in a temple. We were lost in idolatry and thought that those dumb idols were the givers of life. What a sad state in retrospect of those wasted years. We did not know the way of truth through Jesus Christ. I remember my mother testifying after her conversion that she never had peace during the thirty years when she was an idol-worshipper. She was so happy to be rid of idolatry after Jesus Christ was presented to her. Without Christ, we were like sheep without a shepherd, lost by the deception that plagued this fallen world. Israel was lost in captivity in Babylon, a flock without a shepherd.

Who are those who have the gospel and are not telling it to others? Who are those who have experienced God’s goodness and not testify of the living and true God? Who are those who are ungodly pastors of God’s flock who have led their flock to ruin? God’s anger is kindled against these! Israel is not lost because the Lord of hosts has visited them through His prophet Zechariah. Israel had thus been nourished by the Lord’s good hand. Israel’s idolatrous past had been forgiven and God had given her a new lease of life back in the Promised Land. They were being nourished by the Lord so that they can be His witness.

THOUGHT: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”* (Matt 6:33)

PRAYER: Lord, may I always look to You and do Your bidding.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

ZECHARIAH 10:4

1 PETER 2:4-8

*“The stone which the builders rejected,
the same is become the head of the
corner.”*

NOT WHAT I CAN DO FOR GOD

DL Moody said of himself, “Ask not what you can do for the Lord but what the Lord can do for you.” He thought that in giving himself wholly to God for His service, he was doing God a service. In fact as he found out, it was God working to develop a more sanctified DL Moody.

It is the Lord who takes care of the needs of His flock by His visitation (v 3). As a result of God’s care, Israel was nourished to be useful for His service. It is a step by step equipping for service as described in verse 4. The phrase “*out of*” Him, or literally translated “*from Him,*” repeated four times to emphasize the sequential blessings originating from God the Father upon Judah in equipping her for usefulness as His witness.

Out of Him will bring forth to Judah a chief Ruler, the Messiah described as the corner or corner-stone (Isa 28:16, Matt 21:42, Acts 4:11, 1 Pet 2:4-8). The nail is a tent-pin driven into the ground to fasten the tent. It secures the tent. The Ruler is described as the mainstay or support to bear the burdens of the state. The battle bow is necessary to overcome enemies. Finally, the “*oppressor*” or exactor, one who has power over bordering nations, and demands tribute or tax from them, as conquerors are wont to do from their subjects (Calvin).

Judah is described as “*mighty men*” equipped for battle and able to defeat her enemies. The reason for their victory was because God was with them and did fight for them. What a great privilege it is to behold the glory of God as we allow Him to help us succeed in doing His will. When we recognize our Messiah Jesus Christ and align our lives by receiving Him, it is beholding the glory of God fulfilled in our lives daily.

THOUGHT: I have received much from God.

PRAYER: Teach me, O Lord, to realize my utter helplessness to help You!

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

ZECHARIAH 10:6-9

ROMANS 11:13-24

*“God will whistle for Israel
and they will return.”*

THE DEEDS OF GOD FOR ISRAEL

The Lord spoke in the first person seven times in verse 6 as to what He would do for His people. (1) He would strengthen the house of Judah. (2) He would save the house of Joseph. (3) He would bring them back to their position in the Promised Land. (4) He would have mercy on them. (5) He would restore them to their original state of blessedness as a united nation. (6) He would not cast them off. (7) He would hear their prayers. This is such an encouragement to every backslidden Christian. There is a way back with God. Israel is the example (v 6).

The grace of God strengthens and gladdens the heart. One who walks closely with God is happy. His joy cannot be hidden. He sets an example for his children to see and they too shall rejoice in the goodness of the Lord upon the head of the family (v 7).

To hiss is to whistle as a signal. God spoke again in the first person through His prophet Zechariah that God would be gathering all whom He would scatter in A.D. 70. He caused them to be prosperous (v 8). Israel scattered in far countries would be cared for by God and He would cause them to remember Him. In their exile they shall return again to Him (v 9). Jews from all over the world seemed to have that determined signal to return to Palestine after the Nazi holocaust that murdered 5.8 million of them from 1938 to 1945. The state of Israel was formed on 14th May 1948. The 16th century Reformers could not fathom the promises of God being fulfilled in a literal Israel because Israel was not in existence then. We look from hind sight to behold the literal promises of God for His chosen people. And we, the Gentile Church are glad and rejoice to be the sons of Israel grafted on to partake of God's blessings through Christ. Have you been drifting from Him these past months or years? Come back to Him!

THOUGHT: When prodigals return, great things are done.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to alter my way and take Your way!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

ZECHARIAH 10:10-12

DEUTERONOMY 20:1-4

“For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.”

GOD IS FOR ISRAEL

On 31st May 1967 Egypt moved 100,000 troops, 1000 tanks and 500 heavy guns into the Sinai ‘buffer zone.’ President Aref of Iraq (ancient Assyria) said that day, “The existence of Israel is an error which must be rectified. This is our opportunity to wipe the ignominy which has been with us since 1948. Our goal is clear – to wipe Israel off the map.” By 4th June, Israel was outnumbered three-to-one by the Arab forces on its borders. This was the statement made by Ahmed Shukairy, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation on 1st June, “This is a fight for the homeland – it is either us or the Israelites. There is no middle road. The Jews of Palestine will have to leave. We will facilitate their departure to their former homes. Any of the old Palestine Jewish population who survive may stay, but it is my impression that none of them will survive.”

Israel was attacked from all fronts by the Arab nations. It was the worst threat to her survival since independence in 1948. 766 Israeli soldiers were killed during the “Six-Day War.” The number of Arab dead was never announced. It was a miracle. Israel could not have survived the odds. Israel not only survived but extended her occupied land on three fronts, up north to include the Golan Heights into Lebanon, down south the entire Sinai enclosed by Gulf of Suez and Gulf of Aqaba – *“the scepter of Egypt shall depart away”* and the stretch on the west of Jordan river from Jenin to Hebron. Zechariah 10:10-12 was fulfilled literally. Assyria deported the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim whereas Egypt was the land of Israel’s bondage in slavery. Assyria represents the confederate aggressors from the north and east – Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia. The south was Egypt who took the lead to encourage the governments of Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia to move their troops to Israel’s border. Total Arab strength was 547,000 troops, 2,504 tanks and 957 combat aircraft while Israel had 264,000 troops, 800 tanks and 300 combat aircraft. Israel was outnumbered yet triumphant!

THOUGHT: One with Jesus is the majority!

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for not giving up on blind Israel nor on us.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

ZECHARIAH 11:1-3

EZEKIEL 34:1-10

*“Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you
with the wool, ye kill them that are fed:
but ye feed not the flock.”*

DISTRESS FROM GOD’S JUDGMENT

The message of repentance reverberated in stirring language of poetic imagery. It described devastation and desolation to wake Israel to the fear of God by the severity of judgment visited upon the land. It is heartening to see God’s blessing so beautifully painted in Zechariah chapter 10. Now, the judgment! Lebanon was on the northern border of Israel. It was a source of fine wood for Israel. It was made up of two mountain chains separated by a valley. Bashan was on the north-eastern portion of Israel which is modern-day Syria. Then there was the pride of Jordan which is a poetic reference to the thick impregnable jungle-like growth that adorned the narrow Jordan valley south of the Sea of Galilee that is modern Jordan. Even the young lion roared because their habitation was destroyed. Fire shall consume the land.

Judgment came upon the rulers and aristocracy (v 1), the common people of the land (v 2), and the self-serving, false shepherds of Israel (v 3). Blessings from God came with it a responsibility to live holy lives. Israel was a testimony of God’s goodness. It was not a license to sin and self-indulgence. When God prospers the Christian, he might be tempted to think that his success is because of himself. He is lifted with pride. He is then brought down by God Himself.

Cedars, fir trees and oaks are used in the Old Testament to depict human self-exaltation (Isa 2:13), symbolizing strength, power, glory, wealth and honour – the very qualities that are easily abused by rebellious humanity. The false shepherds wail with a deep mourning of despair and distress because their pasture lands have been destroyed as a result of God’s judgment.

THOUGHT: If money be not your servant, it will be your master.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to serve You with clean hands and a pure heart.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 13

ZECHARIAH 11:4-6

JOHN 10:11-18

“And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them... and he shall be their shepherd.”

FEED THE FLOCK!

Why the destruction? The flock of Israel was slaughtered by the false shepherd. Therefore the Lord commanded the true shepherd to feed the flock of Israel through His servant Zechariah. The true Shepherd of Israel is none other than Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. All who are called by Him as shepherds are to faithfully feed His flock. The religious leaders were false shepherds who *“slaughtered the flock.”* Jesus Himself predicted the distress that will come to His flock when He spoke of the persecution that will come in John 16:2, *“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* The false shepherds through covetousness shall with feigned words make merchandise of God's flock (2 Pet 2:3). They had no compassion for God's flock (v 4-5). Our Lord aptly shows to us the true colours of the false prophet when he said, *“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep”* (John 10:12-13).

The Jews, who rejected the Christ, *“did it ignorantly in unbelief.”* And they paid a terrible penalty for their crime. The punishment for Israel in rejecting their Messiah was at the sword of the Romans. There is civil war and internal discord in each man being given into “the hand of his neighbour.” The Roman oppression may be described as “the hand of the king.” There was a single objective in their common hate for their rightful King, and their vicious cry was *“we have no king but Caesar.”* Jesus was crucified to fulfil God's plan for our redemption. May there not be pockets of unbelief in our heart. May we embrace the Lord Jesus with our whole heart. He is worthy of our devotion as He testified, *“... I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

THOUGHT: Jesus said unto Peter the third time, “Feed my sheep.”

PRAYER: Lord, may Your shepherds be faithful to their calling.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

ZECHARIAH 11:7-9

PSALM 23

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he leadeth me beside the still waters.”

RESOLUTION OF A TRUE SHEPHERD

Zechariah spoke in the first person resolving to feed God’s flock as he has been commissioned in verse 4. The “*poor*” of the flock were the afflicted and the weak – the diseased and the sick, the scattered, the wondering, the preyed. The afflicted were oftentimes unlovable, bitter, resentful, sensitive, aggressive, yet the most vulnerable. A most difficult task yet it is the mission of our Lord! He did not go to the religious leaders except to rebuke their hypocrisy. He went to seek the sinners to provide a way out for them.

To assist him in feeding the flock, Zechariah had two rods. The one he called “*Beauty*” which means “graciousness or favour,” depicted the care of the shepherd for the sheep. “*Bands*” means “unity,” binding together the scattered flock. The flock was worthy of condemnation. Although the flock was doomed to be slaughtered, there was a righteous remnant. The effect of these rods is well described by the psalmist David, “*Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*” (Ps 23:4b), therefore the sheep is able to say, “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.*” The true shepherd protects and nourishes the sheep.

The three shepherds perhaps alluded to the priests, scribes and elders of Israel during the short period of Jesus’ public ministry. The month can be understood as referring to the period of culminating unbelief just before the Jewish Sanhedrin crucified our Lord and thus sealed the fate of Israel to God’s judgment! During this period, the nation rejected our Lord and He rejected the nation by disowning its leaders. Our Lord greatly abhorred them for their wickedness. They were consigned to self-destruction. The rod of favour was withdrawn. The word “*lothe*” means “to be cut off or shortened.” Therefore, translated as “I lost all patience” with them and “*abhorred*” them.

THOUGHT: Abandon me not to my sins.

PRAYER: May the Lord raise up faithful pastors who are true to their calling.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

ZECHARIAH 11:10-14

MATTHEW 26:14-15, 27:1-10

*“Israel pays off its shepherd for
thirty pieces of silver.”*

THE SHEPHERD’S WORTH

Representing the Lord’s kindness and loving protection of Israel was the good Shepherd’s rod called “Graciousness.” To enact the removal of divine providential care, the good Shepherd took this staff and “*cut it asunder.*” This is a strong word used to describe cutting off bodily members, mutilating (1 Sam 2:31; Lam 2:3). It means “cutting down or slaughtering men in battle” (Jud 21:6). So His staff of “*graciousness*” was withdrawn with the result that His covenant of suppression of the Gentiles was withdrawn. They would then have a greater power oppressing them than ever before – the invading Roman army. The exhaustion of the good Shepherd’s patience and His giving the nation of Israel over to judgment and divine wrath in the invasion of the Roman army ended the sovereignty of Israel as a nation.

The believing remnant “*the poor of the flock that waited upon me*” understood the intent of God’s word in disengaging Himself from Israel. The price offered was “*thirty pieces of silver,*” the value of a slave gored to death by an ox (Ex 21:32; Matt 26:14-15). An insignificant amount with far reaching consequence - the other rod of unity was thus broken. For Israel, the rejection of their Messiah is seen in the eventual scattering of the nation to the four corners of the earth, Israel literally ceased to exist in the Promised Land for the next two thousand years. There is a price to be paid for being “*stiff-necked.*” The patience and longsuffering of God has a limit. Dear friends, may we not indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this sinful world for a season and consigned our eternal destiny to the lake of fire. May we be awakened out of our slumber of self-indulgence and flee to our Lord Jesus for refuge, for the ark of Jesus Christ provides a safe passage to the third heaven where God dwells.

THOUGHT: Jesus Christ is mankind’s great God and Saviour.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to share of my Saviour’s worthiness!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

ZECHARIAH 11:15-17

EZEKIEL 34:15-16

*“Woe be to the shepherds of Israel
that do feed themselves!
should not the shepherds feed the
flocks?”*

THE WORTHLESS SHEPHERD

The characteristics of the worthless, foolish and idol shepherd is fully described as a negative example.

- (1) Visits not the afflicted of the flock (v 16a).
- (2) Seeks not the helpless young sheep (v 16b).
- (3) Heals not the broken (v 16c).
- (4) Feeds not even the stronger sheep that needs minimum effort (v 16d).
- (5) Neglects the sheep and prey upon them as a wolf (v 16e).
- (6) Horrible greediness that *“tears their claws in pieces”* (v 16f).
- (7) Forsakes the flock (v 17a).

“Woe” is a declaration of divine judgment upon the worthless shepherd. Since the shepherd used his arm not to fend for the sheep but to fleece and destroy them and employed his eye not to watch over them, but seek their utter ruin, divine vengeance called the sword of destruction upon these members. If the avenging sword failed in its work upon the wicked shepherd’s arm and right eye, these members would nevertheless be judged by the inescapable curse of God. His arm shall wither and his eyes plagued with complete loss of vision. May all entrusted with the divine mandate to care for God’s flock be faithful to the task. The faithful Shepherd is contrasted to provide the correct perspective – *“I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down...I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment”* (Ezek 34:15-16).

This ends the climactic scene of the first prophetic burden from Zechariah 9 to 11 giving the First Advent of Messiah and His subsequent rejection. The way is now open for the second burden, the Second Coming and subsequent deliverance of Israel (Zech 12 -14).

THOUGHT: The care of God’s flock is a grave responsibility.

PRAYER: Lord, send forth faithful pastors to feed Your flock.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

ZECHARIAH 12:1

ZECHARIAH 7:12-14

*“For thus saith the Lord of hosts...
he that toucheth Israel
toucheth the apple of His eye.”*

THE SECOND ORACLE

The first oracle deals with the rejection of the good Shepherd. The second oracle (Zech 12-14) deals with the divine purging where Israel herself will be sifted and purified in her final struggle with the nations and will be transformed into a holy, priestly nation at the Second Coming of Christ. The day will come when there will be a national repentance of the nation of Israel. Messiah will physically deliver Israel from their enemies. This oracle is called *“the burden of the word of the Lord for Israel.”*

The earth was the focal point in the Lord’s creation of the universe (*“stretching forth of the heavens”*) and man was the focal point in the Lord’s creation of the earth. A brother once went to the mortuary as part of his police training to see a human body with the flesh removed to expose the internal organs. He testified that he was awed by the sight because he saw exquisite beauty in the design of the human body and he gratefully remembered his Creator. The rebellion of man against his Creator is leading to a climactic confrontation with his Creator. Unrest and chaos proliferate in this world as a result of man’s fallen nature. We can observe a further focus of God on His covenant people Israel. Surely God’s people want to know the end from the beginning. These last three chapters delineates the beginning of the end – great suffering and great deliverance for Israel.

The hardness of man’s heart is like an adamant stone. Israel, the chosen of God, was so hardened to reject their Messiah that God has to put them through the fiery furnace to melt the hardness of their heart. Israel was scattered to the four corners of the earth. Yet, we see God’s gracious and merciful hand sustaining the nation even as a thread. Is our heart so hardened that we cannot see the gracious hand of God drawing us back to Him in our afflictions? His love will not let us go when we belong to Him! We may wander from Him but He will draw us back!

THOUGHT: The Lord will not forsake His own.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for the comfort from Your Word.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

ZECHARIAH 12:2

PSALM 27

“The Lord is my light and my salvation... the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

THE NATIONS ATTACK JERUSALEM

The signal is given in verse 2, *“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.”* The nations of the earth will lay siege on Jerusalem. The *“cup of trembling”* is an *“intoxicating cup.”* The Gentile nations who attacked Jerusalem will drink the wrath of God and stagger at the confusion.

Since Israel’s independence in 1948, she had to fight many wars to maintain her sovereignty. This will continue until the final war (Zech 12:2-9). In June 1973, General Shazli wrote in the introduction to a pamphlet distributed to all Egyptian soldiers, *“My sons, officers and men. The Jews have gone beyond all limits in arrogance. We, the sons of Egypt are determined to throw them back, to sweep through their positions, killing and destroying them, to cleanse the shame of the defeat of 1967, and to regain our honor and pride. Kill them whenever you find them, and beware lest they pretend to surrender to you so that they can overcome and kill you in a foul manner. Kill them. Do not pity them. And do not show them mercy.”*

Shortly after midday on Saturday 6 October 1973, Egypt and Syria launched a concerted military attack against Israel. The day which they chose for the attack was the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, a day of prayer and fasting. Israel lost 2378 soldiers in the battle between 6 and 24 October 1973.

Golda Meir, Israel’s then leader said, *“We will win because we must live. Our neighbours are fighting not for their lives, nor for their sovereignty, they are fighting to destroy us. We will not be destroyed. We dare not be destroyed. Therefore, the spirit of our men on the front, the spirit of our people in every home, in every city, in every village, is a spirit of a people that hates war but knows that in order to live it must win the war that has been forced upon it.”*

THOUGHT: God put in the heart of Israel the will to live!

PRAYER: Lord, help me not to succumb to the afflictions of life.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

ZECHARIAH 12:3

REVELATION 16:15

“Jesus said, ‘Behold, I come as a thief.’”

THE SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

“*In that day*” is used 17 times in these last three chapters referring to the day of the Messiah. It is not as His first advent in humiliation but in glory to save His own people Israel from her enemies and to establish His Millennial rule on earth. The nations of the earth will invade Jerusalem and humiliate God’s people Israel. The city of Jerusalem is like a crushing stone that brings severe injury to those who would attempt to remove it from its place. This is an account of that final siege of Jerusalem.

The history of the siege of Jerusalem can be traced to 925 B.C. by Egyptian Pharaoh Shishaq and the Assyrian Siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. by Sennacherib. In 597 B.C. the seige was by Nebuchadrezzar II, which crushed a rebellion in the Kingdom of Judah and resulted in deportation of King Jehoiachin to Babylon. Then in 587 B.C. by Nebuchadrezzar II, who fought Pharaoh Apries’s attempt to invade Judah. It ended in the destruction of the city and First Temple, and the exile of prominent citizens to Babylon. In A.D. 70, the Roman General Titus led a seige that resulted in the destruction of Herod’s Temple. In A.D. 614, Shahrbaraz (Sassanid general) captured the city from the Byzantines. In A.D. 637, Umar captured the city from the Byzantine Empire. In A.D. 1099, by the crusaders, as part of the First Crusade. In A.D. 1187, by Saladin, resulting in the recapture of the city by the Muslims. In A.D. 1244, by the Khwarezmians, again resulting in the recapture of the city from the Christians, to whom it had been returned by treaty. The Battle of Jerusalem in 1917 involved the capture of the city in the Sinai and Palestine campaign of World War I by British and Commonwealth forces. Then in 1948, during the Arab-Israeli War, Israel now occupies Jerusalem.

THOUGHT: In that day, the Lord will defend Jerusalem.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to see the nearness of Your Coming.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 20

ZECHARIAH 12:4-14

REVELATION 3:7

*“Behold he cometh with clouds
and they also which pierced him.”*

DELIVERANCE AND CONVERSION

The Lord shall cause a plague to arise that brings overwhelming blindness, madness and bewilderment to Israel's enemies (v 4, Deut 28:28). Israel will have the opportunity to devour their incapacitated enemy *“like a torch of fire in a sheaf.”* The leaders of Judah were much encouraged by the manifestation of God's power to deliver His people (v 5-6). Deliverance would come first to the *“tents of Judah,”* signifying the Jews in rural districts. God honoured the less privileged than those living in Jerusalem by saving them first. The *“glory of the house of David”* refers to David's descendents who share the honour of his name and *“the inhabitants of Jerusalem”* share in the glorious reputation of Jerusalem. This is the same principle of humility that Paul applied to dealings within the Body of Christ (v 7, 1 Cor 12:22-25). The weakest inhabitants will be given great honour that day (v 8). God will cause Jerusalem to triumph by destroying *“all the nations”* that come against His city (v 9).

Then there will come a time of Israel's spiritual renewal by the outpour of the *“Spirit of grace and of supplication (prayer)”* when Messiah will be revealed in His Second Advent as Apostle John saw in Revelation 3:7. The effectual working of the Holy Spirit leads to conviction and repentance of all Israelites in bitterness, grief and mourning for their sins as they acknowledge the Messiah Jesus whom they crucified. He has returned in glory to deliver and save them to the amazement of the humbled nations. The royal (David, Nathan - 2 Sam 5:14) and priestly (Levi, Shimei - Num 3:18, 21) families are singled out to represent all the nations for all will mourn regardless of office, status or position. It is the prayer and joy of every Christian to see the conversion of the hard-hearted when the gospel is being preached. May the Lord grant a revival in our homes where the worship of God is upheld daily by the whole family.

THOUGHT: The family that prays together stays together.

PRAYER: Lord, be gracious to the souls of my loved ones.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

ZECHARIAH 12:10-11

PSALM 51

*“Purge me with hyssop,
and I shall be clean: wash me,
and I shall be whiter than snow.”*

THE MARKS OF TRUE REPENTANCE

It is a momentous time in the history of Israel when they would acknowledge the Messiah whom they have “*pierced*” (Jn 19:34). The spirit of grace and supplication will be poured upon Israel so that their eyes are opened to behold Jesus, and to recognize the fearful national crime which they have committed to their own sorrow and hurt. The intensity of bitterness of sorrow and grief is described as one that “*mourneth for his only son.*” The godly sorrow of Israel will not be in vain. The repentant will be restored. It is a momentous time in our life when we realize our estranged condition away from God and truly come in repentance and contrition of heart.

The repentance of Israel will be universal and yet individual (v 11-14). “*The mourning of Hadadrimmon*” is a description of the national mourning over the pious young king Josiah slain by Pharaoh Necho (2 Kgs 23:29-30, 2 Chron 35:20-27). In that great mourning for Josiah, the prophet Jeremiah took part. Men and women of Israel sang songs of lamentation to express grief, sorrow and mourning.

When Nathan the prophet was sent by God to rebuke David for his sin of adultery, David immediately repented with contrition of heart. A direct consequence was that the baby born out of this adulterous relationship with Bathsheba died. Sin causes shame. But there is a way back with God for every repentant sinner is David’s testimony. Psalm 51:12-13 is a description of how mourning turned to joy, “*Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*” God’s gracious dealing with Israel is the same way that He will deal with every backslidden child of His. The realization, that sudden dawning of our heinous rebellion against our God, that causes the repentant sinner to mourn and beg for forgiveness is pleasing in God’s sight.

THOUGHT: All true repentance arises from a sight of a dying Saviour, Jesus who has died for us.

PRAYER: Save me, Lord, from self-destruction.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

ZECHARIAH 13:1-6

HEBREWS 9:12-15

*“In that day a cleansing fountain
will open in Jerusalem.”*

TOTAL CLEANSING OF THE LAND

In that day of Christ's return, a fountain will be opened for cleansing and forgiveness of sin and impurity for the house of David and the inhabitations of Jerusalem (v 1). The shed blood of Christ on the cross is sufficient for our cleansing if only we will appropriate it. There will also be a total purging of idols and of the false prophets in the land (v 2). The people will be so committed that if their own children should prophesy falsely, they will cast the first stone (v 3). This was in fact Moses' teaching to Israel before they entered the Promised Land. But Israel failed to practise it. They were enticed by their own lust to the idolatry and immorality in the land leading to three thousand years of judgment from God. The false prophets will shun prophesying for fear of being shamed, they will practically change trade to become farmers. However, there will be tell-tale signs of their previous occupation (v 4-6).

The Charismatic, Signs and Wonders Movements will cease in the land. Today, it is impossible to stop the mouth of the false prophets, the movement toward that one apostate church continues unabated. Their influence is so great. How then do we identify the false prophet? Jesus gave the answer in Matthew 7:15-20, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.”* When the true Shepherd rules the land, all false shepherds will have to disappear. Until then, may the Lord grant to us spiritual discernment by checking all teachings we receive against God's infallible and preserved words.

THOUGHT: There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins.

PRAYER: Thank You, Lord, for every remembrance of Your sacrifice.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

ZECHARIAH 13:7-9

MATTHEW 26:31-32

“Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.”

AFFLICTION IS PURIFICATION

The voice of the Lord sounded suddenly, driving the account of the false prophets from our minds. It was the voice of the Lord, summoning a sword to strike the good Shepherd, Companion (Fellow meaning Equal) of our Lord. The first word of the Lord in the Hebrew text is *“Sword,”* commanded to inflict physical harm upon the Shepherd. This was the Son of God who was smitten by the sword of the Father (Isa 53:10). Is this a description of judgment upon the Jews for rejecting their Messiah? For with the Shepherd out of the way, the flock will then automatically scatter. It is a description of the complete cleansing of sin by the Son of God at His crucifixion in His First Advent (v 7).

The Jews were a rebellious lot, but there is a faithful remnant. The majority rejected their Messiah resulting in the nation of Israel being scattered in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. The remnant will be preserved and remembered through the Church age, the times of the Gentiles. The scene moves now to the Jewish remnant at His Second Coming (v 8-9). This *“little flock”* has suffered much through the refining fire of the centuries of tribulation, yet when they have been refined, they shall come forth as tried gold. Two thirds will be destroyed and only a third remains. The surviving Jews at the Second Coming of Christ look upon their Messiah in repentance at His return. The trials in a Christian’s life seem to grow more intense as he matures in the faith. Take heart, the refining fire of the Lord will purify and remove all dross of sin as He moulds us in His image. This is God’s way of purification, Jesus sets for us the example in His sufferings. May we in every affliction call upon Him, casting all our cares upon Him, for He cares for us. Jesus will be pleased to say at His Second Coming, *“It is my people.”* And the faithful shall respond, *“The LORD is my God.”*

THOUGHT: *“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain mine own ways before Him.”* (Job 13:15)

PRAYER: Lord, grant me patience and steadfastness in every trial.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

ZECHARIAH 14:1-3

REVELATION 19:11-16

*“His name is called The Word of
God.”*

MESSIAH’S VISIBLE RETURN (1)

In Zechariah 12 and 13, we have studied the future deliverance and conversion of Israel. This Zechariah 14 continues the second oracle and concludes it with the Messiah coming to establish His Kingdom in Jerusalem. It is climactic. The earth is God’s focus in His creative work of the universe. Israel is God’s focus among the nations of the earth. Israel is a great nation because she is God’s chosen vessel to receive His Special Revelation. Israel sits at the centre of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa. The Lord Himself says so in Eze 5:5, *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; This is Jerusalem: I have set it in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her.”*

The Bible-Presbyterian Church at her inception in 1937 imbibed from the dispensationalist the doctrine of the pre-millennium. Christ will return to rule physically on earth from Jerusalem for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6). This is even before the establishment of the nation of Israel on 14th May 1948. We praise God for this spiritual heritage that gives to us the proper biblical perspective to view this decaying world. The belief in Israel’s Restoration in Christ’s Second Coming and her preeminent role during His Millennial Reign is a most blessed one. This doctrine is called Covenant Pre-millennialism. God has not forsaken Israel, although Israel has rejected her Christ. All references to Israel being restored to head the nations of the world in Christ’s millennial reign mean exactly and literally as we see in this last chapter of Zechariah. The nations of the world gather themselves together against Israel (v1-2), our Lord Jesus returns to save Israel from certain destruction (v 3). This is vividly revealed to us in Revelation 19. Our Lord Jesus Christ, He that is Faithful and True, will ride on a white horse with the heavenly army to judge and make war against the nations, *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron”* (Rev 19:15a).

THOUGHT: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

PRAYER: Re-order my life, Lord, to be ready for Your Return!

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

ZECHARIAH 14:1-5

ACTS 1:11

*“In that day the Lord’s feet
will stand before Jerusalem.”*

MESSIAH’S VISIBLE RETURN (2)

Anti-Semitism was at its height during the Second World War when 6 million Jews were exterminated by the German army under Adolf Hitler. The worst is yet to be for there will be a future time, when all the nations of the earth will be gathered against Jerusalem (Zech 12:2-3, 14:2). The city will be plundered, and the armies will exile half of the people and leave half. Zechariah announced in verse 1, *“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh...”* That day of the Lord is yet future but its coming is absolutely certain. The spoils of war will be divided. Israel shall have entered into a covenant with the false Messiah or Antichrist who shall suddenly and treacherously turn upon God’s people (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; Mk 13:14). The Lord will intervene at the breaking point to fight for His people Israel (v 3).

The trials and temptations that befall a Christian are with God’s permission. God knows the amount of pressure we are able to withstand. He will provide surely a way out (1 Cor 10:13). Israel since 1948 has fought and won 6 battles against overwhelming odds. This final battle will be the worst. Our Lord Jesus returns with His glorified saints and angels (v 5) to intervene and save Israel (Rev 19:11-16). This will occur on the same day when the Lord returns and there will be some interesting geographical changes. The Mount of Olives will be split, by a great earthquake, into two by a large valley as the Lord returns visibly and physically, just as He left (v4; Acts 1:11). A valley of escape will be formed for His people. The impact globally is further described in Revelation 16:18-20 *“...and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell...And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”* Singapore will not be spared on that day though it seems safe from earthquake today.

THOUGHT: *“And the Lord directs your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”* (2 Thess 3:5)

PRAYER: I reaffirm my faith in You that I may partake of the first resurrection at the rapture and returning with You to save Israel.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

ZECHARIAH 14:4-11

PSALM 46

*“God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.”*

JERUSALEM TRANSFORMED

As a result of the great earthquake (v 5), great physical changes will transform the Holy Land. A new and living river shall flow from Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. They will be joined. The streams shall be perennial and not dry up even in summer. The Dead Sea shall come alive, filled with all kinds of fishes. It is possible to go fishing in the Dead Sea like the many who fish for St Peter's fish in the Sea of Galilee today (v 8). Psalm 46:4 also shed further light: *“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”*

The land will be turned into a plain that will allow smooth traffic flow for the nations of the world to come to Jerusalem to worship the King of kings and Lord of lords. The day will be neither light nor darkness (v 6). In the evening, there shall be light (v 7). We cannot fully fathom this new lighting condition. The climate will also be transformed, there will be a supernatural canopy over the land protecting it from the storm and rain, Isaiah 4:5-6, *“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.”*

Most emphatically, *“...the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one”* (v 9). Ponder this blessed truth - God physically dwelling in the midst of His people – *“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.”* On earth today, God has been denied and forgotten, His honour discarded and His commandments transgressed. Nations seek not His glory nor show forth His praise. May it not be so for us!

THOUGHT: *“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”* (Ps 46:10)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to love and honour You!

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 27

ZECHARIAH 14:12-15

JUDGES 7:1-22

*"In that day the nations' wealth
will come to Jerusalem."*

THE PLIGHT OF REBELS (1)

The Lord at His coming shall send a plague to smite all the people that fight against His people in Jerusalem (v 12). Secondly, there will be seen mutual annihilation of Israel's enemies through a supernatural panic like the time of Gideon and the Midianites (v 13, Jud 7:22). The third weapon that God employs against the enemy is Judah, the strength divinely given to the remnant to spoil the nations of their great abundance of wealth (v 14). The plague will also consume all the common animals (v 15). There will be a holocaust of the heathen armies in Jerusalem as God judges them. The word "holocaust" is made up of two Greek words "*holos*" meaning "completely" and "*kaustos*" meaning "burnt" derived from the Hebrew word "*shoah*" connoting catastrophe, calamity, disaster and destruction. It is the term generally used to describe the genocide of approximately six million European Jews during World War Two, as part of a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi) regime in Germany led by Adolf Hitler. The Jews were at first shot. Later the introduction of gas chambers quickened the killing process. They were stripped of all their valuables, even their gold teeth were being plucked out. These atrocities were unspeakably wicked.

The death suffered by these whose "*flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet and eyes shall consume away in their holes and their tongues shall consume away in their mouth*" is most atrocious. This plague came upon them because they would not submit to our Lord Jesus Christ. They might have thought that the might of all the nations was sufficient to fight the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is the ill-informed pride of a rebellious heart that caused their downfall. Have you been rebelling against God's laws and there seem to be not sign of God's judgment? Repent!

THOUGHT: "*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" (Lk 19:10)

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to see my sins as they are and to repent!

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

ZECHARIAH 14:12-15

EZEKIEL 38:18-23

“The sword of the Lord.”

THE PLIGHT OF REBELS

(2)

The armies of the nations that take the mark of the beast will suffer terrible fate by a word from His mouth. All the weapons of war will be rendered useless. There will be a blood bath in the Holy Land that it will take 7 months for Israel to clean up and bury the dead (Ezek 39:12) and 7 years to destroy all the weapons (Ezek 39:9).

On 26th September 2008, the Chinese Shenzhou VII (Ark of God) spacecraft blasted off at 9:07 p.m. Thursday, carrying three Chinese astronauts into space on the country's third manned space mission in five years. The three-day mission included the country's first successful attempt at a spacewalk. The Chinese government has spent billions of dollars in recent years building up a space program that it hopes will help China establish a space station by 2020 and eventually will put a man on the moon. Accomplishments that would certainly bring the country international prestige. The launching of Shenzhou VII from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu Province, which is in western China, was shown live on state television.

The only safe ark is not in the space station that China will build or the Shenzhou VII but in our Lord Jesus Christ. How can we escape the coming judgment? Certainly not by escaping to outer space, but by accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Have we great investments – stocks and shares, gold, money, cars, careers, properties, leisure? Are they won by dishonest means? Have they become our idols? The day of reckoning is coming!

THOUGHT: *“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”* (2 Pet 3:11)

PRAYER: Lord, grant me spiritual discernment.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

ZECHARIAH 14:20-21

MARK 8:34

“Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.”

WORSHIP IN THE MILLENNIUM (1)

Despite their mistreatment of Israel, the repentant nations will be spared and provided opportunity for regular worship. The feast of Booths (Tabernacles) was one of Israel's three pilgrim feasts observed annually by the people of Israel (v 16; Deut 16:13-16). The feast commemorates the wilderness experience of Israel and celebrates the fall harvest (Lev 23:39, 42-43). True worship shall be universally established amongst a remnant of the nations. Any nation slack in their worship and acknowledgement of their King will suffer punishment by a plague. And if a nation fails to go to Jerusalem for worship, it will have no rain and suffer losses (v 17).

It is the same for God's people today who fail to worship and acknowledge Him in their lives. Remember the encouraging words of the prophet Isaiah, *“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it”* (Isa 58:13-14).

Egypt is the nation that has caused much suffering to God's people. In that day, Egypt will be subdued and in their obedience, they will also enjoy the blessings of salvation given to Israel. The rule of the Prince of Peace from Jerusalem will be most glorious because there will finally be lasting peace, Satan will be bound up for 1,000 years. What a blessed scene of true prosperity!

May this study awaken us to the nearness of the Lord's RETURN! Let us forsake the world and come to Jesus!

THOUGHT: *“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”* (Mk 8:36)

PRAYER: Save me, Lord, from straying from You!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

ZECHARIAH 14:16-21

ISAIAH 66:18-24

*“In that day the nations shall
worship at Jerusalem.”*

WORSHIP IN THE MILLENNIUM (2)

“In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.”
(Zech 14:20-21)

The mark of true consecration will be seen everywhere and practised in the millennium. It is *“HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.”*

All are cleansed and holy in Jerusalem and among God’s people. There will be holiness in public life *“bells of the horses,”* in religious life *“pots in the Lord’s house,”* and all private life *“every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah.”* Truly, *“blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”* (Matt 5:8). God dwells physically in the midst of His saints who will be appointed to rule with Him. Sin will no more have dominion. What glorious freedom!

These last two verses of prophecy may well close not only this book but the whole history of Israel, for it shows God’s original purpose fulfilled in Exodus 19:6, *“And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.”* All who enter the house of the Lord are recognized as regenerated born-again believers. There shall be no Canaanites (heathen, unbelievers) in the house of the Lord of hosts. Our Lord rules in our hearts today but the corrupt nature wars daily against the spirit of holiness. May God’s people wage a good warfare against the corruptness in us, daily practising holy habits, watching and working for the night comes when no man can work. God does not forget His own children. The Lord truly remembers!

THOUGHT: The hallmark of gratitude is remembrance.

PRAYER: Lord, may You fill me fully with Your Spirit for today.