

EXPLANATION OF 38TH BIBLEBOOK

ZECHARIAH (520-? B.C.)

The book of Zachariah consists of two parts: Zechariah 1-8 and Zechariah 9-14, which the prophet received in a later period of his life, namely, after the completion of the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BCE. It may be possible that he lived as long as the victory of the Greeks over the Persians in the battle of Marathon in 490 BCE and the battle of Salamis in 480 BCE. He lived close to the time of the Greek Empire in the East.

Zechariah descended from a priestly family, just like Jeremiah and Ezekiel. His father, Berekiah, probably died at an early age, because in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 he is called ‘the son of Iddo’, his grandfather. In Hebrew, ‘son of’ can also mean ‘grandson/descendant of). Iddo was the first high priest after the Exile¹.

Zechariah was familiar with the books of the earlier prophets (the prophets before the Exile)(7:12).

A. PART I. ZECHARIAH 1-8. THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

ZECHARIAH 1

Zechariah 1:1-6. The call to repentance.

1:1. In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo:

The eighth month of the second year of Darius was November 520 BCE.

1:2. The LORD was very angry with your forefathers.

While Haggai prophesied against the neglect to rebuild the temple, his contemporary, Zechariah prophesied about the anger of the LORD against the sinful life of Judah during the Exile (5:3; 7:9-18; 8:16-17).

1:3. Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Return to me,’ declares the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will return to you,’ says the LORD Almighty.

The LORD called Judah to repentance. The Judeans (Jews) had made a start with rebuilding the temple. But God demanded more than that: He demanded a return to himself. If Judah would obey, the Lord would also return to Judah.

1:4. Do not be like your forefathers to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.’ But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD.

The earlier prophets were Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and they already prophesied the need to repent from their evil ways/behaviour and evil works. But Israel did not listen.

1:5. Where are your forefathers now? And the prophets, do they live forever?

Although Israel’s forefathers and the former prophets had died, *the words of the former prophets were fulfilled!*

1:6. But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your forefathers? “Then they repented and said, ‘The LORD Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.’”

As one of the latter prophets, Zechariah joined the prophesying of the earlier prophets. He was familiar with their writings (7:7). Gods proclamations concerning punishment through the earlier prophets went into fulfilment – the Judeans were carried into exile! Although Israel’s forefathers and the earlier prophets no longer lived, their words have come into fulfilment! *Only a remnant of Israel repented and returned from exile.* Those who returned acknowledged that the LORD had done what he had resolved. They were punished in accordance with their ways and deeds.

The LORD let the prophet see eight visions in one night in which he revealed his resolve:

- to save his own people and
- to humble his enemies.

These revelations are not direct divine speeches, but the description of visions.

Zechariah 1:7-17. The first vision. A horseman on a red horse between the myrtle trees.

1:7. On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius (521-486 BCE), the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo.

On the 24th day of the 11th month of the second year of the reign of Darius (mid. February 219 BCE) the word of the LORD came to Zechariah.

¹ Nehemiah 12:4

1:8. During the night I had a vision - and there before me was a man riding a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown and white horses.

Zechariah sees in his vision at night a rider on a red horse between the myrtle trees. He is the leader² of a group of riders. Behind him stand red, brown and white horses (with riders). The myrtle trees stand in a low valley. 'The myrtle' is an evergreen tree. Because there is much water, the trees flourish.

Because the riders appear before the LORD or the Angel of the LORD the picture is of the entrance of the dwelling of God, heaven. The myrtle trees in the green valley symbolise the dwelling place of God.

1:9. I asked, "What are these my lord?" The angel who was talking to me answered, "I will show you what they are."

The interpreting angel is carried into the vision without introduction. He explains the vision to Zechariah³. He is mentioned several times in the visions (1:18; 2:3; 4:1, etc.). Zechariah is aware that someone in front of him is speaking to him, a middleman whom he addresses as 'my lord' (sir). Seeing and hearing in the vision happens in the human spirit of Zechariah.

1:10. Then the Man standing among the myrtle trees explained, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to go throughout the earth."

'The Man standing between the myrtle trees is also carried into the vision without introduction. He answers Zechariah's question. This Man stands on the side of the LORD as his Representative/Mediator. He is the Angel of the LORD⁴. He says that the horsemen in the different groups have been sent out by the LORD to cross through the earth in every direction in order to explore the condition of the earth. Now they are again together to give an account to their Sender (the LORD) (1:10) or to the Angel of the LORD (1:11).

1:11. And they reported to the Angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees. "We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace."

'They' (the horsemen by means of their leader on the red horse) report to the Angel standing between the myrtle trees and not directly to the LORD. This accentuates the distance between God and man, his loftiness. This Man in between is no one less than the Angel of the LORD.

*'On the one hand the Angel of the LORD' is distinguished from the LORD in the Bible and on the other hand identified with the LORD*⁵. He is the Mediator, the Representative of the LORD, who came forth from the hidden place where God dwells⁶. He is the second person of the Holy Trinity during the Old Testament period⁷. He also represents the Intercessor for God's people (1:12)⁸.

The leader of the group said that they had crossed through the whole world, but that the whole world is "at rest and in peace". This is an unfavourable message for Jerusalem and Judah (1:12). Through the rebellions in the Medo-Persian Empire the Judeans thought that 'the period of salvation' (of God's people) had arrived. After the return from exile they expected that the time of salvation would be preceded by events in the nations. That would be *the proof that a new period has dawned in the world*: nations would be on the move, kingdoms would be overthrown, armies would be defeated people would kill one another with swords⁹; more exiles would return (8:8; 2:4); treasures (for rebuilding the temple) would be brought to Jerusalem (6:10)¹⁰; *and many heathen from the nations would join the LORD and the LORD's people. They would become the LORD's people and He would live among them* (2:11; 8:22-23)¹¹.

However, in 550 BCE peaceful rest was restored to the Persian Empire. *The Judeans had hoped that the Messianic period of salvation would be inaugurated with these rebellions*. Now they were disappointed that their expectation came to nothing.

Encouraging in this first vision was that these events were controlled by the LORD. The LORD Himself was *delaying the fulfilment of his promise* (1:12).

1:12. Then the Angel of the LORD said, "LORD Almighty¹², how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these seventy years?"

² This man is not the Angel of the LORD, but the leader of the group riders.

³ He is not the Angel of the LORD, but just the interpreting angel.

⁴ 'The Angel of the LORD' is the second Person of the Trinity, the appearance of Jesus Christ during the Old Testament period.

⁵ Genesis 16:10f; 22:12; 31:11,13 etc.

⁶ See John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:5-8. He is God who took on the human nature without letting go of his divine nature.

⁷ See www.dota.net Manuel 8, Supplement 14. Angels and the spiritual warfare.

⁸ See Hebrews 7:25

⁹ Haggai 2:23

¹⁰ Haggai 2:8

¹¹ Isaiah 56:6-8

¹² God the Son (the Angel of the LORD) intercedes with God the Father (the LORD of Hosts or the Almighty)(Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25)

Then the Angel of the LORD (as Representative of his people) directed a complaint to the LORD: how long will it take the LORD to have pity on Jerusalem and Judah? *It is a comfort for Zechariah that there is an Intercessor at God's throne pleading for them.*

Jeremiah was the first to mention the 70 year long exile¹³. According to Zechariah the Exile already lasted from 586 to 519 BCE, thus not literally 70 years. In 519 BCE God's anger had not yet stopped. For many people the Exile was still continuing (1:16).

1:13. So the LORD spoke kind and comforting words to the Angel who talked with me.

The LORD answered the angel that spoke to Zechariah (the interpreting angel and not the Angel of the LORD¹⁴) – because the answer was destined for the people.

1:14. Then the angel who was speaking to me said, "Proclaim this word: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I have jealous/zealous love for Jerusalem and Zion,

The interpreting angel answered that Zechariah should proclaim the comforting words of the LORD to the people, namely, that the LORD is burning with love and zeal for Zion. 'Zion' refers to Jerusalem as the place where the temple is situated.

1:15. but I am very angry with the nations that feel secure (unconcerned). I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity.'

The love and zeal the LORD has for his people has a reverse side. The LORD is angry at the nations that did evil against Judah. They are responsible for the dispersion of Judah (1:21; 2:6-8). The overthrow of kingdoms¹⁵ would certainly come. Babel that had become a part of the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 BCE was still at peace. It held Judeans (Jews) in submission, but was living carefree and without reference to God. During the exile the LORD was angry at Judah, but now that the time of being angry had passed, the nations made it worse.

God's punishment is in reality a chastisement in love¹⁶. However heavy God's anger¹⁷ had been in the past, it will be 'a little anger' in comparison with the love the Lord would show his people. *God's anger is not designed to destroy them, but to save them.* The heathen nations (with their religions) are God's instruments to punish his people or to put them to the test¹⁸. God's anger is directed against the heathen nations because it is their purpose to destroy God's people.

1:16. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: "I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt. And the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem,' declares the LORD Almighty.

1:17. Proclaim further: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'My towns will again overflow with prosperity. And the LORD will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.'"

'Zion' refers to Jerusalem as the place where the temple is located. The rebuilding of the temple would be continued and completed. The city would be divided into plots and would be rebuilt. 'To comfort Zion' means that the LORD would change Zion's misery and adversity into salvation and prosperity. See Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort, comfort my people. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem." The change of her destiny was forthcoming! 'To again choose Jerusalem' means that the LORD would *make Jerusalem again the place of revealing his salvation* (2:12; 3:2).

The initial fulfilment is the rebuilding of the temple and the city under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and the flourishing of the nation of Judah. The usurpers of Judah, who touch 'the apple of God's eye' (2:6-9), will fall prey to the nations that were their former slaves.

The ultimate fulfilment is the completion of the work of salvation of Jesus Christ in the end-time.

Zechariah 1:18-21. The second vision. The humbling of the nations in the world.

1:18. Then I looked up – and there before me were four horns!

1:19. I asked the (interpreting) angel who was speaking to me, "What are these?" He answered me, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel (another name for Judah: 'the people of the LORD')¹⁹ and Jerusalem."

'Horns' are the symbol of power and might²⁰. Here it is the might of the nations of the world that had dispersed Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. The four animals in Daniel 7 symbolise 4 subsequent world empires²¹.

¹³ Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10. regards the 70 years from the beginning of the exile to the return of the first exiles (605-536 BCE). However, Zechariah 1:12 regards the 70 years from the destruction of the temple to the rebuilding of the temple (586-516 BCE).

¹⁴ The Dutch translation translates: "The Angel of the LORD who spoke to me."

¹⁵ Haggai 2:23

¹⁶ Compare Revelation 3:19, "Those who I love I rebuke (elengchó) and discipline (paideuó)." And Hebrews 12:5-6, "Do not make light of the Lord's discipline (paideia) and do not lose heart when he rebukes (elengchó) you; because the Lord disciplines (paideuó) those he loves and he punishes (mastogó) everyone he accepts as a son."

¹⁷ God's indignation (Zacharia 7:12)

¹⁸ God's rod, God's axe (Isaiah 10:5,15). Compare the LORD's shepherd (Isaiah 44:28)

¹⁹ In Zechariah 1:21 only Judah is mentioned.

²⁰ Psalm 18:2; 75:5-6,10

²¹ The four consecutive kingdoms of the world are: the Babylonian Kingdom, the Medo-Persian Kingdom, the Greek Kingdom and the Seleucid Syrian Kingdom.

In the book Daniel ‘the 4 striking horns that replaced the one great horn’²² symbolised 4 future kingdoms. But *the 4 horns in Zechariah symbolise* kingdoms that already destroyed Judah and refer to *the empire of the world in all her appearances*.

1:20. Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen.

Zechariah sees four craftsmen. The Hebrew word is ‘iron workers’ (smiths), or ‘woodworkers’ (carpenters) or ‘stone workers’ (stonecutters). Here they probably symbolise smiths who use enormous hammers that can smash iron horns²³.

1:21. I asked, “What are these coming to do?” He answered, “These are the horns that scattered Juda so that no one could raise his head, but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.”

The interpreting angel says that Judah was not able to lift its head. Judah was completely powerless. The smiths came to break the power of the heathen (non-Jewish) nations. God would use his own means to smash their power.

The fulfilment. Haggai 2:1-10 and Zechariah 2:6-9. Judah’s usurpers would fall prey to God’s punishment and to nations that were their former slaves.

ZECHARIAH 2

Zechariah 2:1-5. The third vision. The man with a measuring line.

2:1. Then I looked up – and there before me was a man with a measuring line in his hand!

2:2. I asked, “Where are you going?” He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to find out how wide and how long it is (or: must become).

Zechariah asked the man with the measuring line what he was going to do. He answered that the measuring line would be stretched over Jerusalem, not to divide it into building plots²⁴, but to determine how great the city was. We *should think of the Jerusalem of the future, after the rebuilding of the temple (1:16).*

2:3. Then the (interpreting) angel who was speaking to me appeared and another angel came to meet him

The interpreting angel appeared again as well as a second angel who addressed him.

2:4. and said to him: Run, tell that young man (with the measuring line), ‘Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it.

The real contents of this vision is the promise of more glorious things. *The increase of the citizens would be so great that they could no longer be enclosed in the walls of the city. The city (the heavenly Jerusalem) would be immeasurably large²⁵!* The man with the measuring line hears that his effort was completely useless. Therefore we hear no more of his plan to measure the city.

2:5. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it.’ declares the LORD, ‘and I will be its glory within.’

The future of Jerusalem would be still more glorious! The LORD would be present in a very special way. He would be like a wall of fire on the outside of the city, thus protecting the city from attacks from every direction. The enemies that try to penetrate the city would be incinerated. And the LORD would be its glory within, that is, fill it with light and glory by his indwelling²⁶. *The city of God is depicted in words that point to a reality higher than this present world. It points to the Heavenly Jerusalem, the city of which God is the architect and builder, a heavenly country*²⁷.

Zechariah 2:6-13. Babel’s downfall and Zion’s elevation.

A prophetic utterance of Zechariah, which he added in between his visions.

2:6. “Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north”, declares the LORD “for I have scattered you to the four winds of heaven”, declares the LORD.

‘The land of the north’ is Babylon and is reached from Israel via the north and southeast²⁸. The prophet exhorts the people still dwelling there to flee²⁹ to Jerusalem (2:10) before the coming judgement of God (1:15,21; 2:9). The remnant who returned from Babylon in 536 BCE was very small.

2:7. “Come, O Zion! Escape you who live in the Daughter of Babylon!”

‘The Daughter of Babylon’ is Babylon, depicted as a woman/virgin.

²² Alexander the Great

²³ 1 Kings 22:11

²⁴ Compare Ezekiel 40 2-4

²⁵ Cf. Revelation 7:9

²⁶ Isaiah 4:5 and Isaiah 60:1,19

²⁷ Hebrews 11:10,16

²⁸ Jeremiah 1:14

²⁹ Isaiah 48:20

2:8. For this is what the LORD Almighty says: After he has honoured me (to prophesy) against the nations that have plundered you – for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye -

‘The glory/honour’ of God is a description of God himself and represents God’s divine characteristics and nearness. The prophet Zechariah said that he had been sent by God: “Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me” (2:9,11; 4:9; 6:15). People will only believe God’s message when it has been sent with God’s authority. ‘The heathen people’ that had robbed Judah was first of all the Babylonian Empire, but now also the Medo-Persian Empire where a great number of Judeans (Jews) still lived.³⁰

God’s people is ‘the apple of his eye’. When God’s people are attacked, God is hit on a very sensitive place. In other words, God’s love includes serious indignation against people that oppress Judah (1:15). They stand under God’s punishing judgement.

2:9. I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me.

God is going to raise his hand against people that plunder his people. This is a threat against Assyria³¹ and is raised against the powerless threat of Assyria³². The lot of Judah’s plunderers has already been decided: they will become the spoils of the nations they had previously subjected.

The fulfilment with respect to Babel.

In 488 BCE Babel rebelled against Darius (550-486 BCE). Darius punished the city by breaking down its walls and towers. Later Xerxes (486-465 BCE) plundered her temple treasures. Alexander (340-323 BCE) and Antiochus (215-164 BCE) were more lenient against Babel. During the time of the Roman writer and politician, Plinius (61-113 CE), Babel was a heap of rubble.

2:10. “Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion. For I am coming, and I will live among you”, declares the LORD.

In Ezekiel’s vision the glory of the LORD departed from the temple³³. Now the LORD wanted to return with his glory and live in his house (the temple rebuilt) (1:16; 2:5).

2:11. Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.

This is a very clear prophecy that the heathen/Gentile nations in the world would also share in the salvation of the LORD. But these Old Testament prophecies still hold on to the notion that the Gentile believers will share in the salvation by joining Israel³⁴!

2:12. The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and will again choose Jerusalem.

Zechariah 2:12 (520 BCE) is the oldest known utterance in which ‘Canaan’ is depicted as ‘the holy land’. Hosea 9:3 (754-714 BCE) speaks about ‘the land of the LORD’. The LORD would make Judah (that is, the chosen believers in Judah/Israel, the remnant)³⁵ again *his inheritance*. He will again choose Jerusalem (1:17) as the place of his dwelling and the place of his revelation of salvation.

2:13. Be still before the LORD, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.”

‘All flesh’ (mankind) is an indication that all people are fragile, transient and little before God. God’s might and glory compels man to stand in awe before God³⁶.

ZECHARIAH 3

Zechariah 3:1-10. The fourth vision. The high priest Joshua.

3:1. Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse (oppose) him³⁷.

With the rebuilding of the temple one expects the restoring of the high priesthood of Joshua. Joshua stand before the Angel of the LORD. *The Satan stands next to him to oppose him, that is, to exclude him from God’s favour and prevent him being instated in the office of high priest.*

The Satan is the accuser of the believers (the brother) and accuses them day and night³⁸. First Joshua is freed from the guilt and shame that rested on the high priesthood during the exile and thus freed from Satan’s accusations and opposition. This is at the same time an encouragement for the people to continue rebuilding the temple.

³⁰ Haggai 2:23

³¹ Isaiah 11:15

³² Isaiah 10:32

³³ Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4,18; 11:22-23

³⁴ Cf. Isaiah 2:1-4; 45:23; 56:3,6

³⁵ Romans 9:6; Isaiah 1:9 (Romans 9:29); Isaiah 10:22 (Romans 9:27)

³⁶ Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7

³⁷ See Job 1:6; 1 Chronicles 21:1

³⁸ Revelation 12:10

The fulfilment. Just as the Old Testament high priesthood in general is a type of the eternal High Priesthood of Jesus Christ³⁹ and the name 'Jesus' essentially means exactly the same as the name 'Joshua'⁴⁰, likewise this event points typically to the day all sin, guilt and shame of believers would be removed!

3:2. The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

'The LORD' who answers the Satan is the Angel of the LORD before whom Joshua was standing. He defends Joshua vehemently. Whenever the LORD rebukes someone, then the person rebuked must immediately give way: for example, the Red Sea gave way⁴¹; the enemies gave way⁴²; the locusts gave way⁴³; the fever gave way⁴⁴; the wind gave way and the waves calmed⁴⁵; and the evil spirit was cast out⁴⁶. The LORD has chosen Jerusalem as the place of his dwelling and revelation (1:17; 2:12).

The attempt of Satan to exclude Joshua outside the LORD's favour, failed through God's chosen love for Joshua⁴⁷. Satan cannot undo God's elective love! True, Joshua had been snatched as a burning stick from the fire⁴⁸, referring to his escape from Babylon and its imminent destruction.

3:3. Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the Angel.

'The filthy clothes'⁴⁹ are a symbol of the sin and especially the guilt that rested on Joshua. This guilt had to be acquitted before Joshua could assume his task as high priest. The sin of Israel during the exile was very great:

- Jeremiah 5:30-31 says, "A horrible and shocking thing has happened in the land: The prophets prophesy lies, the priests rule by their own authority, and my people love it this way. But what will you do in the end?"
- Jeremiah 6:13 says: "From the least to the greatest, prophets and priests alike, all practise deceit." At the return from exile the sin and guilt of Judah had not yet been removed and the LORD had not yet returned to Juda (1:3)! The exile still continued for many people (1:12) and the sins committed after the return of the others had not yet been atoned for. The atonement and removal of sin happened at the first coming of Jesus Christ⁵⁰.

3:4. The Angel said to those standing before him, take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich (stately) garments⁵¹ on you.

The Angel of the LORD⁵² made atonement by taking the sin and guilt of Joshua upon himself⁵³! Then he clothed Joshua with the righteousness and holiness he gained on the cross⁵⁴.

3:5. Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the Angel of the LORD stood by.

'The stately garments and turban' point to the clothes of the high priest. 'The high-priest turban'⁵⁵ is also used to indicate the royal crown⁵⁶. The Angel of the LORD initially sat, but now stands. That is an indication that he is active. He himself is clothing Joshua with his stately garments (his righteousness and holiness).

3:6. The Angel of the LORD gave his charge to Joshua:

The Angel of the LORD gave Joshua two assurances (promises bound to conditions):

3:7. This is what the LORD Almighty says: "If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements: then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here."

The first assurance is that Joshua would lead the temple service. He would have authority over all temple servants⁵⁷ and be responsible for all services in the temple.

³⁹ Hebrews 7

⁴⁰ Joshua in Hebrew: Jehoshua = JaHWeH + hoshia (Hif, > Q jasha): the LORD saves.

⁴¹ Psalm 106:9

⁴² Isaiah 17:13

⁴³ Malachi 3:11

⁴⁴ Luke 4:39

⁴⁵ Luke 8:24

⁴⁶ Luke 9:42

⁴⁷ Jesus says that no one and nothing is able to snatch you from his hand (John 10:28). And the Spirit of Jesus says that no one and nothing is able to separate you from God's love for you (Romans 8:29)

⁴⁸ Amos 4:11. "Even though I overthrow you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, like a burning stick snatched from the fire, you will not return to me", declares the LORD.

⁴⁹ See Ephesians 4:22-24

⁵⁰ Haggai 1:9-11

⁵¹ Beautiful-, pomp- official clothes. Isaiah 1:18 says, "Clean, white clothes".

⁵² The Angel of the LORD is the appearance of Jesus Christ before his first coming

⁵³ Isaiah 53:4-6, "..... The LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

John 1:29. "Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

1 Peter 2:24. "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree."

⁵⁴ See 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 4:24; Romans 13:14

⁵⁵ Hebrew: mitsnefet (Exodus 28:4)

⁵⁶ Ezekiel 21:26

⁵⁷ See 2 Kings 11:18-20

The LORD promises that Joshua would have a place among the heavenly servants of God. The prophet Elijah says in 1 Kings 17:1, “The LORD, the God of Israel, whom I serve.” Even though Joshua is still on earth, the LORD regards him as belonging to the servants of God, the angels, standing before him!

3:8. “Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come (who serve as signs of wonder) – I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.

Joshua’s associates are priests “seated before him” when they are gathered in a meeting. These men are called ‘signs of wonder’ because they were not destroyed during the exile, even though they were rescued as burning branches from the fire. This removal of guilt, forgiveness and restoration is a sign of greater things which the LORD would do during the New Testament period. The Lord is going to fulfil the old promise of the Messianic period of salvation. ‘The Branch’ is ‘the Servant of the LORD’, the Messiah (6:12-13)⁵⁸ who would be the new shoot from the old stump (the fallen royal house of David)⁵⁹.

3:9. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it, says the LORD Almighty, and I will remove the sin (*unrighteousness*) of his land in a single day.

‘The stone’ which is the capstone of the temple building, is only seen in the vision and has symbolic significance. It points to the completion of the temple building under the leadership of Zerubbabel (4:6). The LORD himself would engrave the engraving on it⁶⁰. The engraving consists of seven eyes (small rings). ‘The seven eyes’ symbolise the eyes of the LORD which range throughout the earth (4:10). This shows that the rebuilding of the temple is God’s work and under his protection. He would avert every calamity.

The completion of the temple is placed in the light of the messianic future. “The glory of the future temple would be greater than that of the first temple”⁶¹. The “Branch ... would build the temple of the LORD”⁶² ... He would be Priest on his throne ...” (6:12-13). The blessing of the Messianic Age is that the sin and guilt of the land would be removed in one day.” The promise of the forgiveness of sins is found in other Messianic promises⁶³. It is fulfilled in one day through the atonement sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.⁶⁴

3:10. “In that day each of you will invite his neighbour to sit under his vine and fig tree,” declares the LORD Almighty.

This is the outward side of salvation. People would invite one another to fellowship and enjoy the peace of everything that is good.

ZECHARIAH 4

Zechariah 4:1-14. The fifth vision: The gold lampstand and the two olive trees.

The fourth and fifth vision belong together. In the fourth vision the high priest Joshua is shown to the prophet Zechariah and in the fifth vision the gold lampstand. Both refer to *the restoration of the Old Testament religion*.

4:1. Then the angel who talked with me returned and wakened me as a man is wakened from his sleep.

Probably in the same night Zechariah received the fifth vision. The interpreting angel appears again to Zechariah. In the other visions, Zechariah “looked up” (1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1). Here the interpreting angel wakens Zechariah from his sleep. The state of consciousness of Zechariah is non-active.

4:2. He asked me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl (*a small oil cask*) at the top and seven lights on it, with seven channels to the lights.

4:3. Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left.

Zechariah sees a gold lampstand with seven arms (three to each side), a small oil cask (bowl) on the top of the lampstand and an olive tree on each side of the lampstand that keeps filling the oil cask.

In the tabernacle stood a golden lampstand⁶⁵, but in the temple of Solomon stood ten golden lampstands, each with seven lamps⁶⁶. The lamps in the temple of Solomon were lit every evening and burned throughout the night. In the temple of Zerubbabel there probably stood one golden lampstand. This was removed by Antiochus Epiphanes when he desecrated the temple on the 15th Kislev 167 BCE⁶⁷. Later Judas the Maccabee restored the temple with one golden lampstand, which was robbed by the Romans in 70 CE⁶⁸.

⁵⁸ Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; see Isaiah 11:1; 53:2.

⁵⁹ Isaiah 11:1

⁶⁰ See Exodus 32:16.

⁶¹ Haggai 2:7-10

⁶² See Matthew 16:18

⁶³ Jeremiah 31:3; Micah 7:18-19

⁶⁴ Hebrews 7:27

⁶⁵ Exodus 25:31vv

⁶⁶ 1 Kings 7:49

⁶⁷ 1 Maccabees 1:21,54

⁶⁸ 1 Maccabees 4:48-49. Its image appears on the Arch of Titus in Rome.

4:4. I asked the angel who talked with me , “What are these, my lord?”

4:5. He answered, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord”, I replied.

4:6. So he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit”, says the LORD Almighty.

This word of the LORD is a *promise with regard to the completion of rebuilding the temple*. The rebuilding started on 21st September 520 BCE and five months later Zechariah receives a promise that the rebuilding of the temple would be accomplished, not by human power, but by divine power. Also Haggai received this promise: “Be strong ... and work. For I am with you”, declares the LORD Almighty . “MY Spirit remains among you. Do not fear”⁶⁹. The Spirit of the LORD inspired, led and provided invincible power to Zerubbabel and his co-workers.

The lampstand with lamps is a picture of the restored temple. In the previous vision Zechariah saw the restoration of the high priest and in this vision he sees the restoration of the golden lampstand, one of the essential characteristics of Israel’s sanctuary. The meaning of the vision is that the temple would be rebuilt by the Spirit of the LORD. The oil in the lamps symbolise the work of the Holy Spirit within the Church⁷⁰. The number ‘seven’ (3:9) depict the divine fullness of the grace of the Holy Spirit⁷¹. The Spirit of the LORD is the factual reality of the restored temple! The temple during the Old Testament period had its origin in God and was established by the work of the Spirit of the LORD. Likewise the Church during the New Testament period has its origin in Christ and is established by the work of the Holy Spirit⁷². In the real temple the golden lampstand is not filled with oil by human hands. The oil was brought to the lamps via the two olive trees, the small oil cask and the seven supply channels. This is the pinnacle of this vision. See the explanation of ‘the two who are anointed’ in verse 14.

4:7. “What are you, O mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of ‘God bless it! God bless it!’”

‘The high mountains’ consist of human objections and problems and they will fall away as time goes. “Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low, the rough (*crooked*) ground shall become level, the rugged (*rocky*) places a plain”⁷³.” Zerubbabel will complete the rebuilding. He will place the capstone (3:9) on the pinnacle of the temple before the eyes of the crowd when the rebuilding has been completed.

4:8. Then the word of the LORD came to me:

4:9. “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple: his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you.”

The LORD promised that the rebuilding will be completed by Zerubbabel. Zechariah adds that the people will be convinced that he had been sent by the LORD.

4:10. Who despises the day of small things? Men will rejoice when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. (These seven eyes are the eyes of the LORD which range throughout the earth).

The prophet Haggai encouraged the veterans who may have still seen the first temple and the fainthearted among the people, with the words: “Be strong ... and work. For I (the LORD) am with you. My Spirit remains among you. Do not fear”⁷⁴. Likewise Zechariah must encourage the fainthearted to persevere rebuilding the temple. When they see Zerubbabel place the capstone, they will rejoice.

‘The seven eyes’ on the capstone, which the LORD Himself engraved on it, represent the eyes of the LORD ranging throughout the world and overseeing the completion of the rebuilding.

4:11. Then I asked the angel , “What are these two olive trees? On the right and on the left of the lampstand?”

4:12. Again I asked him, “What are these two ears of corn (*olive branches*) beside the two gold pipes that pour out golden olive oil?”

Zechariah sees two olive trees⁷⁵ and specifically two olive branches heavy laden with olives like corn ears. The olives drip oil into the pipes. The oil has the gold-yellow’ colour of olive oil. In this way the lamps on the lampstand are fed by the olive trees.

4:13. He replied, “Do you not know what these are?” “No, my lord,” I said.

4:14. So he said, “These (*the two ears of corn as sources of the Spirit*) are the two ‘oil sons’⁷⁶ (*those who are anointed*) to serve the LORD of all the earth.

⁶⁹ Haggai 2:4

⁷⁰ 1 Samuel 10:1,6; 1 Samuel 16:13; Isaiah 61:1; Mark 6:13; Acts 4:27,31; Acts 10:38; 2 Corinthians 1:21

⁷¹ Isaiah 11:2; Revelation 5:6

⁷² Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22

⁷³ Isaiah 40:4; Matthew 17:20

⁷⁴ Haggai 2:5

⁷⁵ Hebrew: zajit plural zetim

⁷⁶ Hebrew: bene ha-jitshar, ‘sons of (fresh) oil’

The Hebrew word 'bene ha-jitshar' is translated by 'oil-sons' (best translation) or 'anointed' (a lesser translation) and means that are 'full fresh oil'⁷⁷. They refer to the Spirit in heaven who is the Source. They do not refer to the offices of Zerubbabel and Joshua, because *they receive the Spirit and are bearers of the Spirit, rather than the source of the Spirit*.⁷⁸ Zerubbabel was not an (anointed) king and Zechariah as prophet had probably not been anointed. In Zechariah 4 the two oil-sons are the source of the Spirit that keeps the lamps burning. These sources do not stand on earth (as kings and prophets), but with the LORD in heaven. *This prophecy points beyond the earthly sanctuary to the spiritual sanctuary, the Church of the New Covenant, that would be built through the work of the Holy Spirit.*

The initial fulfilment. The vision refers to the near future: the completion of the rebuilding of the second temple by its heavenly Source (the Holy Spirit).

The ultimate fulfilment. The vision is a prophecy about the future building of the New Testament Church as the dwelling of God through his Holy Spirit⁷⁹. It points forward to the Church of the New Covenant. In Revelation 1:20 the seven lampstands are the symbol of the worldwide Church of which Jesus Christ is the Centre and Head. The calling and task of the Church is to let the light given to her (by the Spirit) shine in the world⁸⁰.

ZECHARIAH 5

The following two visions are about God acting against the sin found in the land of Judah: theft and perjury in verse 3 and iniquity in verse 6.

Zechariah 5:1-4. The sixth vision: The flying scroll.

5:1. I looked again and there before me was a flying scroll.

5:2. He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide."

Zechariah saw a flying scroll. It was unrolled, because he could estimate its length and breadth. There was writing on the scroll. It is a curse over individual sinners, as thieves, perjurers and wicked people. Where it came from is not told, but apparently from heaven because God made it fly out.

5:3. And he said to me, "This is the curse, that is going out over the whole land. For according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according what it says on the other (side), everyone who swears falsely will be banished."

5:4. The LORD Almighty declares, "I will send it out, and I will enter the house of the thief and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. I will remain in his house and destroy it, both its timbers and its stones."

The interpreting angel said that God was announcing a curse over sinners. The curse was issued by God and went over the whole land of Judah. The curse would settle down in the house of the thief (a sin in ethical area) the perjurer (sin in religious area).

Zechariah 5:5-11. The seventh vision: The woman in a basket.

5:5. Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what this is that is appearing."

The interpreting angel again appeared in the vision (2:3).

5:6. I asked, "What is it?" he replied, "It is a measuring basket." And he added, "This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land."

Like in the previous vision it concerned the sin of the Judeans (Jews) in the whole land. They had returned from exile, but had not returned to God (1:3)!

5:7. Then the cover of lead was raised, and there in the basket sat a woman!

The basket (Hebrew: efa) was a corn measure (about 30-40 litre), but because a woman was sitting in it, it did not refer to the measurement. The flying scroll as well as the basket had unusual measurements.

5:8. He said, "This is wickedness." And he pushed her back into the basket and pushed the lead cover down over its mouth (the opening of the basket).

It looked as if the woman tried to escape out of the basket, but the angel pushed the heavy lid down. She would not be able to escape and fill the land (of Israel) with her iniquity. She would be carried away. Evil was strong in the land, but the LORD is stronger. He conquered her in order to liberate the land from evil⁸¹.

⁷⁷ Compare Isaiah 5:1 'ben-shaman', 'son of fat/rich earth' or 'fruitful land'.

⁷⁸ The modified picture of this in Revelation 11:4 alludes to Zechariah 4, but is only an application of this to the prophetic office of the two witnesses who like Elijah and Moses had great authority (Revelation 11:6).

⁷⁹ Ephesians 2:22

⁸⁰ Matthew 5:14,16; Philippians 2:15

⁸¹ See Matthew 12:29. Jesus bound the strong man /Satan and now robs his house/the kingdom of the world of its possession (Colossians 1:13).

5:9. Then I looked up – and there before me were two women, with the wind in their wings! They had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth.

He saw two women with wings that looked like those of a stork, thus large and strong in order to fly a long distance. They picked the basket with the woman (all unrighteousness of Judah) in it up and flew with a tailwind from behind high between heaven and earth

5:10. “Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel who was speaking to me.

5:11. He replied to me, “To the country of Babylonia (Sinear) to build a house for it. When it is ready, the basket will be set there in its place (on its pedestal).”

They brought the godlessness to Sinear⁸² (Babylonia) in order to build a dwelling (temple) for her there. Sinear represents the godless world empire: “On her forehead was written, ‘Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth’⁸³. In Zechariah Babylon represents the world empire and in the book of Revelation she represents the world empire Rome. Godlessness is there at home. The future salvation of the LORD consists of: the LORD comes and carries godlessness away!

ZECHARIAH 6

Zechariah 6:1-8. The eighth vision: The four chariots.

This vision resembles the first vision (1:7-17). But there are differences: four horses instead of three (1:8); the black and dabbled horses are not mentioned in chapter 1; and the horses have no riders, but pull chariots. In chapter 1 they returned from a journey throughout the world, but in chapter 6 they are sent out to go throughout the earth. Chapter 6 is thus the counterpart of chapter 1.

6:1. I looked up again – and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains – mountains of bronze!

The wagons are war or chariots of the cherubim⁸⁴ and depict winds. The chariots come from the presence of the LORD of the whole world (6:5) from between the two mountains of bronze. These two bronze mountains stand as great pillars at the entrance of heaven, possibly facing the rising sun⁸⁵.

6:2. The first chariot had red horses, the second black,

6:3. the third white, and the fourth dappled – all of them powerful.

6:4. I asked the angel who was speaking to me , “What are (the meaning of) these my lord?”

6:5. The angel answered me, “These are the four spirits (or: winds) of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the LORD of the whole world.

As before, he receives a reply from the interpreting angel. ‘The four chariots’ are ‘the four winds’ and symbolise the servants of the LORD⁸⁶. They stood before the LORD to give a report on their previous assignment⁸⁷ and to receive a new assignment.

6:6. The one with the black horses is going towards the north country, the one with the white horses towards the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south.

6:7. When the powerful horses went out (or: and the red horses toward the east) they were straining to go throughout the earth. And he said, “Go throughout the earth!” So they went throughout the earth.

The command is given by the LORD himself (6:8), (“my Spirit”). He only has the right and the power to command. Now the chariots (winds) are moving out to range throughout the whole earth The colours of the horses correspond to the destinations they are sent to: the black horses to the north, the dark sky; the white horses to the west, the glistening sun on the Mediterranean Sea; the red horses to the east, the red sky at sunrise. The dappled horses are not so clear. The horses trample impatiently, waiting for the command of the LORD to depart.

6:8. Then he called to me, “Look, those going toward the north country have let my Spirit down (NIV: have given my Spirit rest) in the land of the north.”

From his divine majesty and power the LORD ‘calls’ the prophet Zechariah. The contents are the nucleus of the message of the last vision: the chariot with the red horses carry the Spirit of the LORD to the north country, Babylon. The Hebrew word for ‘Spirit’ is the same as ‘wind’: ‘ruach’. It is a characteristic of the Spirit to function like the wind. “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going: So it is with everyone born of the Spirit⁸⁸.” Here the Spirit of the LORD is let down in the middle of Babylon in order to intervene and take action.

⁸² Genesis 10:10-11; 11:2

⁸³ Revelation 17:5

⁸⁴ 1 Chronicles 28:18

⁸⁵ In Egyptian wall pictures the rising sun is depicted between two mountains.

⁸⁶ See Psalm 104:3-4

⁸⁷ Job 1:6

⁸⁸ John 3:8

Does the Spirit of the LORD come to judge or to bring salvation? Both are possible. Here God reveals not only the godlessness (5:10-11) but also the Spirit of the LORD (6:8) within the north country (Sinear, Babylon)(a symbol of the kingdom of the world).

The Spirit first comes to judge the godlessness brought together in the north country. The LORD will wash away the filth of the women of Zion, and cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a Spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire⁸⁹. The prophecy in the eighth vision resembles the prophecies in the second (1:20-21) and third (2:6-7) vision. Here the judgement is for what the enemy had done to Judah.

The Spirit especially comes to save. Still many of Zion's children remained behind in the north country (2:7). The prophecy that follows the eighth vision speaks about the gifts which the Judeans gave for rebuilding the temple (6:10-11).

The Spirit is the Executor of rebuilding the temple (4:7). The people of the LORD will be brought to Jerusalem out of the dispersion to the east and the west (8:7-8; see 2:4-5) and many other people from the Gentile nations will join themselves to the LORD (2:11; 8:22). They will be joined to the resettled people of the LORD in Jerusalem.

Note the contrast between the first and the last vision. The first vision spoke of the disappointment of the horse riders because "the earth was at rest and in peace" (1:11). But when the Spirit of the LORD is let down in the north country the rest and peace comes to an end! The judgement of the LORD sets the whole world in turmoil and many out of the (Jewish) exiles and out of the non-Jewish heathen are seeking the salvation of the LORD that is revealed in Zion.

Nothing is said about the other chariots and horses, but they imply that the Spirit of the LORD would be carried to the uttermost parts of the world and also let down in the east, the west and the south. *The Spirit of the LORD is sent everywhere to judge the wicked and godless and to prepare the inauguration of the Messianic Age of salvation.*

The fulfilment. *This vision goes into fulfilment at the first coming of the LORD Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.*

Zechariah 6:9-15. Joshua crowned.

The result of the last vision: the letting down of the Spirit of the LORD in the north country (6:8) is that the Messiah would come and complete the rebuilding of the temple! The presentation of the prophecy is that the temple would not be rebuilt by Zerubbabel, but by the Messiah!

6:9. The word of the LORD came to me:

Also the building of the New Testament 'temple' (the Church) is not the work of people, but of the Lord Jesus Christ⁹⁰. Zechariah receives another word of the LORD, this time not by a vision, but by inward dictation of the LORD. The prophet must also perform a prophetic act⁹¹.

6:10. Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobija and Jedaiah (verse 11), who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah.

6:11. Take the silver and the gold and make a crown, and set it (*symbolically*) on the head of the high priest, Joshua, son of Jehozadak.

Heldai, Tobiah en Jedaiah were delegates from the exiles in Babylon who brought gifts of silver and gold from them towards the rebuilding of the temple⁹². These men stayed at the house of Josiah. Zechariah had to go to that house and receive the gifts. The gifts they brought would become a memorial in the temple (6:14). Zechariah had to make a crown⁹³ from the silver and gold. The crown was probably made by a goldsmith. Then he had to place the crown on the head of the high priest Joshua. This was unusual, because a crown was usually placed on the head of a king and a turban on the head of a high priest (3:5).

6:12. Tell him (*Joshua*), this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Here is the man whose Name is 'the Branch' and he will branch out from his place and will build the temple of the LORD.

The crown speaks about something different than Joshua's high priesthood. *The prophetic action is about a Man called the Branch. That he is the Messiah follows from Zechariah 3:8 in the fourth vision and from the fact that he would build the temple of the LORD⁹⁴. The rebuilding of the temple is not attributed to Zerubbabel, but to the work of the Messiah!* This prophecy was probably not spoken in the period after the death of Zerubbabel and therefore does not originate in the period after the completion of the rebuilding of the temple, but was uttered during the time Zerubbabel was governor.

⁸⁹ Isaiah 4:4; Matthew 3:11

⁹⁰ Matthew 16:18. "I will build my Church (ekklésia)."

⁹¹ As in Isaiah (Isaiah 7:3-4) and Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37:16-28).

⁹² Compare Ezra 8:25; Nehemiah 7:70

⁹³ The word is in the plural, but the singular is intended

⁹⁴ Likewise 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 (written after 400 BCE.)

Zerubbabel is not included in this action, because the prophecy characterises the Messiah as *the Priest-King* (6:13). *The Messiah would be “a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse”, that is from the royal house of David that had died out*⁹⁵. *He would grow tall from a small beginning.* He would rebuild the house of the LORD⁹⁶.

Zerubbabel would complete the rebuilding of the temple (4:9). He completed the stone building in 516 BCE. But Zechariah 6:12 refers *the coming Messiah who would build the spiritual temple, the Church during the Messianic Age (the New Testament period)!*

6:13. It is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on the throne. And He will be a priest on his throne (he is thus the Priest and the King!) And there will be harmony between the two.

Also here he is contrasted with Zerubbabel and Joshua. Messianic glory is not predicted for Zerubbabel even though some people expected that. Zerubbabel was not even crowned as king and he was also not a priest. His work was temporarily.

The explanation of the LORD refers to the glory of the coming Messiah. He (the Messiah) will sit on his throne and be a Priest on his throne! The crowning of the high priest Joshua points forward to the coming of the Priest-King. *He will unite the High priesthood and the glorious Kingship in his Person.* The sentence “between the two there would be harmony” sets out from the Old Testament circumstances in which the high priesthood and kingship were separated and born by two people, as Joshua and Zerubbabel. The double office of the Messiah as High Priest and King would lead to peace and salvation for the people of God. What was only partially true during the Old Testament period and sometimes even the opposite, will be perfect during the Messianic Age. The two lines in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the one line in the prophecy in Psalm 110:1,4⁹⁷: “The LORD (Hebrew : JaHWeH) says to my Lord (Hebrew: Adonai): ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. ... The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek’”. *The kingship and the priesthood in the Old Testament merge in Jesus Christ.*

6:14. The crown will be given to Heldai, Tobiah, Jedaiah and Hen son of Zephaniah as a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

6:15. Those who are far away will come and help to build the temple of the LORD, and you will know that the LORD Almighty has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the LORD your God.

Verse 14 and 15 is not what Zechariah had to say to Joshua, but is still a part of the LORD’s words. The golden crown which Zechariah had to make receives another destination. It was suspended in the temple⁹⁸ ‘as a memorial’ of the gift⁹⁹ of silver and gold which the three men gave to make a crown and of the hospitality of Zephaniah.

Verse 15 says that this act has an even higher significance: their act is a prophecy about the future in which those who live far away will come to rebuild the temple of the LORD. This is a reference to the Jewish exiles in Babylon and also *to the non-Jews in the heathen nations who will come and build the New Testament temple (the Church of the new covenant).* *Zechariah 2:11 says, “Many nations will be joined with the LORD in that day and will become my people. I will live among you”*¹⁰⁰.

The future is described in terms of descriptions in the Old Testament, in which the outward temple occupy a dominant place. The fulfilment of this prophecy happened when Jews as well as non-Jews are brought into the New Testament Church (temple). Haggai 2:7,9 says, “I will shake all the nations and the desired (object or Person of Delight) of all nations (namely, Jesus Christ) will come, and I will fill this house (the New Testament temple/the Church) with glory. ... greater than the glory of the former (Old Testament temple).”

In the time of fulfilment all will see that the LORD sent Zechariah as prophet. *Only in the way of faith and obedience will the nation share in the salvation of the LORD*¹⁰¹!

The initial fulfilment. Zerubbabel will rebuild the literal Old Testament stone temple (4:9).

The ultimate fulfilment. The Messiah, Jesus Christ, will build the spiritual New Testament temple, the Church¹⁰².

ZECHARIAH 7

Zecharia 7:1-14. The LORD requires obedience to his Word and keeping his moral commands.

Chapter 7 and 8 contains preaching of the prophet in answer to the question whether people should maintain the tradition of fasting during the 5th month now that the temple is being rebuilt?

⁹⁵ Isaiah 11:1-2

⁹⁶ The Church during the new covenant. See Matthew 16:18; John 2:19-22

⁹⁷ David was king between 1011- 971 BCE.

⁹⁸ When the rebuilding of the temple was completed

⁹⁹ See Exodus 30:11-16; Numbers 31:50-54

¹⁰⁰ See Isaiah 56:3-8; Romans 11:25

¹⁰¹ Hebrews 4:1-6. Many Jews did not enter ‘the rest’ due to their unbelief and disobedience!

¹⁰² Matthew 16:18; John 2:19-22; Ephesians 2:19-22; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5

Zechariah answers by preaching about the past, the present and the future.

- 7:1-14. Past. Zechariah proclaims that the LORD required through the mouths of the earlier prophets something different than fasting, namely, obedience to his Word and keeping his moral commands. Read Isaiah 58:3-12. God punished the fathers for their disobedience by sending them into exile.
- 8:1-17. Present. Zechariah proclaims that over against the gloomy past, the period of salvation had in principle begun in which the LORD would freely love, show mercy and grace to his people and require of them to maintain his moral commands. The future would reveal this completely.
- 8:18-23. Future. The prediction and promise of salvation is continued. *That is why the times of fasting will change into times of joyful feasting!* The moral requirement to love truth and peace remains.

He teaches two important things with regard to fasting:

- *Serving the LORD is something different than fasting (7:5).*
- *In the (New Testament) time of salvation the Jewish times of fasting will be changed into times of joyful feasting (8:19)!*

7:1. In the fourth year of king Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the 4th day of the 9th month , the month of Kislev.

7:2. The people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-Melech, together with their men, to entreat the LORD, 7:3 by asking the priests of the house of the LORD Almighty and the prophets, ‘Should I mourn and fast (*abstain from food*) in the 5th month, as I have done for so many years?’

This prophecy was spoken in November/December 518 BCE, in the middle of the temple building period (520-516 BCE). A delegation from Bethel, that before belonged to the northern kingdom of Israel, had a question about the fasting days. ‘To entreat the LORD’ happened by bringing burnt offerings on the altar (outside the temple). They also brought sacrifices to get an answer on their question.

They asked a question about *fasting, which was not a part of the ceremonial law of Israel, but rather a tradition of fasting that was added during the exile.* Therefore, prophetic enlightenment was needed.

The four fasting days were inaugurated after the catastrophic event in 586 BCE. During the 70 years of exile in Babylon, the Israelites commemorated four disasters:

- The 10th day of the 10th month¹⁰³. The beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (589 BCE).
- The 9th day of the 4th month¹⁰⁴. The wall of Jerusalem was broken through and Jerusalem was captured (587 BCE)¹⁰⁵.
- The 10th day of the 5th month¹⁰⁶. The city and the temple was burned by fire by the Chaldeans. The walls of Jerusalem were broken down and a great number citizens of Judah were carried into exile to Babel (587 BCE).
- The 3rd day of the 7th month¹⁰⁷. Ishmael murdered the governor Gedaliah and the Judeans with him. Then the remaining Judeans fled to Egypt (587 BCE).

The Bethelites regarded fasting on the 5th month very important. Zechariah’s answer shows that they over-emphasized this fasting day and therefore found it difficult to give it up.

7:4. Then the word of the LORD Almighty came to me:

7:5. “Ask all the people of the land and the priests , ‘When you fasted and mourned in the 5th and 7th (months) for the past 70 years, was it really for me that you fasted?’

7:6. And when you were eating and drinking, were you not feasting for yourselves?’

‘The people of the land’ refer to the Judeans gathered on the temple plain to listen to Zechariah¹⁰⁸. *During the Old Testament period God required fasting only on one day every year, namely the ‘the day of Atonement’¹⁰⁹.* Then the believers ‘had to humble themselves’ or ‘to deny their souls something’ (‘to make their souls suffer some hardship.’) Isaiah 58:1-12 clearly teaches that when believers ‘deny their souls something’ they had to *refrain from unrighteousness and oppression, refrain from eating and drinking in order to share with the poor.* Although the primary meaning of the word affects the soul more than the stomach, it probably included refraining from eating and drinking¹¹⁰. Isaiah uses both Hebrew words together¹¹¹.

But Zechariah does not refer to the fasting once a year on the Day of Atonement! He teaches that fasting in itself has no merit with God and is also not what God actually want people to do¹¹².

7:7 Are these not the words of the LORD proclaimed through the earlier prophets when Jerusalem and its surrounding towns were at rest and prosperous, and the Negev and the western foothills were settled?’

7:8. And the word of the LORD came again to Zechariah:

¹⁰³ 2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1

¹⁰⁴ Jeremiah 39:2; 52:6v

¹⁰⁵ Jerusalem was besieged for 18 months between 589-587 (or 588-586 BCE)

¹⁰⁶ Jeremiah 52:12-16; 2 Kings 25:8-12.

¹⁰⁷ Jeremiah 41:1v; 2 Kings 25:25v.

¹⁰⁸ Haggai 2:5

¹⁰⁹ Leviticus 16:29-34; 23:26-32; Numbers 29:7

¹¹⁰ Acts 27:9.

¹¹¹ Isaiah 58:1-5. **Tsom** = to fast/abstain from food + **Innah nefesh** = to cause privation/ to afflict or chastise the soul. To abstain

¹¹² Cf. Matthew 6:16-18

7:9. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Administer true justice show mercy and compassion to one another. 7:10. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.

What God requires already before the exile was that the Judeans keep the moral commandments: to make just judgements, to do good, to show mercy and to refrain from oppressing the weak and devising evil against others. Zechariah was well at home in the Scriptures of the earlier prophets (1:4) and completely in agreeance with them *in combatting all kinds of outward religion*.

7:11. But they refused to pay attention: stubbornly they turned their backs (became stiff-necked)¹¹³ and stopped up their ears¹¹⁴ (so that they did not have to listen).

7:12. They made their hearts as hard as flint¹¹⁵ and would not listen to the law or to the words that the LORD Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the LORD Almighty was very angry.

Their sin was deliberate disobedience. The ‘words of the LORD’ included all the prophetic preaching and teaching. Reminding people of the words of the earlier prophets intended to call them to repentance. The anger of the LORD was expressed in the exile, which in 518 BCE had not yet ended for many.

7:13. “When I called, they did not listen: so when they called, I would not listen, “says the LORD Almighty.

The LORD says, “How long will fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you. And made my thoughts known to you. But since you rejected me when I called, and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice, and would not accept my rebuke, in turn I will laugh at your disaster; mock ... when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you, ... Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me, but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD, since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them, but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease without fear of harm”¹¹⁶.

7:14. I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations, where they were strangers. The land was left so desolate behind them that no one could come or go. This is how they made the pleasant land desolate.

The Judeans (Jews) went into exile and the land of Canaan was destroyed because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD. In this way Zechariah drew their attention to something other than fasting. God does not require fasting, but listening to his voice and keeping his moral commands. *Listening to the voice of the LORD and keeping his moral commands leads to experiencing the favour of the LORD.*

ZECHARIAH 8

Zechariah 8:1-17. The period of salvation has begun and will be fully revealed in the future.

The better present and the joyful future. *The present is only mentioned with respect to the future time of salvation.* Since the time of the rebuilding of the temple God changed his attitude towards the people (8:2,9,11,15). In the end he returned to his divine requirement (demand): not fasting, but keeping the moral commandments is important.

Chapter 8:1-17 consists of seven oracles and chapter 8:18-23 of three more.

8:1. Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me.

The first oracle.

8:2. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her (1:14), and I am very angry due to her sin (1:15; 2:8).

The message of the Old- and the New Testament is that God saves those who submit to him and judge those who harden themselves against God. God’s presence leads to either salvation or damnation (judgement).

The second oracle.

8:3. This is what the LORD says: “I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem (2:10). Then Jerusalem will be called ‘the City of Truth’ (2:10), and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called ‘the Holy Mountain’.

The period of salvation begins with:

- *The partial return of exiles from Babylon*
- *The beginning of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (1:16)*
- *Prophecies about the Messianic period of salvation (the New Testament period)*

¹¹³ Nehemiah 9:29; Hosea 4:16

¹¹⁴ Literally: make their ears heavy. Isaiah 6:10

¹¹⁵ Jeremiah 17:1; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26

¹¹⁶ Proverbs 1:22-32

Ezekiel 48:35 says, “The name of the city from that time on will be: ‘THE LORD IS THERE’. God’s presence is accompanied by truth, righteousness and holiness.

The third oracle.

8:4. This is what the LORD Almighty says: Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of his age (*the great number of days*).

8:5. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there.

In the future period of salvation people will reach a relatively high age¹¹⁷ and the number of the people of God will be high¹¹⁸.

The fourth oracle

8:6 This is what the LORD Almighty says: “It may seem marvellous to the remnant of his people at that time (after 587 BCE), but will it seem marvellous (*too wonderful*) to me?” declares the LORD Almighty.

The LORD contrasts the faint-heartedness and the lack of faith of the people with the greatness of the salvation of the LORD. Salvation will surely come. “Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you. ... I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?”¹¹⁹

The fifth oracle.

8:7. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east (*where the sun rises*) and the west (*where the sun sets*).

8:8. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God.

The LORD will bring the believers among the Jews (2:8) and believers among the Gentiles (2:11) from the east and the west back to Judea (6:15). *After the initial fulfilment in Judea, this points to the ultimate fulfilment in which believers from among the Jews and from among the Gentiles would enter the New Jerusalem*¹²⁰.

The sixth oracle.

8:9. This is what the LORD Almighty says: You who now hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there when the foundation was laid for the house of the LORD Almighty, let your hands be strong, so that the temple may be built.

8:10. Before that time there were no wages for man or beast, No one could go about his business safely because of his enemy (*opponent*), for I had turned every man against his neighbour.

8:11. But now I will not (*no longer*) deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past”, declares the LORD Almighty.

8:12. The seed will grow well (*will be prosperous*), the vine will yield its fruit, the ground will produce its crops, and the heavens will drop their dew. I will give all these things as an inheritance to the remnant of the people.

8:13. As you have been an object of cursing among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so will I save you, and you will be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong (*take courage*).

Before the beginning of the rebuilding of the temple in 520 BCE there was no income for man or beast due to the failure of the harvest and the opposition of enemies. Then there was no order in society, because whoever ventured out onto the street, was in danger of attacks by robbers and murderers. God handed people over to one another¹²¹. Then the prophet Haggai prophesied, “You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse of holes in it.”¹²²

But now that the rebuilding of the temple has begun, there will again be welfare. *Now people must not resort to fasting and sickly mourning about the disasters of the past.* Now people must dedicate themselves with courage and strength to the new task ahead. Not from the laying of the foundation stone in 536 BCE, but from 520 BCE the people have heard the exhortation of the prophets Zechariah and Haggai, “Be courageous. Let your hands be strong.” There has been a change in the attitude of the LORD. He was going to change disaster into prosperity. There would again be harvests. The poor and insignificant ‘remnant’ of the people would receive this as their inheritance. Before the rebuilding of the temple, the surrounding nations used the names of Judah and Israel to curse and wish others misery¹²³. But now the LORD promised blessing and would make their name a blessing.

The seventh oracle.

8:14. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Just as I had determined to bring disaster upon you and showed no pity (*I had no remorse*) when your fathers angered me,” says the LORD Almighty,

8:15 so now I have determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. Do not be afraid!

¹¹⁷ Isaiah 65:20

¹¹⁸ Genesis 22:18

¹¹⁹ Jeremiah 32:17,27

¹²⁰ Hosea 2:22-23.

¹²¹ Romans 1:24,26,28

¹²² Haggai 1:6

¹²³ Jeremiah 24:9; 42:18

8:16. These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts;

8:17. do not plot evil against your neighbour and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD.

God’s eternal plan (decree, ordinance) includes his threats and promises as well as the people’s reactions to these threats and promises. God’s ‘remorse’ is:

- either his holy and righteous reaction to the continuous unrighteousness and transgressions of people
- or his merciful and gracious reaction to their repentance and submission.

God shows his grace to his people out of his free love and he asks them to respond by keeping his moral law.

The moral requirements of the LORD are to always speak the truth and to hate every semblance of lies, because God hates ‘fake news’! God demands that people render true and sound judgement in courts that result in peace, that is, in making whole again what has been broken, especially healing broken relationships’. “God hates all who do wrong” and “those who love violence”¹²⁴.

The initial fulfilment. The prophet speaks about things that follow the completion of the rebuilding of the temple by Ezra and Nehemiah.

The ultimate fulfilment. *The prophecy speaks about things that will first find their complete fulfilment in Jesus Christ and his Church.* The expectation of millennialists, namely that in the future the Jews would return to Israel and live in Jerusalem, fail to understand the character of Old Testament prophecy. All exiles do not literally return to Israel and it is impossible for all Jews to live in Jerusalem. *The LORD will bring all the chosen believers from among the Jews (2:8) and all the chosen believers from among the non-Jews (2:11) from all countries in the east and west back to the Heavenly/New Jerusalem (the Church of the Messianic Kingdom).*

Zechariah 8:18-23. The question about fasting.

Three more oracles are added to the seven oracles in chapter 7. The description of the future period of salvation is continued.

The eighth oracle.

8:18. Again the word of the LORD Almighty came to me.

8:19. This is what the LORD Almighty says: The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months will become joyful and glad occasions and happy festivals for Judah. Therefore, love truth and peace.

The four fasting days commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BCE will become joyful festive days during the Messianic (New Testament) period. Zechariah does not speak of fasting days (7:3) as something people must do, but as something the LORD would do. *He does not teach the believers to terminate the fasting days, but that the LORD would terminate the fasting days in the future!* The LORD would change the mourning of Judah into joy. *In order to receive salvation, the keeping or terminating of the fasting days is unnecessary, but living according to the moral commands and ways of the LORD is necessary.* The moral demand is summarised by the words: “Love the truth and peace.” That is what the prophet Zechariah emphasises in 7:9 and 8:16-17.

The ninth oracle.

8:20. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come,

8:21. and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say, “Let us go at once and entreat (propitiate) the LORD and seek the LORD Almighty. I myself am going.

8:22. And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him.”

In the future period of salvation the nations would come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD (2:11)¹²⁵. People in different cities would exhort one another to go to Jerusalem to entreat (propitiate/placate) the LORD by bringing sacrifices (7:2) and by seeking Him by worshipping Him.

Also the prophets Micah¹²⁶ and Isaiah¹²⁷ predict that the heathen nations would come to Jerusalem. But these prophecies still show the Old Testament stamp upon the prophecies: the salvation remains bound to the earthly Jerusalem. Nevertheless, that the non-Jewish nations would participate in the salvation of Judah’s God is clearly taught.

The fulfilment. *In the real fulfilment many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek and find the LORD Almighty in the heavenly Jerusalem!*

The tenth oracle.

8:23. This is what the LORD Almighty says: “In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, “Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you”.

¹²⁴ Psalm 5:5; 11:5

¹²⁵ Haggai 2:8

¹²⁶ Micah 4:1-4

¹²⁷ Isaiah 2:1-4; 4:1

Also here is clearly predicted that salvation is given to Judah (the Jewish nation). Later Jesus says, "Salvation is from the Jews"¹²⁸. "The salvation is so great (and attractive) that the nations are provoked to jealousy. Ten men from different languages will take firm hold of the robe of 'a Jew' and plead to go along with them.

This is not a picture of the greatness of the Jews, but rather a picture of *the greatness of the salvation that is first given to the Jew and then to the non-Jew*.¹²⁹

The prophet spurs the Judeans on to take courage and keep their heads high, because it is a great privilege to have the LORD, the Almighty, as GOD!

The fulfilment. According to Romans 2:28-29 'a Jew' is a symbol of a believer in Jesus Christ! Note the fulfilment during the New Testament period. Think of the thousands that followed the apostle Peter (Acts 2) to the Church (the heavenly Jerusalem), also the deacon Stephen (Acts 6), the apostle Paul (Acts 13:46-50) and the church leader James (Acts 21;20). They were all Jews!

The prophecy about *the fasting days of mourning* was fulfilled in their replacement by *the festive days of joy* at the first coming of Jesus Christ¹³⁰.

The four fasting days are still observed by Jews as national days of mourning. According to the Talmud they were abolished on the preaching of Zechariah, but re-introduced after the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE. *The fact that Jews still keep these fasting days means that they have rejected Jesus Christ.*

B. PART II. ZECHARIAH 9-14. THE MESSIANIC FUTURE.

ZECHARIAH 9

Zechariah 9:1 to 10:12 are regarded as one prophecy. In the first sub-division God's judgement over the nations in the north (Damascus and Phoenicia) and in the west (Philistines) of Canaan are announced. A small part of the remnant of one of these nations, the Philistines, would be incorporated into Judah. We must regard these nations as representing 'the kingdom of the world' that is an enemy of God.

Zechariah 9:1-7. The humbling of the nations and the extension of the Kingdom of God.

9:1. An oracle ('a burden')¹³¹, The word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and will rest upon Damascus – for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the LORD - ;

9:2. and upon Hamath too, which borders on it, and upon Tyre and Sidon, though they are very skilful.

'A burden' is an oracle (an utterance of God) that through the Holy Spirit lies heavily on the heart of the prophet. He must utter it! Hadrach is probably a god or a king of Damascus. The eyes of the LORD is directed on everything the nations in the world are doing¹³². Hamath lies on the river Orontes and is flanked by Damascus on the east and Tirus and Sidon on the west. The oracle is not expounded any further.

9:3. Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets.

9:4. But the LORD will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea (dumping them into the sea), and she will be consumed by fire.

The Phoenician cities of Tyrus and Sidon are 'skilful' ('wise'), that is, they have knowledge and insight in worldly business and commerce¹³³. Tyrus built fortifications,¹³⁴ and they gathered silver and gold in such great quantities that it looked like the dust on the street. The LORD would suddenly hand her over to the conqueror, dump her possessions into the sea¹³⁵ and set the city on fire.

9:5. Ashkelon will see it and fear; Gaza will writhe in agony; and Ekron too, for her hope will wither. Gaza will lose her king and Ashkelon will be deserted.

9:6. Foreigners will occupy Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

9:7. I will take the blood from their mouths, the forbidden food from between their teeth. Those who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites.

Four of the five cities of the Philistines are mentioned: Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod (and not Gath). The fall of Tyrus filled the Philistines with anxiety and they trembled in fear. Their expectation to find shelter behind Tyrus against the conqueror attacking from the north would be shattered. When Tyrus has been shattered, the way to the Philistines would be free. This would be the end for their kings and their citizens.

¹²⁸ John 4:22

¹²⁹ Romans 1:16

¹³⁰ Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:17-21

¹³¹ See 'the burden' in Jeremiah 23:33-40

¹³² Hebrews 4:13

¹³³ Ezekiel 28:4-5

¹³⁴ Isaiah 23:4

¹³⁵ Ezekiel 27:27

The enemy would just leave a remnant consisting of the lowest classes in society mixed with foreigners. The LORD would also make an end of their wicked lifestyle: namely, eating meat with blood¹³⁶ in it, eating sacrifices and other kinds of unclean food.

But there would also be a surprise: *a remnant of the Philistines would remain for God just as the remnant of Judah. This remnant would be incorporated into God's people*¹³⁷. The citizens of Ekron would become like the earlier Canaanites of Jerusalem (the Jebusites) and surrounding; they would become a part of the citizens of Jerusalem¹³⁸.

The initial fulfilment. After the victories of Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE) the Greek culture was introduced into neighbouring countries. However, the knowledge of God was not introduced! The contents of verse 1-8 is judgement and salvation: salvation for Israel and for those incorporated from the other nations into Israel and judgement for others.

The ultimate fulfilment. In the light of Zechariah 9:8-10 this prophecy would only be fulfilled in the Messianic future. The real fulfilment is in Jesus Christ, principally from his first coming onwards and finally at his second coming.

Zechariah 9:8-10. The future coming of the Prince of Peace is Israel's real salvation.

After the prediction of the humbling of the nations and from it the emerging of the extension of God's Kingdom, the prophecy continues to describe the salvation of Israel. The Great King is the central figure.

9:8. But I will defend my house against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch.

In contrast to the Gentile nations being humbled and partly incorporated into Judah, 'God's house' is a reference to the land of Judah. It is there that God's house would be erected. The LORD would guard the land against attacks from the marauding armies passing by Judah. God sees the distress of the land (because the exile is still continuing) and this makes such an impression on God that he promises that this would not happen again. *The prophet speaks of God in a human manner.*

9:9. Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey.

9:10. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The coming of the King is the centre of the salvation message announced. 'The daughter of Zion' is Jerusalem herself. The prophet is carried to close before the fulfilment of this promise of salvation. 'The King' is the Son of David, the Messiah. He is righteous and possesses salvation just as the LORD Himself¹³⁹. He is small and shares the smallness of his people. He is humble and bends forward to hear the pleadings of his people. He rides on a donkey and not on a war horse¹⁴⁰! Before the time of Solomon, there were no horses in Israel and even the most important princes rode on donkeys¹⁴¹, even king David himself¹⁴². Only in the time of King Solomon horses were imported and riding in a wagon/chariot pulled by horses was a sign of royal dignity¹⁴³. Thus, this prophecy is like the earliest picture of the King in Genesis 49:10-11. He lacks the outward royal glory of king Solomon: He is "a shoot coming from the stump of Jesse" and "small among the clans of Judah"¹⁴⁴. He does not compete with the rulers of the world. *He represents Israel's theocratic kingship*¹⁴⁵. Riding on a donkey (9:9) represents his smallness and humility.

The LORD would remove the war chariots (from the earlier kingdom of Ephraim) and the horses (from present kingdom of Judah) and break the battle bows. He will inaugurate a Kingdom of (divine) peace among the Gentile nations everywhere in the world (9:10)! Under his kingship people will not flee on fast horses, but "in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength"¹⁴⁶. He is "the Prince of Peace ... of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end". His kingdom is established, not by might, but will be upheld by justice and righteousness¹⁴⁷. Also Zechariah describes the Messianic Kingdom in the future time of salvation by means of colourful descriptions. It will not be a violent kingdom as that of the Egyptians and Assyrian kingdoms, but it will be a Kingdom of peace in which *only the God of the Bible will be worshipped as the Source of power and might*¹⁴⁸.

¹³⁶ Genesis 9:6; Leviticus 17:10; Acts 15:29

¹³⁷ Psalm 87:4-6

¹³⁸ See 2 Samuel 24:16-25

¹³⁹ Isaiah 45:9

¹⁴⁰ Genesis 49:10-11

¹⁴¹ Exodus 4:20; Numbers 22:21; 2 Samuel 16:2

¹⁴² 2 Samuel 13:29; 18:9; 1 Kings 1:33,38,44

¹⁴³ Jeremiah 17:25; 22:4

¹⁴⁴ Isaiah 11:1; Micah 5:1

¹⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 17:16; Isaiah 2:7

¹⁴⁶ Isaiah 30:15-16; 31:1

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 9:5-6.

¹⁴⁸ Micah 5:9-10. See. "For yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory for ever." (Matthew 6:13)

With the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Messianic Kingdom of peace is inaugurated¹⁴⁹ and will not be limited to (people from the natural nation of) Israel!

The expression 'from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth' the whole earth is meant¹⁵⁰.

See the real fulfilment below.

Zechariah 9:11 – 10:2. Israel's initial salvation consists of liberation from exile and victory over the kingdom of the world.

This part does not happen after the previous pericope, because the exiles there are already delivered; Israel's enemies are already conquered and the Kingdom of peace has already been inaugurated. This part reverts to what precedes that Kingdom.

Zechariah 9:11 to 10:2 describes the initial salvation and Zechariah 9:9-10 describes the real salvation!

9:11. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit.

Josef¹⁵¹ and Jeremiah¹⁵² were cast into empty wells and kept imprisoned there. The exile is also 'a prison' and the great majority of Judah are still imprisoned there. The people were sprinkled with 'the blood of the covenant' when God made a covenant with them at Sinai¹⁵³. Because as descendants of the fathers they participate in this covenant, the LORD would also deliver them.

9:12. Return to your fortress O prisoners of hope (on the coming salvation); even now I announce that I will restore as much to you (give you double retaliation).

The LORD speaks to the prisoners about deliverance. The 'fortress' is Zion/Jerusalem and alleges that inside Jerusalem they would be safe. 'Double retaliation' for the suffering does not imply twice as much, but rather *the complete and just equivalent*. And they would receive much more than they deserve: namely, joy and an inheritance¹⁵⁴.

9:13. I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sins, O Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword.

9:14. Then the LORD will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. The Sovereign LORD will sound the trumpet; he will march in the storms of the south.

9:15. And the LORD Almighty will shield them. They will destroy and overcome with slingstones ... (the further Hebrew text has unfortunately been corrupted)

The prophecy is also a prediction that Judah would conquer their enemies. Judah (the southern kingdom) and Ephraim (the northern kingdom) are mentioned together as an indication of 'the complete number of chosen believers of God's people'. The LORD himself is the Warrior and this fact guarantees the victory.

The people of God are the weapon in the LORD's hand and the kingdom of the world is called 'Javan' (Greece). Jewish commentators regard Javan as a reference to the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Kingdom that came forth out of the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great. But the real fulfilment is more than that: As Ruler the LORD Himself gives the signal to attack and marches as the southern storms with great might against the enemy. This pericope speaks of the conflict between 'the kingdom of the world' and 'the Kingdom of God' (the people of God').

9:16. The LORD their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown (Yes, Ebenaezers = 'stones of help' will arise in the land).

9:17. How attractive and beautiful they will be! Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women.

Now the people of God are described as a flock of helpless sheep who need protection and receive the protection of the Shepherd. Just as before in 1 Samuel 7:13 there will rise heaps of stones as memorial piles: "Thus far the LORD has helped us!" These piles would remind the people of God that God had saved/delivered them. All these heaps of memorial, peace and the fruitfulness of the land make the land attractive and beautiful.

ZECHARIAH 10

10:1. Ask the LORD for rain in the springtime; it is the LORD who makes the storm clouds (flashes of lightning). He gives showers of rain to men, and plants of the field to everyone.

¹⁴⁹ See John 18:36-37

¹⁵⁰ Psalm 72:8

¹⁵¹ Genesis 37:24

¹⁵² Jeremiah 38:6

¹⁵³ Exodus 24:8

¹⁵⁴ See Isaiah 61:7

10:2. The idols (*terafim*) speak deceit, diviners see visions that lie; they tell dreams that are false, they give comfort in vain (*with a couple of words*). Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd.¹⁵⁵.

Therefore, with a view to the future fruitfulness of the land believers must ask the LORD, and not their idols, for rain. The early rains fall in the autumn and make the soil suitable for ploughing and sowing of winter corn.

The spring rains are needed for forming kernels within the ear. The flashes of lightning announce the coming of the rain. Thunder and lightning come from the LORD and not from the idols which the returning exiles took with them from Babylon. Half the heathen population of Israel worshipped these household idols (*terafim*)! They were employed to give favourable oracles for home and field. The fortune-tellers of the king of Babylon shake arrows (out of its quiver), inspect livers (of slaughtered animals) and then deliver desirable verdicts¹⁵⁶. There were also fortune-tellers in Judah who expounded dreams, inspected clouds and delivered spells (magic formulas). They all prophesy lies¹⁵⁷. It was precisely these heathen practices that led to the exile where very many people wandered around like sheep without a shepherd.

The initial fulfilment. In the period between Zechariah and the first coming of Jesus Christ many more exiles returned from exile (9:11). The Israelites under the leadership of the Maccabees were victorious in their war with the Greeks (the Syrian Hellenists during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes IV (9:13).

The real fulfilment came about by the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. He will gather all the chosen believers from all (also non-Jewish) nations and bring them to the spiritual Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem¹⁵⁸. With the first coming of the Messiah, the Messianic Age of peace, the Kingdom of peace (the Kingdom of God in the New Testament period) was inaugurated and is certainly not limited to the nation of Israel! "He would proclaim peace to the (heathen) nations" (9:10)!

This 'peace' consists of the following

- The LORD first makes peace with mankind. Through the death of Jesus Christ, he made atonement for the sins that brought separation between God and man¹⁵⁹.
- Then believers are enabled to make peace with the LORD and experience his peace by accepting Christ's completed work of salvation¹⁶⁰.
- Peace consists of 'the absence' of strife, struggle, war, irritation, etc. and 'the presence' of healing of everything that was broken before.
- Subsequently they are able to make peace with other people, even with former enemies¹⁶¹ and with difficult circumstances.
- Finally, they experience peace in their hearts when God will say, "Well done"¹⁶², even when everything around them keeps on storming, for example through false accusations and temptations.

At the second coming Jesus Christ will conquer Satan and all his allies in the Last war (Armageddon) and conquer death¹⁶³. Jesus Christus is 'the Prince of Peace' and "of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end"¹⁶⁴.

Zechariah 10:3-12. Israel's salvation consists of victory and return (to their country).

The prophecies about salvation which began in Zechariah 9:9 are continued here, especially Israel's victories over her enemies: Egypt and Assyria (9:13)¹⁶⁵. The LORD's people which he (Zechariah) described as wandering sheep (9:2) are nevertheless the flock of the LORD (9:16).

10:3. My anger burns against the shepherds¹⁶⁶ and I will punish the leaders (*the goats and their sins*). For the LORD Almighty will care for his flock, the house of Judah¹⁶⁷, and make them like a proud horse in battle.

10:4. From Judah will come the Leader (*Hebrew: cornerstone*), from him the lieutenant-colonel (*Hebrew: the tent peg*), from him the archer (*Hebrew: battle bow*), every ruler¹⁶⁸.

10:5. Together they will be like mighty men trampling the muddy streets in battle (*trampling the enemy in the mud of the streets*). Because the LORD is with them, they will fight and overthrow the horsemen.

Therefore the LORD will 'visit' his people with salvation: He will come to them with favour, the opposite of verse 3: 'visit them with disaster'. He will make the weakened people, 'the defenceless sheep without shepherd', to be a conquering war-horse. Just as the LORD described his people as 'his bow and arrow' (9:13), likewise he describes them

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 9:36

¹⁵⁶ Ezekiel 21:21

¹⁵⁷ Jeremiah 27:9-10

¹⁵⁸ Hebrews 12:22-24

¹⁵⁹ See Romans 5:9-11

¹⁶⁰ See Romans 5:1-2

¹⁶¹ See Ephesians 2:14-15

¹⁶² Matthew 25:21

¹⁶³ Revelation 20:7-15

¹⁶⁴ Isaiah 9:5-6

¹⁶⁵ 'The king of the south' (Egypt) and 'the king of the north' (Syria) in the book of Daniel.

¹⁶⁶ Ezekiel 34. "The shepherds (kings, priests and prophets) of Israel who feed themselves ... and not the sheep".

¹⁶⁷ See John 10:16. "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also ... and there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

¹⁶⁸ Isaiah 19:13; 22:23

as ‘a strong war-horse’ that tramples the enemy underfoot. The words ‘from him’ mean that the commanders and soldiers march out at the command of the LORD and in service of the LORD.

10:6. I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them (*cause them to return*) because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them!

10:7. The Ephraimites will become like mighty men (hero’s), and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the LORD.

10:8 I will signal for them (*whistle them to me*) and gather them in. Surely, I will redeem them; they will be as numerous as before.

Besides Judah (the southern kingdom of 2 tribes), Joseph and Ephraim (the northern kingdom of 10 tribes) is mentioned (9:13) as an indication of the full number of the LORD’s people in the future. The initial salvation consists of the return from exile.

Before the exile the people were ‘not God’s people’ (Hebrew: lo ammi) anymore and ‘no pity’ (Hebrew: lo-ruchama) was shown to them¹⁶⁹. *But now after the exile they are again the LORD’s people, the LORD’s remnant of chosen believers*¹⁷⁰ and again shown pity¹⁷¹. They will be as if they had never been repudiated by the LORD. The struggle and the victory do not refer to war, but to the fact that with the return from exile the LORD’s people gained the victory.

The Spirit of prophecy (9:11-15) is symbolic and is not intended to be literal. ‘Wine’ strengthens the enthusiasm and courage in the struggle and the children are motivated by the example of their parents. At the return from exile the LORD lures them by whistling¹⁷² and they come running from all directions. The small group of exiles that returned in the days of Zechariah would grow¹⁷³ and become so numerous as they were before.

10:9. Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return.

10:10. I will bring them back from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them.

The LORD repeats his promise about the return of many exiles. The exiles would continue to think of the LORD and experience his protection even in the most distant countries. The countries to which they were exiled are mentioned: Egypt and Assyria. In the days of Jeremiah a considerable number Judeans (Jews) took refuge in Egypt. The name ‘Assyria’ is utilized in a broad sense to refer to Persia¹⁷⁴ and Babylonia¹⁷⁵. The returning exiles would not only live in Jerusalem, but also in Gilead on the other side of the River Jordan and in Lebanon. Even then there would not be enough room – prophetic for the real fulfilment when an innumerable great number of the LORD’s people would stand in front of the Lamb¹⁷⁶. Nothing besides the new earth would be able to contain this great crowd!

10:11. They (HSV: He = the LORD) will pass through the sea of trouble; the surging sea will be subdued (HSV: He will beat the waves of the great water = Nile) and all the depths of the Nile will dry up. Assyria’s pride will be brought down and Egypt’s sceptre will pass away.

10:12. I will strengthen them in the LORD and in his name they will walk.

The LORD Himself would bring the return from exile by humbling the worldly powers. He would march through Egypt and beat the waves of the Nile so that the water disappears and they can march through it on dry ground. The sceptre or rule of Assyria will disappear. The returnees would find their strength in the LORD and they will continue to walk in dependence of Him.

ZECHARIAH 11

Zechariah 11:1-3. God’s judgement over Lebanon and Bashan.

As in Zechariah 9:1-7 the announcement of God’s judgement over the hostile kingdom of the world is continued. This was possibly an independent prophecy.

11:1. Open your doors, O Lebanon, so that fire may devour your cedars.

11:2. Wail, O pine tree, for the cedar has fallen; the stately trees are ruined! Wail, oaks of Bashan; the dense forest has been cut down!

11:3. Listen to the wail of the shepherds; their rich pastures are destroyed! Listen to the roar of the lions; the lush thicket of the Jordan is ruined!

¹⁶⁹ Hosea 1:6-9

¹⁷⁰ See Romans 11:4-5

¹⁷¹ Hosea 1:10

¹⁷² Isaiah 5:26; 7:18

¹⁷³ Isaiah 56:8

¹⁷⁴ Ezra 6:22

¹⁷⁵ Lamentations 5:6

¹⁷⁶ Revelation 7:9

Libanon with its lush forests would not be able to stop the fire that would consume it. Besides cedars, pine trees are the most important trees. These pine trees in Lebanon must wail together with the oak trees in Bashan (trans-Jordan) at their destruction. They share in the same judgement. Also the thick bushes on the banks of the Jordan will be destroyed. This is the place where shepherds with their sheep and even lions live.

Zechariah 11:4-17. The nations and Israel are given up.

Zechariah 11:4-17 is one of the most difficult pieces to explain in the Prophets.

The prophet Zechariah is charged twice (11:4,15) to act as a shepherd. This could be one or two visions. In his visionary condition the prophet must conduct two symbolic acts. *This is not history, but prophecy about future events.* It is an eschatological prediction or announcement of an ultimate event in the last days. *Zechariah 11:4-17 speaks about the destruction of the world in the end-time, and in particular of the destruction of 'Israel according to the flesh' (natural Israel).*

Zechariah 11:4-14. The first symbolic act.

In Zechariah 11:4-14 the person depicted as the prophet-shepherd is no one less than the LORD Himself (verse 10 and 13). He who makes a covenant with all the nations in the world (11:10) is not a mere human person. The divine shepherd function is executed by means of people and, in the final place, by Jesus Christ. That is why it is fulfilled by Jesus Christ according to the New Testament revelation.

Zechariah's first symbolic act consists of dressing himself as a good shepherd.

11:4. This is what the LORD, my God says: "Pasture the flock that is marked for slaughter.

11:5. Their buyers slaughter them with impunity (and go unpunished). Those who sell them say, 'Praise the LORD, I am rich!' Their own shepherds do not spare them.

11:6. For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the earth (NIV: people of the land), declares the LORD. "I will hand everyone over to his shepherd (NIV: neighbour) and his king. They will oppress the land, and I will not rescue them from their hands. "

In this vision the LORD speaks to the person telling the story, the prophet Zechariah. Note the first person "I" (in verse 7 and 15). Zechariah is charged to pasture sheep marked for the slaughter. No one cares for these sheep. The buyers kill the sheep with impunity and the sellers rejoice because of the profit they make. The shepherds who pasture these sheep until they are slaughtered do not protect/spare them from being slaughtered at the set time.

The buyers, sellers and shepherds (11:5) have no specific meaning, but simply illustrate the condition in which the sheep find themselves. The sheep have an owner, but the shepherds regard them only as sheep to be slaughtered. The merchants/traders need the shepherds until the day of slaughter. The prophet Zechariah offers to be such a shepherd (11:7).

The meaning of this vision is that the shepherd (Zechariah) is depicted as the LORD himself, who is the real Shepherd of Israel (10:3)¹⁷⁷ and in a general sense may be called the Shepherd of all nations (11:10).

Verse 6 emphasizes that the sheep to be slaughtered refers to the future. *The LORD plans to give 'the sheep', depicting humanity including Israel, up to disaster. The description 'sheep to be slaughtered' does not speak of divine compassion with humanity or with Israel, but of handing them over to destruction¹⁷⁸.* The command, "Pasture the sheep to be slaughtered!" means 'act as the shepherd of sheep that is doomed to be destroyed and will be slaughtered'. The LORD regards his shepherding of humanity, including Israel, in this way. The words "pasture the sheep to be slaughtered" do not voice God's intention to save, but rather God's intention to judge. The laying down of the office of being a shepherd is not motivated by the evil behaviour of the sheep. *From the beginning the LORD already decided to hand the (unbelieving and disobedient) nations including Israel over to destruction¹⁷⁹.*

In the end the sheep to be slaughtered symbolise Israel, but at the beginning also all of humanity. Initially the sheep to be slaughtered depict in general all of humanity and specifically Israel. In the rest of this revelation attention is exclusively concentrated on Israel. Zechariah 11:6-10 says that *Israel will have the same destiny as the other nations in the world. Israel's destruction is a part of the destruction of the world.*

11:7. So I (Zechariah) pastured the flock marked for slaughter for the stock merchants/traders (NIV: particularly the oppressed of the flock). And I took for myself two staffs – the one I called 'Kindness (NIV: Favour) and the other 'Bound together' (NIV: Union) – and I pastured the flock.

Zechariah took two shepherd staffs as illustration of the shepherding of the LORD which he continues until the Day of Judgement. The first staff symbolises the covenant of the LORD with all the nations (11:10, cf. verse 6) and the second staff the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. The only good the nations of the world including Israel possesses is due to the shepherding of the LORD with two shepherd staffs (11:10,14). Because all these blessings are received with ungratefulness and wickedness (11:12), all these blessings will be removed to make way for the Last Judgement.

¹⁷⁷ Ezekiel 34:11-16

¹⁷⁸ Compare Romans 1:24-32

¹⁷⁹ Genesis 2:17

Zechariah who pastures the flock with both shepherd staffs is an illustration that the LORD has not yet withdrawn his grace from Israel or the nations, but is close to the point of doing so! He gives Israel (and the nations) a last chance to pay him what they owe him (11:12). They did not make use of that chance! Therefore the Judgment must come (11:6)!

11:8. In one month I got rid of three shepherds (13:8-9). The flock detested me (my soul could no longer tolerate them, because I became impatient with them). Also their soul disliked me.

The three shepherds that were destroyed in one month receive many wrong historic explanations. It does not refer to the historic past, but to the eschatological future.

‘One month’ is a symbol for a very short time. God’s acts is hastened. It is not an attempt to save the flock, but rather to slaughter the sheep. This is the beginning of disaster and judgement. The LORD (not Zechariah) first destroys the shepherds (11:8a) and when the people of Israel¹⁸⁰ (and the Gentile nations) got an aversion/dislike in the LORD¹⁸¹ (11:8b) he gives them over (10:2b and 3a).

‘The three shepherds’ do not symbolise historical personalities. They symbolise the leaders of Israel (10:3) and the leaders of the Gentile nations (11:11) because of their sins. *The judgement over Israel is described in its unity with the judgement over the world (11:6).* We may assume that there were three flocks of sheep (compare 13:8), each with a shepherd and the prophet is the chief shepherd. The intension is that the whole flock of (Israel) will be robbed of their shepherds. The judgement will only be complete when the leaders (especially the leaders of Israel in the image of the merchants/traders) have finally expressed their disdain/aversion of the Divine Shepherd (11:13).

The prophet-shepherd becomes impatient and cannot tolerate the sheep. He gets a dislike in the sheep. An estrangement occurs between the shepherd and the sheep, thus also between the LORD and the people of Israel. He declares no longer to be willing to pasture the sheep.

11:9. Then I said, “I will no longer pasture you (NIV: be your shepherd). Let the dying die and the perishing perish.” Let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.”

Because the prophet-shepherd (Zechariah) represents the actual Shepherd, the LORD, the LORD declares that He is going to lay down his office of Shepherd. He is going to abandon them to their lot, allow them to die, get lost and devour each other’s flesh. Sheep do not devour flesh; therefore ‘people’ are meant. Symbol and reality flow together.

11:10 Then I took my staff called ‘Kindness (NIV: Favour)’ and broke it, revoking the covenant I had made with all the nations.

Also here symbol and reality flow together. There is no more mentioning of ‘sheep’, but of ‘nations’. *The ‘I’ of Zechariah flows into the ‘I’ of the LORD!* The breaking of the staff Kindness (Favour) symbolises that the LORD is breaking the covenant with all nations. Which covenant? It is the covenant of the LORD’s kindness, attitude of goodwill and forbearance/tolerance which He has thus far shown to the nations and by which they continue to exist¹⁸². In essence it is the same as the covenant with Noah¹⁸³, even though the contents are described differently. It is a covenant with all the inhabitants of the world (11:6).

Because in all this prophecy Israel stands in the forefront, the judgement of *Israel is placed in the frame of the judgement of the world.* The LORD breaks the covenant with Israel, namely, the kindness, goodwill and forbearance in which Israel had a share.

11:11. It (the covenant) was revoked on that day, and so the merchants/traders (NIV: the afflicted of the flock) who were watching me, knew it was the word of the LORD.

The merchants/traders (the leaders of the people) understood that this (prophecy expressed in the prophetic act of Zechariah) is a word of the LORD.

11:12. I (Zechariah) told them (the merchants/traders): “If you think it best, give me my pay; but if not, keep it.” So they paid me (just) thirty pieces of silver¹⁸⁴.

11:13. And the LORD said to me: “Throw it to the potter”- the handsome price at which they priced me (the LORD)! So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter!

Now a new element is introduced in the prophecy: the question of *human guilt. The divine judgement is deserved, because the people have despised the divine shepherding care of the LORD.*

¹⁸⁰ And the Gentile nations

¹⁸¹ Think of the rejection of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, at his first coming, the trials before the Jewish Sanhedrin and Roman governor and the crucifixion.

¹⁸² Compare Leviticus 16:34 (a shadowy, temporary and imperfect atonement); Isaiah 48:6-11 (for his own sake the LORD delays his wrath and following destruction); Acts 14:19-17 (In the past the LORD let the nations go their own way); Romans 3:25 (in his forbearance the LORD left the sins committed beforehand unpunished).

¹⁸³ Genesis 9:9

¹⁸⁴ Exodus 21:32

In verse 7 Zechariah as prophet-shepherd took on the task of pasturing the sheep for the merchants/traders. They symbolise the leaders of the people of God in their ungratefulness towards the LORD. They are here not 'the three shepherds' who have already been wiped out (11:8). The judgement is only completed when finally the leaders have uttered their final disdain for the Divine Shepherd (11:13). Human guilt leads finally to the giving up of the people¹⁸⁵.

The prophet-shepherd cannot expect the sheep to pay his wages. But because the people are represented by their leaders, the people remain culpable. Zechariah had pastured the sheep for the leaders (11:7), stopped to do so after one month and looked forward to his wages. The appraisal of the work of the LORD and of his Word must be completely free even though people will be judged according to it. The merchants weighed (only) thirty pieces of silver and paid it to Zechariah. According to Exodus 21:32 a slave, dead or alive, cost thirty pieces of silver. This may be a fair price for a shepherd that only worked for one month (11:8). But also here symbol and reality flow together. It is the wages the people of Israel pay to the LORD for his office as Shepherd! It shows that the leaders of Israel despised the LORD's work as Shepherd. The fact that the LORD regarded the thirty pieces of silver as unworthy is shown in the fact that Zechariah had to throw them to the potter who happened to be in the house of the LORD (the temple)¹⁸⁶. The LORD refused to accept the thirty pieces and also Zechariah could not keep them.

Fulfilment of Zechariah 11:12-13 in Matthew 27:3-10.

The similarities between this prophecy and its fulfilment is the thirty pieces of silver and the potter. The differences are the following: In the prophecy the thirty pieces of silver are paid as wages to the prophet-shepherd (Zechariah) and in him to the Prophet-Shepherd (the LORD). It is subsequently thrown to the potter in the temple.

But in the fulfilment the thirty pieces of silver are the wages of a traitor paid by the Pharisees to Judas. In regret Judas threw them in the temple. Subsequently the money was used to buy a plot of land from the potter to function as a graveyard for foreigners.

The main idea is that both the prophecy and the fulfilment speak about the ungratefulness of the leaders of Israel towards the Divine Shepherd. Matthew teaches that the rejection of the divine work of salvation culminates in the rejection of Jesus Christ. This rejection seals Israel's lot.

That Matthew calls this a quotation of Jeremiah¹⁸⁷ is probably due to an error of an early copier of the Gospel of Matthew, because also Jeremiah speaks about a potter¹⁸⁸.

11:14. Then I broke my second staff called 'Bound together' (NIV: Union), thereby breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

The judgement had begun with the breaking of the first staff (11:10). So when the leaders of the people clearly showed their disdain for the divine shepherding office. The prophet-shepherd (Zechariah) ended his shepherding office and with that the LORD ended his shepherding office!

The breaking of the second staff named 'Bound together' ('Union') symbolises the breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. The prophecy refers completely to the people of the LORD. Nevertheless, this sentence is also true for the nations in the world. The two shepherd staffs are broken in the right order: *first they are abandoned by the LORD (11:10) and thereafter estranged from one another. (11:14). First God changes his attitude towards the people and then these people change their attitude towards one another and the nations change their attitude towards Israel*¹⁸⁹. *When the LORD withdraws from people, people turn against each other.* The second part of the curse in Zechariah 11:9 goes hereby in fulfilment: "Let those who are left eat one another's flesh." *The LORD laid down his shepherding and gave (natural) Israel up*¹⁹⁰.

Fulfilment of the prophecy.

Zechariah 11:15-17 shows that the prophecy is specially referring to Israel: when the Good Shepherd lets go of the people, an evil shepherd takes over. But Zechariah 11:6,10 shows that the prophecy also refers to other nations: the LORD will no longer spare the other nations, but deliver them over to evil/bad shepherds (11:6)¹⁹¹. He breaks his covenant with all nations (11:10). The prophecy as a whole says that *Israel is going to share in the destination of all nations, that Israel's destruction will be a part of the destruction of the whole world. Zechariah 11:4-14 (especially verse 6 and 10) show that this prophecy has eschatological and universal significance.* It points towards the end of the world and that Israel will share this end. The shepherding which the LORD lays down is both the special shepherding of the LORD over Israel, and his general shepherding over the nations. Therefore the fulfilment only comes when the LORD withdraws his hand from the nations and thereby also from what is left of Israel.

¹⁸⁵ Romans 1:24-32

¹⁸⁶ This is not a future event, because the temple was still standing (1st century CE).

¹⁸⁷ Jeremiah 27:9

¹⁸⁸ Jeremiah 18:1-10

¹⁸⁹ All civil wars in the world show that all nations are not only against Israel, but also against one another!

¹⁹⁰ And thereby the LORD gave up the unbelieving and disobedient heathen nations. See Romans 1:24-32. Therefore God gave (these heathen nations) over to shameful perversion and sins.

¹⁹¹ Think of the increasing number of dictators in the world.

The real content of the prophecy is the prediction of judgement caused by the denial of Divine Shepherding. In the period between Zechariah and the first coming of Christ (the period of the second temple) we see that there was a want of appreciation of the Divine Shepherding and that the LORD withdrew his hand from Israel, not absolutely and permanently, but relatively and temporally. The announcement of the laying down of the Divine Shepherding over Israel culminates and became a reality at the rejection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ¹⁹².

Only in the place of damnation will the staffs 'Kindness' ('Favour') and 'Bound together' ('Union') be completely broken!

In this prophecy only one side of the future is shown, namely, the destruction of the world. Nothing is said about the people in Israel and in the heathen nations that are being saved!

Zechariah 11:15-17. The second symbolic action.

Zechariah's second symbolic act consists of dressing himself as a bad shepherd.

11:15. Then the LORD said to me, "Take again the equipment of a foolish shepherd.

Zachariah must dress himself as an evil shepherd. The word 'foolish' is often a synonym for 'godless'.

11:16. For I am going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feed the healthy (those still standing), but (himself) will eat the meat of the choice (fat) sheep, tearing off their hoofs.

The LORD will raise a bad ruler in Canaan. As in Ezekiel 34:4-27 he is pictured as a shepherd that does not care for the sheep. He does not seek the sheep that go astray; he does not heal the injured; he does not feed the sheep that are still alive. On the contrary, he cares only for himself; he devours the fat sheep and as a beast of prey tears chunks of meat off animals¹⁹³.

11:17. "Woe to the worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! May his arm be completely withered. His right eye totally blinded (become dim/darkened)!"

Gods curse is evoked over the bad shepherd. As prophetic and divine curse it will certainly go into fulfilment! Even though the bad shepherd is raised up by the LORD (11:16)¹⁹⁴, he will fall under the divine judgement. The terrible punishment is depicted *symbolically*, because first his arm is severed and his eye is gauged and then his arm withers and his eye is darkened.

The initial fulfilment of Zechariah 11:15-17. The second symbolic act belongs to the first symbolic act, because the Old Testament prophesies several times that when the LORD lets go of the people, a bad shepherd takes over¹⁹⁵. In Zechariah 11:6 the judgement is summarised as follows: the LORD hands people over, each to its shepherd or king so that he destroys the earth without the LORD saving them out of his hand. The divine shepherding of Israel and of the other nations is laid down. The bad shepherd of verse 15-17 succeeds the good shepherd of verse 4-14. At first we must think of a normal human ruler over Israel. The nation of Israel and the other nations continue to exist and verse 4-14 is not yet being fulfilled in absolute sense. The message of verse 15-17 is thus: after and as the Good Shepherd lets go of the flock, the bad shepherd takes over.

Historically this went into fulfilment. Think of the bad rulers in Israel after the days of Zechariah: Antiochus Epiphanes IV, the king of the Hellenistic Seleucids (175-164 BCE) before the first coming of Christ and the Romans thereafter who ended the existence of Israel as a nation with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE. The fulfilment is not limited to the rejection of Christ, because the prophecy speaks of raising up another shepherd thereafter, for example. during the 1st century CE (70 CE) the Romans *ended the existence of Israel as a nation* at the destruction of Jerusalem.

The real fulfilment of Zechariah 11:15-17. Because verse 4-14 in its deepest sense is eschatological and universal, verse 15-17 is that too. When God lets go of Israel and the other nations in absolute sense, there will follow no other ruler than Satan (and his antichrists) to whom the doomed world is delivered over to.

The prophecy only speaks of the divine judgement against unbelievers and not about divine salvation of believers.

ZECHARIAH 12

Zechariah 12:1 to 13:6. Prophecy about salvation.

Zechariah 12:1 to 13:6 form a unity. It is a prophecy about salvation.

- Zechariah 12:1-9. When the nations attack Jerusalem, the LORD will protect Jerusalem and Judah and make the nation and the royal house invincible.
- Zechariah 12:10 to 13:6. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the Lord will renew inward life.

¹⁹² Matthew 8:11-12; Matthew 13:11; Matthew 21:33-44; Matthew 22:1-14; Matthew 23:13; Matthew 27:1-10

¹⁹³ Think of the dictators and oligarchs in the world who enrich themselves at the cost of their own people and the poor.

¹⁹⁴ Compare Cyrus in Isaiah 41:2; 44:28; 45:1

¹⁹⁵ See 1 Kings 11:9-11

Zechariah 12:1-9. Jerusalem will be attacked and delivered.

When the surrounding nations besiege Jerusalem, the LORD will protect the city and the nation (Israel) (meaning: Judah)¹⁹⁶ and make the royal house invincible.

12:1. An oracle (*burden*). This is the Word of the LORD concerning Israel. The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundations of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares:

The prophecy comes from God. It is his word about Israel (meaning: Judah). He is the Creator of the material universe and the Creator of the human spirit. The body and the spirit of man form a unity, not a duality: “Man is a living soul”¹⁹⁷. “The LORD created the heavens and stretched them out; he stretched out the earth and all that comes out of it. He gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it”¹⁹⁸. This is said because he is going to announce great things!

12:2. “I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem (589 BCE).

When the city is besieged by the nations, the LORD will deliver it. The emphasis is on deliverance. Through the LORD’s intervention the nations attacking Jerusalem will become exhausted and powerless, just as after drinking a cup of narcotics/drugs.¹⁹⁹.

12:3. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.

When Jerusalem is besieged, Judah is threatened (see 12:7). The attackers are initially the surrounding nations (verse 2), but finally all nations (verse 3). The nations will injure themselves just like they injure themselves when trying to pick up a very heavy rock when they prepare a piece of land or building.

12:4. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness” declares the LORD. “I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations.”

But then the LORD intervenes. With open eyes he watches over ‘the house of Judah’, which includes all citizens of Jerusalem. He strikes the enemy with blindness.

12:5. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts , ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the LORD Almighty is their God.

The victory is the work of the LORD, even though he makes use of humans. ‘The heads/leaders of the generations of Judah represent the whole nation. Their confession is the prerequisite for their success in the battle, namely the acknowledgement that the strength of the inhabitants of Jerusalem lies, not with the power of horses, but with the Spirit of the LORD (4:6)²⁰⁰.

12:6. On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a fire pot in a woodpile. Like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place.

This conviction makes them invincible. As a fire pot in a pile of wood their enemies will be consumed. The enemies intended to destroy her, but the city will continue to exist in her old place.

12:7. The LORD will liberate the dwellings of Judah first, so that the honour of the house of David and of Jerusalem’s inhabitants may not be greater than that of Judah.

The countryside of Judah will be liberated first, so that the royal house in Jerusalem would not brag that the city is more safe than the countryside. The LORD himself wants all the glory for the liberation.

12:8. On that day the LORD will shield those who live in Jerusalem, so that (*even*) the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God (*HSV: heavenly beings*), like the Angel of the LORD going before them.

He will protect Jerusalem like a shield against the attack of the enemies²⁰¹. On that day the weak (stumbling) will become strong as David. Zerubbabel and his companions will be like a heavenly being in the eyes of their enemies, as the Angel of the LORD in his human nature.

In the light of the New Testament the prophecy is only fulfilled in Jesus Christ Himself. He is the Angel of the LORD even though he is here still hidden in ‘the house of David’. *In the prophecy of Zechariah Jesus Christ is hidden in (is*

¹⁹⁶ See Revelation 20:7-10

¹⁹⁷ Genesis 2:7

¹⁹⁸ Isaiah 42:5

¹⁹⁹ Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15-19; Obadiah 16

²⁰⁰ 1 Samuel 17:45

²⁰¹ Psalm 84:12

veiled by) 'the house of David' as 'the Branch of David' (3:8; 6:12) and as 'the King' (9:9). But when the Messiah comes, he will bind the Strong Man (Satan)²⁰² and give his Holy Spirit to his co-workers²⁰³.

12:9. On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.

On that day (the Day of the LORD / the last day) the Lord will destroy the (unbelieving/godless/unholy) nations that advance against Jerusalem (the Heavenly Jerusalem = the Church)²⁰⁴. The victory is clearly given by the LORD Himself. He will wipe them out.

The initial fulfilment is just as in Zechariah 9:11 to 10:3a. From the time of Zechariah and before the first coming of Jesus Christ, it is promised that still many would return from the Babylonian exile²⁰⁵ and that there would be victories in the war of the Maccabees against the Greek-Syriac Empire (of Antiochus Epiphanes IV).

The real fulfilment is just as in the New Testament revelation that prophesies that during the whole New Testament period and at the second coming²⁰⁶ the chosen believers from all nations will be gathered to the spiritual Zion, the Church of Jesus Christ and that there will be a final victory of Christ and his Church over all the power of the enemy²⁰⁷.

Zechariah 12:10-14. The period of salvation: mourning for the One they pierced.

12:10. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a Spirit (NIV: spirit) of grace and supplication (HSV: prayers). They will look on Me, the One they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

Joël (800 BCE) prophesied that 'the Spirit of prophecy' (witnessing/prophesying, dreaming dreams and seeing visions) would be poured out²⁰⁸. Ezekiel (593-571 BCE) prophesied that 'the Spirit of regeneration, renewal and obedience' would be poured out²⁰⁹. Zechariah (520-518 BCE) now prophesies that 'the Spirit of grace and supplication' (inward renewal) would be poured out. Believers would receive and experience God's grace and they would supplicate/plead (with deep conviction) to receive more grace, that leads to receiving even more grace²¹⁰! The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on 'the royal house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem' include the believers in the countryside outside Jerusalem, because the capital represents the whole nation.

"They will look upon Me, the One they pierced, that is, Jesus²¹¹". The first coming of the Messiah in his God-Man image will reveal the lack of majesty of his human being: they will look upon him as 'the despised', 'rejected' and 'Pierced One'²¹². They will however also see the glory of his divine being²¹³. This will cause an inner transformation towards Jesus. The people who before misjudged him and failed to appreciate him, who did not acknowledge him or welcome him, will receive him with tears²¹⁴. They will repent and do away with sin.

12:11. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great, like the weeping of Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

12:12. The land will mourn, each by itself, with their wives by themselves: the clan of the house of David and their wives, the clan of the house of Nathan and their wives,

12:13. the clan of the house of Levi and their wives, the clan of Shimei and their wives,

12:14. and all the rest of the clans and their wives.

The prophecy retains the character of a veiled Old Testament revelation²¹⁵ when it depicts this event as an intensive mourning in which the whole nation together with the house of David participates. The prophet does not see the future with the clearness of the New Testament fulfilment – there still lies a veil over their spiritual eyes²¹⁶, because he does not see that the Pierced Son of David is a part of the house of David. The prophet refers to a more or less known figure, for example, 'a man of sorrows' in Isaiah 53:3. Nevertheless, the tribes and families of Israel, the Levites and the priests are no longer distinguished today.

The real fulfilment. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place at Pentecost: in salvation history on the Jews in Acts 2, on the half-Jews (Samaritans) in Acts 8 and on the non-Jews (Gentiles) in Acts 10²¹⁷. After the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, people receive the Holy Spirit when they hear the Gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, and are

²⁰² Matthew 12:29

²⁰³ Acts 1:8

²⁰⁴ Hebrews 12:22-24

²⁰⁵ Isaiah 56:8

²⁰⁶ During the whole New Testament period (Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 3:11-12; John 12:32; Hebrew 12:22-24) and at the second coming (Matthew 13:30,37-43; Matthew 24:30-31; Matthew 25:34,41; Revelation 14:14-16)

²⁰⁷ Revelation 17:14; 19:11-21; 20:8-9

²⁰⁸ Joel 2:28-29 and Acts 2:17-18

²⁰⁹ Ezekiel 36:24-28

²¹⁰ John 1:16

²¹¹ Isaiah 17:7; John 19:37

²¹² Isaiah 53:2-5

²¹³ Isaiah 40:1-5

²¹⁴ John 1:11-13

²¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:7-18

²¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:14-17; Ephesians 3:2-6; 1 Peter 1:10-12

²¹⁷ Acts 11:14-18; 15:7-11

incorporated into Christ/in the Body of Christ (the Church)²¹⁸. The hearers are cut to the heart, repent and receive forgiveness of their sins and the Holy Spirit²¹⁹. *This shows that the fulfilment of prophecy is not a literal copy of the prophecy.*

The prediction that all the people would participate in this mourning, is not fulfilled in ‘Israel according to the flesh’²²⁰, but in ‘the Israel of God (spiritual Israel)’²²¹. Only chosen believers mourn their sins at the foot of the cross and experience what Zechariah 13:1 predicts – complete forgiveness and cleansing (13:1)²²².

The final fulfilment. At the second coming of Christ sin, Satan and the realm of death will be removed forever.

ZECHARIAH 13

Zechariah 13:1-6. The period of salvation: removal of sin, idols and (false) prophets.

13:1. On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

The description of the blessings of the period of salvation is continued. Descriptions of removing the sin during the period of salvation occurs more often in the Old Testament. “I will remove the sin of this land in a single day (3:9).” “Who is a God like you who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the (chosen believing) remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea²²³.” Also under the image of washing off sins: “The LORD will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire (in the period of salvation)²²⁴” “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols (HSV: stinking gods)²²⁵”

But only by the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (12:10) and the inner renewal that follows is it possible for the house of David and the citizens of Jerusalem (the Old Testament believers) to share in the salvation that is described here. Hebrews 11:39-40 confirms this: “These (heroes of faith during the Old Testament period) were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised (!). God had planned something better for us so that only together with us (the believers during the New Testament period) would they be made perfect.” The main thing is that sin is removed during the coming period of salvation (the New Testament period)²²⁶!

The initial fulfilment. It is clear that the initial fulfilment takes place in Jesus Christ²²⁷. The blood of Jesus Christ purifies us from all sin²²⁸.

13:2. On that day I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more,” declares the LORD Almighty. “I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity (of the false prophet) from the land.

12:3. And if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother, to whom he was born, will say to him, “You must die, because you have told lies in the LORD’s name.’ When he prophesies, his own parents will stab him.

12:4. On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet’s garment of hair in order to deceive (to tell lies).

12:5. He will say, “I am not a prophet. I am a farmer; the land has been my livelihood since my youth.”

12:6. If someone asks him, “What are these wounds on your body?” he will answer “The wounds I was given at the house of my friends (those that love me).”

There were already false prophets in the days of Moses²²⁹, Jeremiah²³⁰ and Nehemiah²³¹. Two literal representatives of sin in Judah were called by name: the idols and the false prophets. The prophets are here not the servants sent by God²³², but *professional prophets, guild/craft prophets, people who used to act with the pretention that they were able to interpret divine messages in dreams, visions and signs.*²³³. In those days the Spirit of the LORD departed from such circles. ‘The

²¹⁸ Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 12:13

²¹⁹ Acts 2:36-39

²²⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:18. Greek: Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σαρκά

²²¹ Romans 9:6b, Galatians 6:14-16. Greek: Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ θεοῦ

²²² See 1 John 1:7,9

²²³ Micah 7:18-19

²²⁴ Isaiah 4:4

²²⁵ Ezekiel 36:25; ss Psalm 51:4,9

²²⁶ Psalm 51:9; Isaiah 4:4; Ezekiel 36:26; Micah19; Zechariah 3:9

²²⁷ Acts 2:37-41

²²⁸ 1 John 1:7

²²⁹ Deuteronomy 18:20-22

²³⁰ Jeremiah 23:9-40

²³¹ Nehemiah 6:7,12 and through the extent of mixing between Jews and non-Jews

²³² Amos 2:11

²³³ Cf. 1 Kings 20:35; 1 Kings chapter 22; Jeremiah 23:9-40; Hosea 4:12; Amos 7:14

unclean spirits were spirits of false prophets of religions. They had to be killed²³⁴. In contrast to these professional prophets, the Spirit of the LORD would rest on the true prophets during the period of salvation²³⁵.

False prophets kept on denying that they were professional prophets, but they were not able to hide the wounds on their hands and arms which they inflicted on themselves just like the Baal prophets in the day of Elijah²³⁶.

They kept lying that they received these wounds during their godless orgies and fights. They were willing to say anything but the truth so that they would not be known as prophets.

**Zechariah 13:7-9. Announcement of judgement and of salvation:
The death of the shepherd and the lot of the people.**

The shepherd appointed by the LORD over the people will be killed and the people/the nation will be dispersed. Two-thirds of them living in Canaan will be destroyed, but one-third will survive. That third will be refined by disasters, repent and turn to the LORD and the LORD will acknowledge them as his people.

13:7. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd (*appointed by God over Israel*) against the man who is close to me!” declares the LORD Almighty. “Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones (*in Israel, the weak suffer most*) (HSV: *God turns towards the weak*).

In Zechariah 11 the shepherd represents the LORD Himself, but in Zechariah 13 the shepherd is clearly distinguished from the LORD. Thus Zechariah 13:7-9 is an independent prophecy.

‘My shepherd’ is the regent/ruler appointed by the LORD over Israel. ‘The man close to me’ may be a human co-worker of the LORD²³⁷, but is in the deepest sense Jesus Christ, the Shepherd and Companion of the LORD, because He himself is God.

‘Sword, awake’ is a rhetorical call that indicates that God’s sovereign decree will be executed. The Shepherd will be killed, which does not exclude the fact that the executor of God’s will would be held culpable²³⁸. ‘The sword’ with regard to Christ cannot be taken literally, because he was crucified with nails and pierced by a spear. *It is a symbol* of the destructive Jewish and Roman power that killed Jesus.

The consequence of killing the Shepherd is that the sheep (the people) will be scattered. God will even turn his hand against the little ones and they will also be scattered²³⁹. The HSV translates the sentence positively: the weak sheep rouse the LORD’s compassion, but the NIV (and Hebrew text) translates the sentence negatively: the weak sheep (the poor and least important suffer the most in this national disaster²⁴⁰).

13:8. “In the whole land” declares the LORD, “two thirds (*the majority*) will be struck down and perish and one third (*the minority*) will be left in it.

Two thirds is *a symbol* for the majority of the people. They are destroyed, directly by the hand of God or indirectly by the sword of the enemy who first killed the Shepherd and then turned against the unprotected people. In both cases this happens because the LORD decreed this (13:7). The minority of the people remain as remnant. Thus, the destruction of the people is not complete, but partial²⁴¹. There is still a future for the remnant (the chosen believers) of God’s people²⁴².

13:9. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine (*purify, chasten, melt*) them like silver and test (*put to trial*) them like gold. They (*that third*) will call on my name and I will answer them: I will say, “They are my people,” and they will say, ‘The LORD is our God.’

This remnant will still face oppression and persecution. Their ‘refinement in the fire’, melting the base metals out of the silver and gold²⁴³, is neither a trial (or punishment) of the LORD nor a temptation (attack) of Satan. That third (God’s covenant people) will call upon the name of the LORD²⁴⁴ and witness in his Name. The LORD will acknowledge them as his people²⁴⁵.

Prophecy in the Old Testament is presented in the forms of the old covenant.

There is thus a difference between:

- Prophecy in national forms in the Old Testament revelation.
- And the fulfilment of prophecy in the clear light of the New Testament revelation²⁴⁶.

²³⁴ Deuteronomy 18:20

²³⁵ Acts 2:17-18; 15:32; 1 Corinthians 14:3

²³⁶ 1 Kings 18:28

²³⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:9

²³⁸ Compare Isaiah 10:5, “Assyria, the rod of my anger.”

²³⁹ 1 Kings 22:17. “I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd.” 1 Maccabees 9:18. “Judas fell and the rest fled.”

²⁴⁰ Psalm 81:15; Ezekiel 38:12

²⁴¹ See Romans 11:5,25,27.

²⁴² Think of the 12 disciples, the 120 believers, the 3000 converts at Pentecost, the 5000 (Acts 4:4) and the daily increase in Acts 5:14; Acts 6:7.

²⁴³ Isaiah 1:25; Malachi 3:3

²⁴⁴ Romans 10:12-13

²⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:16

²⁴⁶ See Hebrews 9:8-10

The initial fulfilment. The Old Testament national form speaks of the downfall of a leader who was appointed by the LORD. *He is a type of Jesus Christ.* During the period before the first coming of Jesus the Jewish nation went through series of trials, but nevertheless the LORD delivered a remnant of chosen believers. This could be a reference to Zerubbabel (520 BCE), or to the High priest Onias who was murdered (172 BCE)²⁴⁷ or to a military leader of the Maccabees (160 BCE). This leader is then a type of Jesus Christ, the ultimate antitype and fulfilment of the prophecy!

The real fulfilment. In Luke 13:33 Jesus says, “I *must* keep going today and tomorrow and the next day (towards Jerusalem) -, for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem.” In Luke 22:37 he says, “I tell you, this *must* be fulfilled in me”, namely, being numbered with the transgressors. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfilment.” In Luke 24:44, he says, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything *must* be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” And the apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12, Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we *must* be saved.”

In Mark 14:27 Jesus says, “You will all fall away, ... for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’”. The prophecy speaks about the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The emphasis is on the sheep being scattered, the disciples of Jesus fleeing from the scene: “Then everyone deserted him and fled.”²⁴⁸. *This is an application of the prophecy.*

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ also caused the end of the whole Old Testament people of Israel together with its religion that centred in the ceremonial law. The breaking down of the temple of Jesus’ body brought about the breaking down of the Jewish temple with its worship by means of the ceremonial law²⁴⁹.

The crucifixion of Jesus robbed Israel from its Messiah in a particular sense. This is a judgement of Israel’s sins. Their destruction of their Messiah led to their demise as the people of Israel. After the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 CE the Jewish nation was destroyed or scattered²⁵⁰. With the destruction of the temple the worship of God by means of the ceremonial law (priests, sacrifices, etc.) terminated. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ terminated the Old Testament religion: ‘the first or old covenant’ and ‘the old order’²⁵¹.

Since the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead the faithful (believing) remnant of the Jews - the 12 disciples of Jesus, the 120 believers, the 3000 converts at Pentecost, the 5000 in Acts 4:4, etc.) and the ever growing number of Jews that come to faith and the ever growing number of non-Jews (Gentiles) that become Christians - is gathered in God’s New Testament people, the Church²⁵². God’s Old Testament people, Israel (the chosen believers in Israel)²⁵³ was thus NOT terminated and NOT substituted/replaced (by the Church), BUT were continued on the higher plane (of realities instead of shadows) and extended/enlarged to include the chosen believers from the heathen nations.

ZECHARIAH 14

Zechariah 14:1-21. The struggle of the world against the Church and the eschatological Kingdom of God described in forms derived from the shadowy revelation in the old covenant.

Chapter 14 pictures the future of Judah and Jerusalem (and with this: the Kingdom of God) in forms that are derived from the old order (the Old Testament shadowy period)²⁵⁴.

The prophecy deals with ‘the last things’, ‘the eschatological end-time.’ Zechariah 14 speaks of the great end-time struggle of the Gentile nations against the people of God. It speaks of the hostility between the world (the kingdom of the world) and the Church (the Kingdom of God). Initially the advancing nations have success (13:7-9), but the final victory belongs to the LORD and his people. This same eschatological war and victory is described in Joel 3:9-12, Ezekiel 38-39 and in Revelation 11:7-10; 13:7-10; 16:12-16; 19:11-21 and 20:7-10. The victory of the New Jerusalem is described in Revelation 21:1 - 22:5.

Zechariah 14:1-2. The day of the LORD.

14:1. A day of the LORD is coming when your plunder will be divided among you.

14:2. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it; the city will be captured, the houses ransacked, and the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

²⁴⁷ Daniel 9:26

²⁴⁸ Mark 14:50

²⁴⁹ John 2:19-22

²⁵⁰ The founding of the Jewish homeland or Jewish State of Israel in 1948 by the Zionist movement is NOT a continuation of Biblical Israel! It is a national movement and ideology that supports a Jewish homeland or Jewish State in the area where in biblical times the Israelite kingdoms of Israel and Judah were located.

²⁵¹ Hebrews 9:8-10

²⁵² Romans 11:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:14-22; Revelation 21:12-14

²⁵³ Romans 9:6b

²⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:14-17; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:8-10; 10:1

'The Day of the LORD' is the day on which the LORD will reveal himself in a special way: to destroy his enemies and save his people. Here it is clearly the day of the second coming of Jesus Christ, the last day in the New Testament period. After that eternity begins.

Here 'the day of the LORD' is pictured in the Old Testament shadowy manner. The nations advance against Jerusalem and at first have success (13:7-9). The city is conquered, the houses are plundered, the booty is divided in the middle of the city where everyone could see it, the women are being raped, half of the citizens are carried off in exile. This is a revelation of the final fierce enmity of the world against the people of God (*an announcement of the judgement*). The other half of the citizens are not destroyed (*thus an announcement of salvation*)²⁵⁵.

Zechariah 14:3-5. Picture of the shaking of the present world.

14:3. Then the LORD will go out and fight against these nations, as he fights in the day of battle.

The LORD and his army of angels descend from heaven to fight against the Gentile nations (symbolising the unbelievers)²⁵⁶. He fights as 'on the day of fighting' as he fought in the past at various times²⁵⁷.

14:4. On that day his feet will 'stand' on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

In the shadowy Old Testament revelation the LORD will appear on the Mount of Olives and it will split when *his feet touches* it. Compare Micah 1:3-4, "The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; ... and *treads* the high places of the earth. The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart."²⁵⁸. 'The treading', 'melting' and 'splitting' *are* *symbolical, not literal!* When God approaches to judge the enemy, he opens a way for his people to flee. How he does that is not specified.

In the clear light of the New Testament revelation Jesus says, "Immediately after the stress of those days, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."²⁵⁹. Jesus revealed to John in a vision, "Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake." No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth!²⁶⁰

And God says, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 'Once more' indicates the removing of what can be shaken – that is, the created things - so that what cannot be shaken, may remain"²⁶¹.

Zechariah 14:4-5 is *Old Testament picture about the coming of the LORD in the end-time (the New Testament period)* to save his people. *It is figurative speech.* See the fulfilment.

This is not a prophecy about the second coming of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, because at his ascension he said, that he would return "in the same way". Acts 1 says, "he was taken up into the sky until a cloud hid him from their eyes"²⁶². *He will descend from heaven to the clouds (not to the earth or Mount of Olives)* where believers will meet him²⁶³. There in the clouds the last Judgement will take place²⁶⁴. At this Last Judgement of people in the air, also the heavens (universe) will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed (broken up) by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (to the light)²⁶⁵ in order to make room for the new heaven and the new earth²⁶⁶.

14:5. You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come and all the holy ones with him.

By creating this valley the LORD opened the way for the remaining half of the citizens of Jerusalem (the chosen believers) to escape. 'Azel' is an unknown place east of Jerusalem, far enough to find safe refuge.

Amos also speaks of such an earthquake in the days of king Uzziah²⁶⁷. When the remnant of Jerusalem are safe, then "the LORD, my God, will come together with his angels"²⁶⁸ to judge his enemies²⁶⁹.

Zechariah 14:6-11. Picture of the new creation.

²⁵⁵ See Revelation 20:8-9

²⁵⁶ Joel 3:9-11; Matthew 24:30-31. See Revelation 19:11-14

²⁵⁷ Exodus 15:3-4; Joshua 10:14,42; 23:3; Judges 4:15; 1 Samuel 7:10; 2 Chronicles 20:15

²⁵⁸ See Judges 5:5.

²⁵⁹ Matthew 24:29

²⁶⁰ Revelation 16:18

²⁶¹ Hebrews 12:26-27

²⁶² Acts 1:9-12

²⁶³ 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Matthew 24:31,40-41; Matthew 25:321

²⁶⁴ Matthew 25:31-46

²⁶⁵ 2 Peter 3:10

²⁶⁶ 2 Peter 3:13

²⁶⁷ Amos 1:1

²⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 33:2; Joel 3:11; Daniel 7:9-10; Matthew 24:31; 25:31

²⁶⁹ Daniel 7:10; Joel 3:11; Matthew 24:31; 25:31-32a

Before the prophet describes the punishment of the enemies of Jerusalem (14:12-15), he describes the changes that will occur in nature and in Judah and Jerusalem in particular.

14:6. On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost.

In the new creation there will be no heat, cold or frost. See²⁷⁰.

14:7. It will be a unique day, without daytime or night time – a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light.

Even though Jesus according to his human nature does not know when this day would take place²⁷¹, according to his divine nature he does know! In the new creation there will be one never ending day and light, just as in the New Jerusalem²⁷².

14:8. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea (*the Dead Sea*) and half to the western sea (*the Mediterranean Sea*); in summer and in winter.

Joel (800 BCE) prophesied about the new creation²⁷³, “The open pastures are becoming green. The trees are bearing their fruit; the fig tree and the vine yield their riches. Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness/salvation (by stopping the drought with these early rains). He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.” He adds to this: “In that day the mountains will drip new wine (there will be many vineyards on the hills). And the hills will flow with milk (there will be many herds of cattle grazing in the hills). A fountain will flow out of the LORD’s house and will water the valley of acacias (the Valley of Sittim)²⁷⁴.”

Amos (788-737 BCE) too prophesied about the new creation.²⁷⁵. “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes. (They will follow very quickly in succession). New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills.”

Hosea (754-714 BCE) prophesied about the new creation²⁷⁶, “In that day the LORD will respond ... to the skies and they will respond to the earth²⁷⁷.” The LORD will be a God who responds to prayer and changes his earlier judgements to its opposites²⁷⁸. Then the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil, and they will respond to Jezreel (here Israel). I will plant it for myself in the land; I will show my love to the One I called ‘Lo Ruchama’. I will say to ‘Lo Ammi.’ ‘You are my people’!²⁷⁹”

Ezekiel (593-571 BCE) prophesies about the new creation²⁸⁰, “Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will large numbers of fish, because the water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live.” ... Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river; Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”

The prophecy about the wonderful fruitfulness of Palestine is the Old Testament picture of blessings of the future Messianic period of salvation (the New Testament period before the second coming and of the final new earth after the second coming. In Revelation 21-22 the new earth is described! Jesus says, “See, I make all things new”²⁸¹!

14:9. The LORD will be King over the whole earth (or: land). On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name.

The centre point of all salvation is the Kingship of the LORD over the whole land of Judah (verse 10). Only the LORD will be acknowledged as God, because all other gods will have been cast away.

14:10. The whole land from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Jordan valley (NIV: Arabah, HSN plain). But Jerusalem will be raised up and lie high in its place (or: NIV: remain inhabited in its place), from the Benjamin Gate, to the sight of the First (HSV: Early) Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses.

The whole land of Judah will sink down until it is level with the deep lying River Jordan Valley. The northern and southern borders are mentioned. Jerusalem will be raised high above this valley. A couple of boundaries of the city are also named.

²⁷⁰ Genesis 31:40-41

²⁷¹ See Matthew 24:35-36. In his limited human nature he was also tempted, hungry, thirsty, grieving and mortal.

²⁷² See Revelation 21:25; 22:5

²⁷³ Joel 2:22-24

²⁷⁴ Joel 3:18

²⁷⁵ Amos 9:13

²⁷⁶ See Joel 3:18; Ezekiel 47:1-12

²⁷⁷ Hosea 2:20-22

²⁷⁸ Hosea 1:4-9

²⁷⁹ ‘Lo-Ruchama’ means ‘not pitied, not loved’. ‘Lo-Ammi’ means ‘not my people’.

²⁸⁰ Ezekiel 47:9,12

²⁸¹ Revelation 21:5

14:11. It will be inhabited; never again will it be cursed, banned (NIV: destroyed). Jerusalem will be secure (HSV: without worries).

Jerusalem will remain inhabited. People will never again be carried into exile from it. A ban, a divinely ordained destruction, will never again occur²⁸².” The people will never again be startled by an enemy.

The initial fulfilment. This promise was literally fulfilled when Jerusalem and the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah were built²⁸³.

The real fulfilment took place during the first coming of Christ when ‘the heavenly Jerusalem’²⁸⁴ and ‘the temple of God’²⁸⁵ (both a symbol of ‘the Church’ now) were established! In another sense this promise is being fulfilled during the New Testament period: God’s work via Christians “fills the earth with people in the image of God” (the most beautiful that can happen) and “they subdue the earth”²⁸⁶ by establishing schools, hospitals, righteous judges, incorruptible politicians, honest businessmen, hardworking labourers, enormous protection of nature, the proclamation of the good news and disseminating practical Christianity everywhere in the world²⁸⁷, etc. etc.

The ultimate fulfilment will take place at the second coming of Christ when ‘the new Jerusalem’ (a symbol of ‘the Church’ at the second coming) will descend from heaven onto the new earth²⁸⁸. *The heavenly Jerusalem or the new Jerusalem is not a literal city, but the total of chosen believers throughout human history.*²⁸⁹ *Never again will there be a literal temple in this Jerusalem*²⁹⁰!

The promise goes into definite fulfilment at the renewal of all things on the new earth: “See, I am making everything new”²⁹¹! “On both sides of the river stand parks of trees of life that bear fruit each month”²⁹²!

Zechariah 14:12-15. Description of the announced punishment of enemies.

14:12. This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem : Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

In Zechariah 14:3-4 the punishment is announced and in Zechariah 14:12-15 it is described. The LORD will send a terrible plague that causes them to rot while they are still standing on their feet²⁹³!

14:13. In that day men will be stricken by the LORD with great panic (HSV: confusion, perplexity). Each man will seize the hand of another, and (with a hand raised with a weapon) they will attack each other.

The hostile nations will fight against each other and destroy one another. “The LORD caused the men throughout the camp to turn on each other with their swords”²⁹⁴.

14:14. Judah too will fight at Jerusalem. The wealth of all the surrounding nations will be collected: great quantities of gold and silver and clothing.

The Judeans will fight inside the conquered city and slay the presumptuous enemy. They will gather the possessions of the enemy as booty, silver, gold and great quantities of clothing²⁹⁵.

14:15. A similar plague will strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps.

All animals (horses, mules, camels and donkeys) will be struck with the same plague (as verse 13).

Zechariah 14:16-19. The shadowy prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles in the days of the new covenant.

14:16. Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship (HSV: bow to) the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of tabernacles.

14:17. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain.

²⁸² See Isaiah 43:28; Jeremiah 25:9; Malachi 4:6

²⁸³ Ezra 1:1

²⁸⁴ Galatians 4:21-27; Hebrews 12:22-24; see John 2:19-21

²⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:16

²⁸⁶ Genesis 1:28

²⁸⁷ Isaiah 2:1-4

²⁸⁸ Hebrews 11:10-16; Hebrews 13:14; Revelation 21-22

²⁸⁹ Revelation 21:1-2,9-10

²⁹⁰ Based on their interpretation of Daniel 9:24-27 and Revelation 11:1-2 dispensational doctrine wrongly believes that a temple would again be built in the period of ‘the great tribulation’ and another temple during the so-called ‘millennial kingdom of peace’. *However, never again will there be a literal temple in this Jerusalem (Acts 7:48-49; Acts 17:24-25; Revelation 21:22)!*

²⁹¹ Revelation 21:5

²⁹² The singular represents collectives. Revelation 22:1-2

²⁹³ See Acts 12:23

²⁹⁴ Judges 7:22; 1 Samuel 14:20; 2 Chronicles 20:23

²⁹⁵ 2 Kings 7:7-8,15

14:18. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The LORD will bring on them the plague he inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of tabernacles.

The remnant of the hostile heathen nations will convert to the God of Israel (the God who revealed himself in the Bible). Every year they will go up (to Jerusalem) to bow in worship before the LORD Almighty (of the host of angels), and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th of the 7th month.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the peak of Israel's religious festivals during the year. It was celebrated after the ingathering of the grain harvest and grape harvest²⁹⁶. During the festival people prayed for rain. Shortly thereafter in October the early rains fell.

14:19. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of tabernacles²⁹⁷.

The Feast of Tabernacles during the Old Testament period was a ceremonial festival, a part of the ceremonial law and the peak (final) religious festival of the year. It was celebrated *after the gathering of the harvest on the threshing floor and winepress*²⁹⁸. It was a great festival giving thanks to God for the harvest at the end of the agricultural year. At that time they also prayed for the early rains in October before the next agricultural year began. *It points forward to the outpouring (rain) of the Holy Spirit*²⁹⁹.

'The Feast of Tabernacles' in Zechariah 14:16-19 is a prophetic festival: it looked with expectation forward to the New Testament period when the Holy Spirit would be poured out³⁰⁰ and also to the Day of the LORD when the LORD would come to deliver his people and judge his enemies. It also looked forward to the second coming. *It symbolised the great joy and thankfulness of God's people on the new earth.*

There will fall no rain on people who refuse to go up to Jerusalem to bend to and worship the King (the LORD). Without honouring the true God there will be no blessing. Egypt was not dependent on the yearly rains, but on the floods of the Nile. If the Egyptians would refuse to go up to Jerusalem, they would be punished like the other nations. The prophet Haggai describes such a judgement: "You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it. ... You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little, What you brought home, I blew away"³⁰¹."

In Zechariah 14 *the last outburst of hatred against God's people during the New Testament period is announced in Old Testament terms*³⁰². "The rest of the people" (14:2) (the remnant of God's people, inclusive the believers during the great tribulation) will escape from this onslaught just as Israel escaped out of Egypt.

God's people will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles symbolically in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. But God's enemies who attacked God's people will have no part in the festive joy of the New Jerusalem. They will be severely punished.

Shadowy predictions about the conversion of Gentiles during the days of the new covenant. "The survivors from all the nations" (who had turned to the LORD) (14:16) is a *shadowy prophecy about the chosen believers in the non-Jewish nations who joined the Kingdom of God*. Not only 'the remnant of chosen believers in every generation from the nation of Israel, but also 'the remnant of chosen believers in every generation from the Gentile nations together form 'all Israel' that will be saved³⁰³.

And "the peoples of the earth on whom no rain falls" (14:17) is a *shadowy prophecy of the unbelievers* (the Jews and non-Jews who have not repented and are thus lost forever).

Zechariah 14:20-21. Without honouring the living God, there will be no blessing from God.

14:20. On that day, HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar.

14:21. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty, and all who come to sacrifice will take some of the pots and cook in them. And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD Almighty.

The yearly Feast of Tabernacles (14:17-21) is a *shadowy prophecy about the perfect holiness of the New Jerusalem on the new earth after the second coming of Christ* (14:20,21).

The bells. On that day the following will be inscribed on the bells on the horses: 'HOLY TO THE LORD'. 'Holy' means 'separation from all that is unrighteous' and 'dedication to all that is righteous'.

²⁹⁶ Deuteronomium 16:13

²⁹⁷ Isaiah 2:2-5

²⁹⁸ Deuteronomy 16:13

²⁹⁹ Johannes 7:2,37-39

³⁰⁰ John 7:2,37-39

³⁰¹ Haggai 1:6,9

³⁰² See Matthew 24:21-22; Revelation 20:8-10

³⁰³ Romans 11:13-26

The pots. Also the pots, the cooking bowls and sprinkling bowls, will be holy, separated and dedicated). The sprinkling bowls were used to apply the blood of sacrificial animals onto the four horns of the altar of burnt offerings, to sprinkle blood before the curtain in the Holy temple and to pour the rest out at the foot of the altar of burnt offerings outside the temple. These instruments were regarded as most holy instruments. The pots in the house of the LORD were used to cook the meat of the sacrifices and were regarded as less holy. *This means that all people and all things are dedicated in the highest sense to the LORD.*

The merchants. On that day there will be no Canaanite merchant/trader in the court of the temple selling animals to be sacrificed and thus desecrate the temple³⁰⁴.

In the early days the Canaanites lost their country and became merchants in Israel. They sold animals to be sacrificed³⁰⁵. They and possibly the pots in which the meat was cooked were regarded as (ceremonially) unclean.

In the future there will be no Canaanite, the symbol of an unbeliever, in the house of the LORD, because he would violate the ceremonial holiness of the temple (14:21). Also not in the Kingdom of God on the new earth³⁰⁶. All people are and everything they use in the New Jerusalem on the new earth will be holy to the LORD! This is a shadowy prophecy that nothing that is impure will come into the New Jerusalem, the Church or Kingdom of God on the new earth³⁰⁷! But literal Canaanites (and others) who believe in Jesus Christ are certainly 'holy' in God's eyes!³⁰⁸!

This promise and threat prove that the message in the Old Testament was not only meant for Israel of the Old Testament, but for all people in all nations!

The following must be kept in mind when reading the Old Testament prophecies:

On the one hand, the Old Testament prophecies have a shadowy character. When people read the Old Testament prophecies there is 'a veil' covering their hearts, which is taken away only whenever they turn to the LORD Jesus Christ³⁰⁹. The meaning of the Old Testament prophecies are revealed in the New Testament revelation. One should not expect a literal fulfilment of shadowy Old Testament images. Some Old Testament prophecies have an initial as well as a real/definite fulfilment.³¹⁰

On the other hand, the Old Testament prophecies have an eschatological character. The Old Testament prophecy speaks about events 'in the last days' or 'at the end of the ages'. In a sense the Day of the LORD (the last days) begins with the first coming of Christ³¹¹ and ends with the second coming of Christ³¹².

In accordance with these characteristics of Old Testament prophecies, the prophecy of Zechariah 14 sees:

- in the struggle of the nations against Jerusalem and their initial victory (14:1-2) *a picture of the last outburst of the hatred of the world against the people of God/the Church.*
- in the action of the LORD against the nations *a picture of God's power to punish the enemies and save his people.* The punishment of the enemies with the terrible plague is a picture of eternal damnation (hell) (14:3-5,12-15).
- in the changes in nature and the elevation of Jerusalem above the Judean plain (14:6-11) *a picture of even more beautiful new earth and the New Jerusalem that descends from heaven onto the new earth³¹³.* Jesus Christ will be the King over the whole new earth! *Only Jesus Christ will be acknowledged as the LORD³¹⁴* (14:9).
- in the remnant from the nations that go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles *a shadowy picture and prediction of the Gentile (non-Jewish) believers who will enter the new covenant!* They that do not repent and turn to God go to eternal damnation (14:16-19).
- in finding everything in Jerusalem and Judah to be 'holy to the LORD' *a picture that no one and nothing impure, abominable and lying will enter the New Jerusalem³¹⁵.*

³⁰⁴ Matthew 21:12; Matthew 13:41; Revelation 21:27

³⁰⁵ Matthew 21:12

³⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

³⁰⁷ Revelation 21:27; see Matthew 21:12-13

³⁰⁸ Acts 10:9-28

³⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:14-18

³¹⁰ For example, Isaiah 7:14 has a preliminary fulfilment in a young woman who was pregnant, bore a man-child and called him Immanuel before the kings of the two countries (Pekah of Israel)(in 734 BCE) and (Rezin of Aram)(in 732 BCE) were conquered by Tiglat-Pileser.

But it has an ultimate fulfilment in Matthew 1:21 when the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus in about 4 BCE. The Roman census was in the time Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-5).

³¹¹ Jesus was **revealed** in the last days (1 Peter 1:20); **appeared** at the end of the ages (Hebrews 9:26); God **spoke** through Jesus in these last days (Hebrews 1:1); Jesus **did away with sin** by the sacrifice of himself at the end of the ages (Hebrews 9:26); he **poured out the Holy Spirit** in the last days (Acts 2:17).

³¹² Jesus **raises the dead** on the last day (John 6:39-40); He **judges all people** on the last day (John 12:48); and at the second coming **the renewal of all things** will take place (Acts 3:21; Revelation 21:5); the heavenly Jerusalem will descend as the new Jerusalem from heaven onto the new earth (Revelation 21:1-2).

³¹³ Revelation 21:1-2

³¹⁴ Greek: kurios. Hebrew: JaHWeH. Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:1-3

³¹⁵ Revelation 21:27

The New Jerusalem or city of the living God is then the dwelling and festive gathering of uncountable angels, of the Church of the first-born (born-again believers) that are registered in heaven before the second coming and of the Triune God³¹⁶.

³¹⁶ Hebrew 12:22-24