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Developing a Series of Sabbath School Lessons on the Book of Zechariah

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A SERIES OF SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS
ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

by

Philip G. Samaan

Chairman: Clarence B. Gruesbeck

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: DEVELOPING A SERIES OF SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Name of researcher: Philip G. Samaan

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Clarence B. Gruesbeck, D.Min.

Date completed: June, 1987

This project report concerns the developing of a series of adult Sabbath School Lessons on the book of Zechariah. The lessons endeavor to address the major themes in Zechariah and cover each of the fourteen chapters in sequential order. However, due to the scope and limitation of this study, the lessons do not deal in detail with every verse.

These lessons are primarily devotional in nature designed to build up spiritually the body of Christ. They are also designed to draw the world-wide Seventh-day Adventist church members to focus attention on this book in daily study for one quarter. Daily study of Scripture

enables church members to treasure it as the source of encouragement, revival, and reformation.

This study of Zechariah has greatly benefited me both intellectually and spiritually. It has helped me to sharpen my skills in interpreting, teaching, and communicating effectively the inspired Word of God. There is such a great spiritual value in simply taking the Word of God for what it is, studying it, praying and meditating on it, and, as a result, experiencing the Holy Spirit's enlightenment.

I have attempted to make clear several important points to the readers. Among these points are: the Christ-centeredness of the book of Zechariah; its relevant and timely messages to the present and future life and mission of the Adventist church; and its potential as a rich resource for a spiritual awakening among God's people in these last days.

In its fourteen chapters, Zechariah's messages are particularly appropriate to Seventh-day Adventists. The themes of salvation by faith, the judgment, and the three advents of Christ, etc. all are to be found. The book complements, clarifies, and reinforces the messages of Daniel and Revelation.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

DEVELOPING A SERIES OF SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS
ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Philip G. Samaan
June 1987

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7 MAY 1987
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to gratefully acknowledge several individuals for their valuable assistance in completing this project. Dr. Clarence B. Gruesbeck, for his untiring efforts in working with a student who lived far away in Africa (his prompt and practical help, his unfailing encouragement and support are greatly appreciated); Drs. William Shea, Robert Johnston, and Abraham Terian for their practical suggestions; Drs. Gerhard Hasel, Raoul Dederen, Jacques Doukhan, Kenneth Strand, for having granted me personal interviews during which I gleaned helpful insights and ideas.

Others to whom I am grateful for their guidance and their encouragement are Drs. Arnold Kurtz and Raymond Holmes, Mrs. Shirley Thoresen, and Mrs. Joyce Jones, the dissertation secretary. My wife Sherilyn and daughter Marla are greatly appreciated for their patience and personal support.

My foremost acknowledgment goes to the central Figure in the book of Zechariah, the Messiah, who fulfilled His promises to me, restored my soul, and granted me a greatly stimulating experience, both spiritually and intellectually through the study of His sacred word.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Justification of the Project

The task of developing a series of Sabbath School lessons on the book of Zechariah for adults was assigned to me by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The assignment lent itself in several ways as a viable project for the professional degree in which I was enrolled.

The Need to Study the Book of Zechariah

The book of Zechariah deserves much more attention on the part of Seventh-day Adventists than it is usually given. There are a few very familiar verses that are quoted occasionally such as ". . . Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech 3:6); however, the major portions of the book are ignored.

First, there needs to be a comprehensive study of the book in the light of the fact that there is hardly any in-depth study of Zechariah in Seventh-day Adventist literature. Second, the book of Zechariah is uniquely relevant to Adventist theology and mission at the present time; it is one of the most eschatological, apocalyptic, and Messianic books of the Old Testament. Third, Zechariah parallels the two books studied most thoroughly by the Adventist Church, namely, the books of Daniel and Revelation. It should be placed in the same

class as these two important books for it parallels them in terms of its eschatological, apocalyptic and Messianic content. It also sheds light on, complements, and reinforces the messages of these two books.

Fourth, the theological field is quite open for study and application of Zechariah's messages to contemporary religious experiences and needs of the Church. Such a book is awaiting fuller investigation, appreciation, and implementation in the lives of church members --individually and collectively.

Personal Benefits

I have recognized my own need to develop my skills in more thorough study of Scripture in order to interpret, teach, and communicate more effectively the inspired word of God to church members. Of course, the intellectual stimulation and the spiritual enrichment as a result of such a thorough study of Scripture have been of great benefit. I am anxious to see much of the same effect in the lives of church members.

Corporal Benefits

The book of Zechariah is clearly a Christ-centered book. The Messiah is its central figure, and in Him the doctrinal truths such as repentance, justification, judgment, and advent are found. It is assumed that such Christ-centered lessons from a very important, yet often neglected book of the Bible, will aid in the spiritual revival and reformation within the church. It will involve the church members in issues relevant to their spiritual condition, Adventist theology, and church mission both now and in the near future. In addition, such study

will focus the attention of the world-wide church on this one subject on a daily basis. As a result, the church will experience not only a spiritual revival but will consequently come to realize that the study of Zechariah, like the study of Daniel and Revelation, merits much more consideration in its preaching and teaching program.

Description of the Project

This manuscript, which is comprised of three chapters, endeavors to address the major themes in the book of Zechariah by making use of every chapter in sequential order. However, due to the scope and limitation of this study, the lessons do not deal exhaustively with every verse as such. This series of lessons is primarily devotional in nature and is designed to build up the church members in their personal spiritual lives.

First, extensive use of resource materials such as the Hebrew, Arabic, and Greek Bibles, several versions of the English Bible, Ellen G. White's writings, the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, and other secondary sources are utilized. Insights and ideas gleaned from personal interviews with theology professors are also used. Second, in chapter 2 are included an introduction and the thirteen lessons from the book of Zechariah. These lessons are designed to address the total world-wide membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, taking into consideration different cultural and educational backgrounds. Third, the lessons are prepared to aid the church member to study, discuss, and apply the insights and instructions of the lessons individually, within the family setting, and in the setting of the Sabbath School class, church, and the community.

Finally, more than the mere use of various sources, the project required a deep and personal searching of the Word. Many hours were spent in prayer and personal meditation seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scripture in the first place, and who inspires and guides earnest seekers after truth today. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth . . ." (John 16:13a RSV).

Expectations from the Project

The project is expected to be a learning and maturing experience for the researcher; and it is anticipated that the project will enhance the spiritual life and mission of the Church as well.

Personal Expectations

The study of the book of Zechariah with the intent of developing a series of Sabbath School lessons for adults has been a learning and maturing experience for me that has enriched my ministry through the study of the available data and through interaction with Biblical scholars. It also has sharpened my study skills through an in-depth study of the Word and effective communication of that study to the church membership as a whole.

Furthermore, the study has aided me, during the writing of these lessons, to develop the necessary capabilities to more readily recognize the spiritual needs of church members. Some of the ideas developed in the study were shared with church members. Consequently, such interaction aided me in acquiring the ability to blend theory and practice, as an integral part of my vocation. This proved to be of

special benefit to me as director of the Sabbath School program of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division of SDA.

Expectations for the Church

It is anticipated that this project will influence the life and mission of the Church by:

1. Focusing the attention of the total Church membership for one quarter of the year (and hopefully beyond) on this very important, relevant, and not generally understood book of the Bible that has a great deal to do with the theology and mission of the SDA Church.

2. Providing a better understanding of the book of Zechariah by church members.

3. Aiding in the spiritual nurture, revival, and involvement of the total membership of the Church on a daily basis. True and lasting revival and reformation often grow out of a sincere and constant study of the word of God.

4. Assisting the church members in areas of inreach and outreach as a result of the insights gained and practical applications experienced from the study of the lessons.

CHAPTER II

ZECHARIAH--PROMISE AND RESTORATION

Introduction to the Book of Zechariah

This quarter we will be studying the book of Zechariah. Our study will not be exhaustive of every passage or chapter, but will deal with the major themes of this important book.

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

One of the main reasons why the book of Zechariah is somewhat unknown is because it is neglected and unopened. Seventh-day Adventists, especially, need to pay much more attention to its study. Why? Because it is the most Messianic, eschatological, and apocalyptic of the Old Testament books. It is the largest book among the Minor Prophets (14 chapters), containing two chapters more than Daniel, with which it has several points in common. It can be said also that Zechariah is the Old Testament equivalent of what Revelation is for the New Testament.

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

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

Overview of Zechariah

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

LESSON 1

"I LIFTED UP MINE EYES"

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

MEMORY VERSE: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1, 2)

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Hebrew name Zechariah means "God remembers." Often in the hustle and bustle of life we forget that God remembers us; we need to stop, turn, lift up our eyes, and see Him.

OVERVIEW:

1. Zechariah--God remembers (1:1,7)
2. Zechariah lifted up his eyes (1:18)
3. Zechariah lifted up his eyes again (2:1)
4. Zechariah turned, and lifted up his eyes (5:1; 6:1)

INTRODUCTION: John Bunyan in his book The Pilgrim's Progress describes the experience of the man with the muck-rake. This man was so busy with the rake in his hand cleaning the dirt around him that he never stopped, looked up, and saw. What the man missed seeing was an angel above him in whose hand was a crown of gold. The angel was patiently waiting to give the crown to the man, but he never received it. Why? Because the man with the muck-rake was so preoccupied with what he was doing that he never turned, never lifted up his eyes, and never looked.

This quarter, as we study these lessons, let us not be like the muck-raker. Rather, let us be like Zechariah who remembered that God was there, who turned, and who lifted up his eyes again and again and saw a vision of the Lord.

Zechariah--God Remembers (Zech 1:1, 7)

Zechariah--Historical Sketch

The name Zechariah, which means "God remembers" in Hebrew, was a common name in the Old Testament--twenty-nine persons are mentioned with it. The meaning of the name was fitting to the situation into which the exiles returned. The unsettled political situation in the Persian empire and the bitter opposition and prejudice from neighboring Samaritans led to great discouragement among the Jews. They completely stopped the rebuilding program and started caring for their own material interests. As a result the people lapsed into spiritual lethargy and difficult times ensued.

During this time of flux, discouragement, and uncertainty, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah came on the scene to bring a message of encouragement and hope to the people that God had not forgotten them as they had thought. God was no longer angry with them and was calling them to return to Him so He might dwell in their midst and remember them always. He assured them that He was ready to fight and win their battles and to finish the rebuilding of the temple.

God kept His promise to restore the temple construction resumed in the second year of Darius and the temple was completed in the sixth year of Darius (Ezra 6:14, 15), or 516 B.C.

ILLUMINATION:

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

THINK IT THROUGH: As I face criticism, opposition, and trials, do I lose sight of God's presence in my life? Such trials can either drive me closer to God or drive me further away from Him. What are their effects on my spiritual life? Do I find myself like the Jews thinking that God has forgotten me and start focusing on my own selfish material interests?

Zechariah--the Person

Zechariah was a young man when he was called by God to the prophetic ministry--around the year 520 B.C.--and was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). He functioned also as a priest carrying on Iddo's priestly line (Neh 12:4, 16). Haggai was quite an old man when Zechariah began his work, so he found in the young prophet a great help. "Two months after Haggai's last recorded message was delivered, Zechariah had a series of visions" (Prophets and Kings, p. 580). Theirs was a ministry of unity and cooperation. Zechariah built on and reinforced Haggai's messages. The former prophet gave an impulse forward (Hag 1:1, 5), and the latter pushed forcefully for the completion of the temple. "The earnest pleadings and the encouragements given through Haggai were emphasized and added to by Zechariah, whom God raised up to stand by his side in urging Israel to carry out the command to arise and build" (Prophets and Kings, p. 576).

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

What traits of character are exhibited by Zechariah in Zech 1:9, 19, 21; 2:2; 3:5; 4:11, 12?

What picture do we see of God's character as He responds to Zechariah's questions, interruptions, and curiosity? See Zech 1:9, 10, 19, 21; 2:2; 3:5.

Zechariah, this energetic young prophet/priest seems to be full of enthusiasm, curiosity, and imagination. He can hardly wait for God to introduce a subject before he starts interrupting, asking questions, or making suggestions. He is alert, a keen observer, and attentive to detail--a well-chosen instrument to be used by God to transmit the apocalyptic, eschatological, and Messianic messages to his people.

From this we learn that God does not mind our questions. He wants us to be heard. He invites us in Isa 1:18 to "Come now, and let us reason together." God is patient and loving and will interrupt what He is saying, and even accept our suggestions, in order to make Himself clear and to promote a relationship of dialogue and understanding.

REACT: In the light of God's reasonableness, his interest in listening to us, and dialoguing with us, how shall we relate to others? Are we

sometimes impatient with their questions? Do we listen actively, or do we do most of the talking?

How do we relate to other people's ideas and suggestions? Do we sometimes come across ill at ease or defensive? It is very interesting to note that our enthusiastic prophet Zechariah actually made a suggestion to the heavenly court in the fourth vision to place a "fair mitre" on Joshua's head (see Zech 3:5). Notice that immediately in the same verse the all-knowing God accepted Zechariah's suggestion.

Zechariah Lifted Up His Eyes (Zech 1:28)

Several times in the first six chapters we clearly notice that Zechariah was the kind of person who looked up to heaven and saw a vision of God. He was not the kind of person who brooded over his problems or kept his eyes looking downward on earthly things.

That is not to say that he was not a realist. He was. He understood well the problems of his people. But before being able to resolve the problems down here, he lifted up his eyes and looked up there and saw that his help came from beyond himself--from God.

What spiritual significance is to be found in Zechariah lifting up his eyes and seeing? Zech 1:18.

COMPARE: Compare Zech 1:18 with 2 Kgs 6:14-17.

We live in the natural and supernatural realms. We are surrounded by seen and unseen forces which affect our daily lives. Often we focus our attention on what is seen in this world such as money,

pleasure, and prestige. Consequently, we are blinded to the unseen world--the supernatural.

We must remember the supremacy of the supernatural over the natural. The supernatural is much more real and enduring; and only by opening our eyes and looking up, like the young man in 2 Kgs 6:17, may we see the mountains around full of God's mighty power. The supernatural must always interact with the natural and give it its true meaning and place it in the right perspective.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Read the following texts carefully and then write down the main thought in each. What do these texts have in common?

1. 2 Kings 6:17
2. Psalm 121:1, 2
3. Isaiah 45:22
4. Zechariah 1:18
5. Luke 21:28
6. Hebrews 12:2

ILLUMINATION:

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

Zechariah Lifted Up His Eyes Again (Zech 2:1).

COMPARE: In Zech 2:1, we notice that the word "again" is introduced

which was not in Zech 1:18. What significance does this word have in the context?

Zechariah did not lift up his eyes once but repeatedly. One experience is not enough. We must look at the Savior again and again to replenish our reservoir of His love, hope, and power. The Scriptures teach us about the necessity of such a continual spiritual experience. For example, we are admonished to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17), die daily to self (1 Cor 15:31), deny self, and take up the cross daily and follow Christ (Luke 9:23), delight ourselves with the law of God, and meditate on it day and night (Ps 1:2), and search the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:1).

What applications can you draw from the above Bible references? Is your experience of spiritual communion a steady or an occasional one? What is the difference between the two?

You might say, "even though I've decided, and I am determined to have a consistent devotional life, I often fail so miserably." There are many things in life that we do not always feel like doing, but we do anyway because they are right. Such things are difficult to do especially at the beginning, but they become easier and more pleasant with time. The food, even the most delicious, does not taste good to a patient recovering from an illness, but he must eat it to regain his strength. To begin a regular physical exercise program, one experiences difficulty, especially at the beginning, but with consistency, discipline, and perseverance, it becomes a part of one's life.

Spiritual discipline is what makes the difference. Decision and determination have their place, but without reinforcing them with discipline, they are of little avail. There will always be times when we will not feel like continuing what we have decided to get done. This is exactly where discipline comes in--discipline that is inspired by God's love to us and His drawing power in our lives; the kind that is inspired by what the apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil 4:13), and "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus" (Phil 3:14).

Inspired and empowered by Christ's love and "the prize" awaiting us, we make a serious and a conscious effort to go on with regularity and steadfastness in spite of the feelings and obstacles that we might encounter. Obviously such discipline is needed in whatever important task we need to accomplish in life, especially in the spiritual realm.

Zechariah Turned and Lifted Up His Eyes (Zech 5:1; 6:1)

Twice Zechariah uses the word "turned" in describing his action of lifting up his eyes and looking. To turn means to stop, change direction, and interrupt what is being done.

What spiritual significance does the use of the phrase "he turned" have in considering the experience of Zechariah? Zech 5:1; 6:1

Study the progressive actions of Zechariah's experience in Zech 2:1; 5:1; and 6:1 as shown in the following points:

1. Turned
2. Lifted up eyes
3. Again

4. Looked
5. Saw
6. Vision

What do these points tell me about Zechariah? About myself?

As the prophet went about his very busy work of leadership, he never lost sight of God's presence and the messages He wanted to give to him. God was the first priority in his life. He was ready to interrupt his activities, no matter how important they were, lift up his eyes and listen to God. He was never too busy to communicate with God. That was the secret of his success in being used by the Lord. He received power from the Source which he imparted to others. That can be the secret of our success too. It is the only way to a victorious Christian life. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved" (Isa 45:22).

ILLUMINATION:

As we make Christ our daily companion we shall feel that the powers of the unseen world are all around us; and by looking unto Jesus we shall become assimilated to His image. By beholding we become changed. The character is softened, refined and ennobled for the heavenly kingdom. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 85)

What significance does the small word "up" have in Zech 5:1 and 6:1?

Sometimes in our lives when things are going relatively well, we may find it easy to pray and to "look up." But when the going gets tough, our faith gets shaky and discouragement sets in; it becomes very tempting to look sideways rather than upward. In other words, during such difficult times, it becomes easy to look at ourselves, to

complain and criticize instead of turning and lifting up our eyes to God, our only real source of help.

The real purpose of trials and difficulties is to drive us to our knees in prayer and to solidify our dependence on God and not vice-versa.

ILLUSTRATION: One day I was discussing with an acquaintance this Biblical concept of "turning" and "looking up" and how absolutely essential it is for our spiritual survival and growth. He responded earnestly saying, "I am too busy. I am 'up to here' with my work at the office. I just don't have any time to study and meditate." I asked him gently if he had any time to eat. He responded by saying, "Yes, but that's different. If I don't eat I will not be able to go on."

The first part of his last response is not true, but the second part is. We need spiritual food as much as physical food and much more, for without it, as my friend said, we "will not be able to go on." No job, no activity, nothing whatsoever is important enough to take us away from taking the time to look up. If it does, it is not important enough no matter what it is. It is a matter of life and death. Our whole life now and forever depends on turning, lifting up our eyes, and beholding God.

What is the main thought in Prov 29:18? What is meant by the word "vision," and how can that be applied in my own life?

Just like the man with the muck-rake in our introduction, without stopping and lifting up his eyes and looking above him he could not obtain the crown of gold which was in the angel's hand. So we too

will not receive a vision--a revelation of God and His character and an impartation of His love, wisdom, and power to us. It is there for the asking, but we must ask for and appropriate what God has in store for us, otherwise there will be no benefit. Without drawing on the Source, we will be separated from Him, become weak and perish. We will miss out on the abundant life, and we will lose the crown of life. It is there. "Look up and live"!

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION:

1. Psalms 121:1-8; Isaiah 49:14-16; Hebrews 8:12
2. Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, pp. 83-86.

SUMMARY: God who gave His Son for us will not forget us or forsake us. He is there always waiting for us to respond to His love by turning and lifting up our eyes and seeing Him and receiving what He has for us. That is how we maintain our relationship with God and have the assurance of eternal life.

APPLICATION: God remembers us and does not forget us, but He will remember no more our confessed sins and iniquities.

1. In our relationship with Him and others, do we remember what we need to forget and forget what we need to remember? Give an example.

2. Can you share an example of a time when you lifted up your eyes and meditated on the Lord? What happened?

3. The condition to receive is to share. How do you plan to share with others the blessings of encouragement, power, and wisdom that you receive from God?

4. In your own life right now, are you too busy doing "important" things that you have no time to turn and look up and see? If yes, what will you do about it and when?

5. What did this lesson teach you about God? What did it teach you about Zechariah? What did it teach you about yourself?

LESSON 2

"RETURN TO ME"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God in His love wants to reestablish His covenant relationship with His people. He wants them to return to Him with all their heart so that He may dwell in their midst.

OVERVIEW:

Zechariah 1:1-6, 12-17	
God's Return	Israel's Return
1. God's comfort (1:13)	1. God's earnest appeal (1:3)
2. God's great jealousy (1:14)	2. The spiritual returning
3. God's displeasure (1:15)	3. Be ye not as your fathers (1:4-6)
4. God's mercies and compassion (1:16)	

INTRODUCTION: God's call to repentance through His prophet Zechariah is one of the strongest and one of the most moving and spiritually intense calls of the whole Old Testament. The theme "Return to Me" is

to be seen as a priority in Zechariah's ministry. Before He could restore Jerusalem and the Temple, God wanted to restore His covenant relationship with them--He wanted their hearts first. He was so willing to shower on them great blessings if they would just return to Him and walk in His ways.

Disillusionment had gripped the returning exiles; and God's messages to return to Him were intended to infuse courage and faith in their sagging morale. He Himself had returned to them with mercy (Zech 1:16).

God's plan of salvation--His covenant--has never changed. Also His words and statutes are permanent and unchangeable. But His people change and their words and promises do not endure. Still God loves His people and is jealous over them. He knows that a covenant relationship is something reciprocal. He is returning to them, but will they return to Him? He is willing to try different means to accomplish His covenant. He is willing to try again and again; but now He is pleading with His people to "return to Me" for the last time through Zechariah. Will they? Yes, He wants them to reconstruct the Temple and Jerusalem, He wants to usher in the Messianic age, but in order to be ready for that, the real construction is not so much of brick and mortar; it is the reconstruction of the heart after God.

God's Return

God never changes. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb 13:8). His word will stand forever. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever"

(Isa 40:8). The words and statutes of God overtake people and events. People die, events pass away, but God's truth marches on.

The same unchangeableness applies to God's covenant relationship with His people. In this reciprocal relationship God is always faithful. He never wants to leave or forsake them. It is they who are not faithful, who leave and forsake Him. As a result God allows his unfaithful people to be exiled in order that they might return to Him, because He loves them. However, even though God's plan never changes, the ways in which it is realized sometimes changes because people, the other party to the covenant relationship, change.

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

REACT: Does God's return to us depend on our return to Him? How and to what extent?

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following texts carefully as they relate to God's returning to us, and then write down the main idea in each. What do these texts have in common?

1. Isaiah 4:22
2. Isaiah 54:6-8

3. Isaiah 54:10
4. Jeremiah 31:3, 20
5. Romans 5:6-8

God is our loving heavenly Father. He loves us too much to allow us to rebel without trying to woo us back to Him. In His love and concern, He becomes displeased and angry with us and allows us to face trials and difficulties to wake us up to our danger. It is His method of bringing us back to Him while all along He exclaims, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me. . . . How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger . . ." (Hos 11:7-9).

What applications can you draw from the above discussion of how God deals with us?

ILLUMINATION:

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

I Am Returned to Jerusalem (Zech 1:12, 16; 8:3)

The theme of God's return to His people and their return to Him is found throughout the book of Zechariah. This theme of returning is

emphasized and reinforced by the eight visions found in chapter 1:7 through 6:8. We must remember that even though God's return to us is proof of His love and grace, and is the major part of restoring the covenant relationship, it will be of no avail unless we also return to Him.

What was the question that the angel asked of the Lord of hosts in the first vision? Zech 1:12. See also Jer 29:10.

How did the Lord respond to the angel's question? What is the significance of his response? Zech 1:13-16; Dan 9:2.

The response of the Lord to the angel's question, "how long wilt thou not have mercy over Jerusalem?" has five elements in it. Let us study these elements leading to the climax of the Lord's answer, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. . . ."

God's comfort. Zech 1:13: "And the Lord answered . . . with good words and comfortable words."

The returned exiles were discouraged and disheartened. What they needed most at this particular time were "good words," words of comfort and affirmation. God discerned well their need, and in His love He met them where they were in order to lift up their spirits. Just as a comforter draws near to comfort the sad and discouraged, the Great Comforter drew near to them with "comfortable words."

God also speaks comforting and tender words to His people through the prophet Isaiah. He said: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem . . ." (Isa 40:1, 2).

FOR REFLECTION: In what ways do I experience God's comforting spirit to me?

ILLUMINATION:

The vision of the measuring of the city was an assurance that He would give comfort and strength to His afflicted ones, and fulfill to them the promises of His everlasting covenant." (Prophets and Kings, p. 581)

God's Great Jealousy (Zech. 1:14)

". . . Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great jealousy."

One talks about the problem or the sin of jealousy and people who are jealous. But what does it mean for God to be jealous? Briefly define the jealousy of God toward His people. See also Zech 8:2.

The Hebrew word gin'a is translated "jealousy" in the KJV. The word can also mean "zeal" and "fury." The Arabic has the meaning of becoming intensely red with dye--color produced on the face as a result of deep emotion and feeling. The Greek word for jealousy is zeleō, from which is derived the word "zeal," and which means "to boil." It seems that the word "jealousy" can be either positive or negative, it depends on what it is expressing.

When this intense emotion is motivated by selfishness, it is negative and culminates in hatred. However, the opposite is true when this emotion is motivated by caring and concern for others, it is positive and it begins and culminates in love. It is a powerful expression of righteous indignation in order to protect, defend, and restore. It can also chastise, rebuke, and defend its object of love.

What does God's "great jealousy," as described above, teach us about His character?

FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION: What kind of jealousy do I have in my interpersonal relationships and my relationship to God and His work? How do I feel when I see my friends and colleagues having more and doing better than I am? How do I react when I see injustice, falsehood, and oppression? When I see the name of a good person tarnished? When I see God's name maligned?

A beautiful picture emerges as we study the important subject of divine jealousy. God's jealousy reveals the great intensity of His love toward His erring people who pledged themselves to keep the covenant relationship with Him. He is not at all passive or indifferent. His jealous and intense love is so great that He cannot sit still. He has to do something--He can do no less. He acts. He rouses Himself from His holy dwellings (Zech 2:13) in favor of His people. He is personally involved. The book of Zechariah is packed with His action. Twenty-three times God uses the emphatic "I." In vs. 10:6 "I" appears seven times! Praise God! He is not indifferent or passive. He is moved to action. He becomes angry and jealous over us. He cares, and He cares passionately. What a God!

God's Displeasure (Zech 1:15)

"And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease. . . ."

Study Zech 1:15 carefully, then explain the following:

1. "sore displeased with the heathen"
2. "at ease"
3. "little displeased" with His people
4. "they helped forward the affliction"

What relationship do the above four points have to each other?

God was greatly displeased or angry with the heathen nations. The Bible does not hesitate to describe God as angry or experiencing other emotions. It is the revulsion of His holy being to sin and evil. God hates sin but loves the sinner. However, sin does not live in a vacuum--it exists and is practiced in and by people. God's anger with sinners reflects His great concern and love for them.

Why was God especially angry with the heathen at this time? Did He not use them to chastise His people by taking them captive? Yes, but these heathen who were used by God to discipline Israel, in their arrogance and pride had gone too far in punishing them and had overstepped all bounds in persecuting them. God was not that angry with Israel, and the nations had exceeded that anger. They made matters worse. Now these heathen were "at ease"--they felt secure, but were really not. In their pride, self-confidence and arrogance, their rest and security was false.

God's Mercies and Compassion (Zech 1:16)

". . . I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies. . . ."

What greater incentives can God give to woo His people to return to Him? It is His goodness that leads us to Him (Rom 2:4). It is His

comforting words, His assurances, His initiative, His divine jealousy, and His mercies and compassion that stir up the desire and longing in us to go back to Him who returned to us the covenant relationship renewed. Jesus said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). God has returned in the person of the crucified Christ. Shall we not return and be drawn to Him?

Israel's Return (Zech 1:2-6)

The invitation to the people to return to God took place in the eighth month of the year 520 B.C. God wanted to make a complete break with the past and begin afresh with the returned and disciplined exiles. His invitation to return not only included the mention of the benefits that would result, but also words of exhortation and warning. This was a serious matter, for a genuine return to God should include giving up false security and presumption.

Study Zech 1:3, then explain the meaning and significance of God's words "Turn ye unto me." What significance does the personal pronoun, "me" have in this context?

In the Bible the words "return" or "turn" to God are usually addressed to a person who has turned his back on God and has turned away from Him, gradually going further and further away from Him. To "return" means to stop, cease turning one's back on God, and turn and start walking in the opposite direction towards God. This is the only way to benefit from God's returning and to appropriate His promises to be given later on in the book. God has made Himself available for the renewal of the covenant relationship, but man has to make himself

Explain in your own words how repentance is a gift from God, considering that one must repent. How does that apply in your own life?

The literal return of the Jews from Babylon had taken place. But only a minority heeded God's invitation to return to Jerusalem. The majority stayed in the comfort of Babylon. Ellen White, quoting Zech 1:6-9, explains that God "inspired Zechariah to plead with the exiles to return. . . . The large number, however, of those who failed to respond to the decree of Cyrus, remained unimpressionable to later influences; and even Zechariah warned them to flee from Babylon without further delay, they did not heed the invitation" (Prophets and Kings, pp. 599, 600).

Now God calls the remnant who came out of Babylon and settled in Jerusalem to a spiritual return to Him. The call involved much more than the building of the Temple from brick and mortar. It involved the rebuilding of a temple in their hearts for God to dwell in. We must build on Christ first before we try to build other things. The apostle Paul writes in this connection, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:11). David writes, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it. . . ." (Ps 127:1).

The Spiritual Returning, Revival, and Reformation.

COMPARE: Study the following texts and compare them with each other. What do they say about the spiritual returning to God and its rewards?

1. Zech. 7:9-10; 8:16, 17
2. Zech. 3:9; 10:6

3. Zech. 1:17, 2:12
4. Zech. 2:10; 8:3
5. Zech. 8:8
6. Zech. 8:23
7. Zech. 6:15

FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION: Study and compare these two texts: Zech 2:6,7 and Rev. 18:4. What is the main thought that you glean in terms of coming out of Babylon?

FOR REFLECTION: Can an individual, in a certain sense, come out of Babylon but be still in Babylon? Can we be members of the remnant church but in our hearts still be in Babylon? Can there be some in Babylon whose hearts are after God? There must not only be a physical coming out, but a coming out and staying out of mind and heart.

ILLUMINATION

Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ's true followers are still to be found in their communion. . . . The time will come when those who love God supremely can no longer remain. (Great Controversy, p. 390)

"Be Ye Not As Your Fathers . . ." (Zech 1:4-6)

God is calling on His people to learn from the past so that they will not be condemned to repeat it. He is entreating them to learn from the mistakes of their fathers, make a radical break with the past, and have a fresh start by trusting Him and His word.

CONTRAST the passing away of the fathers and prophets with the endurance of God's words and statutes (Zech 1:4-6).

. The fathers heard the words of God	The fathers and Prophets perished
. The prophets preached the word of God	
<hr/>	
. The preaching of the word of God	Remained

Study Zech 1:6. What does the expression ". . . take hold of your fathers" mean?

The RSV renders the above expression as "overtake your fathers." It gives the idea of the words of God catching up with them. There is no way they could have escaped His words. They tried to ignore and run away from them, but finally His words overtook them and outlasted them. His words will not go back to Him empty.

What lesson is God trying to teach His people in making this comparison between His words and them?

God is saying that there is no way His people can make it without Him, try as they may. He is appealing to their common sense-- that without Him they will always fail.

If we are to succeed, we are to be connected to God and His word. People die, events pass away, but God's word and truth march on. No matter what we do, God's word will confront us and overtake us either to confirm us or to condemn us.

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read the chapter on repentance in Steps

to Christ, pp. 23-36. Read Jer 31:2,3; Prophets and Kings, p. 579; Great Controversy, p. 390, and Isa 55:6-9.

SUMMARY: God wants us to return to Him with all our heart so that He may restore us to Him. Our covenant relationship to Him is reciprocal and conditional simply because God loves us too much to force our will. In encouraging God's people to do His work, Zechariah is more concerned with the religion of the heart and ethical reformation. In this he comes close to the ideal of the Sermon on the Mount. He goes to the heart not just the letter of the law.

APPLICATION

1. Have I experienced God returning to me, and am I responding by seeking Him with all my heart? Have I been waiting to make myself better before going to Christ?

2. In my own personal life, am I trying to make it without total dependence on God? Will the words of God confirm or condemn me when they overtake me?

3. With God's help, am I meeting the conditions that God has set to maintain my covenant relationship with Him?

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

LESSON 3

"IN THE MIDST OF THEE"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the first three visions the Lord shows Zechariah how in Israel's returning to Him, He becomes their God and they become His people. He will dwell in their midst and become their glory and their protection.

Zech 1:7-2:13

1:7-17	1:18-21	2:1-13
The First Vision:	The Second Vision:	The Third Vision:
The man among the myrtle trees	The four horns and the four carpenters	The man with the measuring line

INTRODUCTION: One concrete sign that shows that you love someone is your desire and joy in spending time with that person. You feel at ease around someone whose company you enjoy. Time passes quickly as you fellowship together in peace and security.

That is a foretaste of the kind of relationship God wants to have with His people. That is precisely His desire expressed through the Bible--including the first two chapters of Zechariah we are studying this week. The major theme of the Scriptures is: Emmanuel, God with us. God is love, and His love is never alone, it always seeks togetherness with His creatures. This is central to the whole subject of restoration.

In the first three visions of Zechariah--the visions of restoration--we see very clearly the above characteristic of our God. He comes to His people to dwell among them as He builds His Temple in their hearts and to tabernacle among them in Jerusalem. He Himself will be His people's defense. He is aroused to action on their behalf: He "will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech 2:5).

And God's plan is to encompass not only Israel but "many nations" shall be joined to Him, and He shall be their God also (Zech 2:11).

The Man among the Myrtle Trees(Zech 1:7-17)

In studying these visions, we should not expect every detail to have meaning. Zechariah is mainly concerned with communicating the divine messages to a people who often were not willing to listen. We need to understand the broad and essential themes and not so much the minute details.

The man who stood among the myrtle trees is called by another name in this vision. What is his name? How is this person

distinguished from the interpreting angel who accompanies Zechariah throughout the visions? Zech 1:8-14. Who is the person called "Lord" (1:10), "Lord of hosts" (1:12), and "the Lord" (1:13)?

The man among the myrtle trees is the same as the angel of the Lord (1:11). He is to be distinguished from "the angel that talked with me" in 1:10, 13 who appears several times in the other visions (see 1:19; 2:3; 4:1-5; 5:5 and 6:4). Consequently, the identity of Zechariah's accompanying angel who talked with him is well-established and clearly distinguished from the angel of the Lord.

This "angel of the Lord" appears again in the fourth vision and is mentioned twice by that exact name in 3:1 and 6 in the court scene as the advocate of Joshua the high priest.

This "angel of the Lord" is Christ Jesus, the second person of the Godhead. Many Bible commentators are in agreement on this point. However, the "Lord," "Lord of hosts," and "the Lord" in Zech 1:10, 12, 13 is possibly the Father, the first person of the Godhead. It seems clear that there are three principal personalities involved in the first vision: God the Father, God the Son, and Zechariah's accompanying angel. "It seems that Christ is sometimes referred to as the 'angel of the Lord' (Exod 3:2, 4; Zech 3:1, 2; cf. Gen 32:24, 30; Exod 23:20, 21; 32:34; 33:14; Josh 5:13-15; 1 Cor. 10:4)" (SDA Bible Dictionary, 8:45).

What do the myrtle trees possibly symbolize? Zech 1:8, 10.

It is very likely that myrtle trees symbolize the returned exiles, or God's people. Consider the following four reasons:

1. The scene of the myrtle trees was well known by the children of Israel because such trees were plentiful around Jerusalem (Neh 8:15; Isa 41:19).

2. The fact that the "angel of the Lord," Christ, stood among them. This is consistent with the thrust of this vision and also of the third one that God wants to dwell in the midst of His people.

3. The theme of God being in the midst of His people introduced here is the very central theme of the whole book of Zechariah and the whole subject of restoration.

4. Zechariah is a very Messianic book. The Messiah is the heart and center of it. He is the golden thread that links all the parts of the book and emerges very prominently throughout.

FOR REFLECTION: What does the fact that Jesus stands among His discouraged and demoralized people tell you about Him and His feelings about us?

What attitude and blessings does God have for His people as He stands among them? What benefits does His presence among us bring? Zech 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

The following is a list of the divine attitudes and blessings found in Zech 1:13-17. Notice the progression evident in the list of such attitudes, promises, and blessings when God is among His people:

1. Zech 1:13: God's comforting words for Jerusalem
2. Zech 1:14: God's great jealousy for Jerusalem
3. Zech 1:15: God's great displeasure with the heathen nations for overstepping their bounds in punishing Jerusalem

4. Zech 1:16: God's return with compassion to Jerusalem
5. Zech 1:16: God's restoration of the Temple and Jerusalem
6. Zech 1:17: God's cities shall overflow with prosperity
7. Zech 1:17 God's comforting of Zion, and His choice of Jerusalem.

Notice that the names Jerusalem, Judah, and Zion are mentioned several times here. This feature is evident throughout the book. "Jerusalem" is mentioned by name forty-one times, and "Judah" is mentioned twenty-one times. We tend to think of and mention names of individuals and things that we like. God, here and throughout Zechariah, is certainly absorbed with caring, jealousy, and love for Jerusalem and His people--He mentions their names very often.

In this first vision when the earth is "at rest" (Zech 1:11), God wants His people to resume the building of the temple during this time of peace. There is a timely spiritual lesson for us today. We must build the Church in times of peace or we will have to do it under more difficult circumstances.

The Horns and the Carpenters (Zech. 1:18-21).

This vision is a short one that comprises only four verses: two questions and two answers. Zechariah is always alert and keen, and he barely hears the response to his first question before he plunges into his second question. The first question and answer relate to the four horns, and the second question and answer relate to the four smiths or carpenters. It is a dialogue between Zechariah and the angel who talked with him.

The Four Horns (Zech 1:18-19)

The word "horn" is found frequently in the Bible. Symbolically in prophecy it represents political power, king, or kingdom as in Dan 7:8, 20, 21, and Rev 17:12, 16. This is the meaning of horns in this vision.

The horn can mean strength, boldness, and arrogance--just as an animal uses its horn to show its strength and to defend itself. (See Ps 75:4, 5; 132:17).

What was the first question of Zechariah? How did the angel who talked to him answer it? Zech 1:18-19

These four horns are clearly defined by the angel's response as the powers that had "scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem" (1:19). The number four probably corresponds to the four directions, hence the universal application to the whole heathen world. E. G. White simply referred to the four horns as symbolizing powers that scattered God's people (Prophets and Kings, p. 581).

It is interesting to note that Zechariah's question referring to the horns is concerned with their identity: "What are these?" (1:19 RSV) However, in his second question referring to the four carpenters, he is concerned about their function: "What are these coming to do?" (1:21a RSV) This is an indication that the Carpenters are here to act and that the horns are the recipients of such action (1:21b).

The Four Carpenters (Zech 1:20, 21)

The word "carpenter" found in the KJV comes from the Hebrew

word charashim which means "artisans" such as workers in metal, wood and stone. These four artisans are used by God to do something; to act.

What was the second question that Zechariah asked? How did the angel respond to it? Zech 1:20, 21.

There are many conjectures that have been made as to the identity of the four horns and the four artisans. For example, some have interpreted the four horns to mean the four hostile empires that persecuted and scattered Israel, namely Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. It suffices to state that these heathen powers would have their turn at being terrified and cast down by the artisans, experts in works of wood, stone, and metal, who represented "the agencies used by the Lord in restoring His people and the house of His worship" (Prophets and Kings, p. 581).

FOR REFLECTION: What does the vision of the four horns and the four carpenters tell you about how God works in the affairs of His people and the world?

God is intimately acquainted with the affairs of humanity. He is the one who really knows everything--past, present, and future. With all His knowledge, He uses opportunities and circumstances in history to help His people. That is why He wants to walk among them and dwell in their midst for He wants to act in their behalf. Imagine how much He would accomplish in our lives if we would make Him first and the center of our lives!

The four carpenters also tell us that when God dwells in our midst, everything is possible. No matter how mighty the horns are they can be overcome; because for every horn God has a carpenter to deal with it.

ILLUMINATION:

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

The Man with the Measuring Line (Zech 2:1-13)

This third vision, as the other ones, shows the future greatness of Israel as a result of God's presence and favor. It shows the great triumph of God's plan to save His people and the world. But we must remember that such glorious prospects were not fulfilled to literal Israel, not because God failed, but because Israel failed. They would have been realized if Israel had kept its covenant with God and cooperated willingly and fully with His divine plan for them.

It is important to understand that eventually God's plan will not change and it will succeed regardless of human failure. The ways of accomplishing such a plan may change on account of human changeability and God's respect for man's freedom of choice.

Ellen G. White explains how God changed the manner of accomplishing His eternal plan. "That which God purposed to do for the world through Israel, the chosen nation, He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today" (Prophets and Kings, p. 713).

The apostle Paul clarifies this transition from literal Israel to spiritual Israel in Rom 9-11. He affirms that God will keep His promises which will be realized through spiritual Israel or the Christian church. In Rom 9:30, 31 he states very specifically that spiritual Israel has taken the place of literal Israel; and that everyone, no matter who, who accepts Christ becomes a part of God's spiritual Israel.

Zechariah's messages, setting forth Jerusalem's glorious future, were conditional (Zech 6:15). Because of the failure of the Jews, when they returned from captivity, to meet the spiritual conditions upon which their prosperity was based, the prophecies were not fulfilled in their original intent. However, certain features will be fulfilled in the Christian church. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1085).

It is very useful to reflect on the preceding remarks as we study Zechariah this quarter. We will amplify the above statement as the need arises from lesson to lesson. Let us remember that Zechariah is a living book for us today--we who are living in the last days just before the Lord comes to culminate His plan for the Church and mankind.

City Without Walls (Zech 2:4)

Why was the young man with the measuring line stopped from doing his work? Zech 2:4,5.

In studying Zech 2:4 and 5 we discover two reasons why Jerusalem will not need walls around it:

1. The vastness and richness of God's blessing. Because of the multitude of men and cattle and other people from other nations coming into it, there will be no way to contain such a vast multitude

with walls. The spread of Jerusalem's vastness, greatness, and influence will go far beyond any limiting walls (see Zech 2:4).

2. The Lord's presence. Outwardly, God "will be unto her a wall of fire round about" referring to His defense and protection against her enemies; Inwardly, God "will be the glory in the midst of her" referring to His divine presence (see Zech 2:5).

What do you think is the reason why God gave Zechariah this vision at that particular time?

ILLUMINATION:

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

Four words summarize this statement: assurance, comfort, strength, and promises. The disheartened exiles needed such an assurance. They were not sure that he was really with them. They wondered if God had left them and had forgotten them. They looked everyday at the unfinished Temple, symbolizing God's presence, and at the ruined city walls for security and protection. They had the painful inward feeling that the Temple and the city, even if completed, would not recover their grandeur and former glory.

They were looking for assurance in buildings and walls, in past glory. And here is where God met them, at their point of need. In chap. 1 He appealed to them to trust His words. Now in chap 2, He appeals to them to trust in His mighty and glorious presence around

them; to place their trust not so much in walls and buildings but in Him, for He was pledging His very self to them.

SEARCH AND LEARN: The theme of God's presence in the midst and around His people represented by fire, light, and glory is a very important one in the Bible. Study the following texts to enhance your appreciation and understanding of the third vision. Then summarize, compare and contrast the main ideas in them.

1. Exod 13:21, 22:
2. Neh 9:12:
3. Ps 125:2:
4. Isa 26:1; 60:1, 2, 19:
5. Zech 9:8
6. Rev 21:23, 24:

How does the message of the vision of the man with the measuring line apply to the individual Christian and the Christian church today? What is its significance?

When the Romans entered Jerusalem they cast a big fiery torch into the Temple and ransacked Jerusalem. What happened to God's promise of inward glory and light and outward protection and security? That wall of fire and that light and glory promised to Jerusalem was not quenched and taken away by God's choice, but by the unfaithful Jews who did not remain faithful to their part of the covenant. They had forgotten God, and their sins had driven Him away from them; consequently they were left to reap the results of their rebellion (see Hos 8:14; Amos 2:5; Matt 23:37, 38).

The above promises were transferred to the church and its members who were once in darkness, but who now had become light in the Lord (Eph 5:8). His light and glory shines through them who are "the light of the world" (Matt 5:14-16), who reflect His light and glory, the One who is the ultimate light and its source (John 8:12). The Christian church, God's faithful remnant, was protected and preserved throughout the centuries by God's "wall of fire"--His presence in it. Walls could not contain the expansion of that church. Through the power, light, and presence of God it expanded to all the then-known world, and it continues to expand in the world today as it evangelizes the world preparing it to enter "the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven" (Rev 21:2). That New Jerusalem will have the glory of God (Rev 21:11)--and "the glory of God shall lighten it" (Rev 21:23).

FOR REFLECTION: What limiting "measuring lines" do we use in our lives and in our church?

We may have our own goals and plans, our own measuring line, but God, too, has His goals and plans for us and our churches. Are we sometimes so absorbed in our measurings that we lose sight of what God is trying to do in us and through us?

There are always the statisticians and goal setters who want to count and measure everything they can get their hands on. That is useful and needed. But we must be careful not to set limits and not to define rigidly God's work and plans. Let us remember He is thinking of fire, light, and glory! How can we measure that? Or can we measure and define the limits of a loving and kind act? How about God's love,

the Good News? Both are so great and so vast, so potent and limitless, that no walls can contain them in the human heart, the church, or the world at large.

ILLUMINATION:

Higher than the highest human thought is God's ideal for His children." (Education, p. 18)

What are the "walls" of security in our lives? In what do we put our trust today?

Have you ever placed your total trust in people, money, programs, organizations and been disappointed and let down? Very possibly you have. Anytime or anywhere we place our ultimate trust in anybody or anything we will be disappointed. Only God will not let us down. We can trust Him fully. He wants to tear down our walls and help us to build bridges to Him and to others.

Of course, we must trust people, organizations, and programs. But we must not put our total trust in them and depend exclusively on them. It is not so much these, but rather the fire, the light, and the glory of God that infuses and empowers them. The important question is: Is God in our midst and in the middle of what we do?

The Apple of His Eye (Zech 2:8)

The Hebrew word for "apple" is bahah which can mean "the eyeball." The eyeball is extremely sensitive, even to small irritations and dust particles. It is certainly extremely sensitive to someone poking his finger in one's eye.

There are two references in the Bible to the "apple of the eye," the text here in Zech 2:8 and one in Deut 32:10. What do these two texts tell you about how God loves and values His people?

What a wonderful, sensitive, and loving God we have! The verse above tells us in a very personal and intimate way how much we mean to Him. This point cannot be missed because we all know how sensitive and precious our eyes are to us, and how protective we are of them, especially if someone tries to poke something into them.

The Living Bible uses a very pointed and interesting paraphrase: "He who harms you sticks a finger in Jehovah's eye." And He says this to His unfaithful and disobedient children!

Yes, to touch Israel is to touch Jehovah in a very delicate and sensitive point. He is with us; He identifies intimately with us. He is in our midst. We are in His heart. We are the apple of His eye.

In the midst of Thee--The Spiritual
Blessings (Zech 2: 10-13)

God Is Aroused into Action (Zech 2:12)

Zech 2:10	Zech 2:11	Zech 2:12
1. Singing and rejoicing in Zion.	1. Many nations shall be joined to the Lord	1. The Lord shall inherit Judah.
2. God will come and dwell in the midst of Zion	2. God will dwell in the midst of Zion.	2. The Lord shall choose Jerusalem.

Study the outline and notice the following points:

1. Twice there appears the declaration, "I will dwell in the midst of Thee" (2:10, 11).

2. The great evangelistic success in many nations joining the Lord is a direct result of God's dwelling in their midst (2:11). Likewise, many others will be drawn to Christ through us and be joined to Him.

What is the spiritual significance for us today of the Lord inheriting Judah and choosing Jerusalem?

ILLUMINATION:

In view of the glorious prospect, Zion is called upon to rejoice. If the people had heeded the messages of its prophets, the city would have 'stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of kingdoms (DA 577). God would have dwelt in the midst of her and Jerusalem would have become the world's diadem of glory. With the failure of Israel and the accomplishments of God's purposes in the spiritual seed, the Christian church (see Vol. iv, pp. 36, 37), the ground of rejoicing is now the New Jerusalem 'coming down from God out of heaven.' (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1091)

Let us consider the fulfillment of Zech 2:12 in the New Testament and the Christian church.

1. The Lord inheriting Judah (Zech 2:12a). The Christians through Christ become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17), receiving "the Spirit of adoption" (Rom 8:15), becoming "the children of God" (Rom 8:16), and freely given all things with Christ (Rom 8:32). "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29).

2. The Lord choosing Jerusalem (Zech 2:12b). Also, the Christians through Christ are chosen by Christ (John 15:16); "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people . . . Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God. . ." (1 Pet 2:9, 10).

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

SUMMARY: God's greatest desire is to be among us and to dwell in our midst. He desires us to place our total trust in Him and obey Him for we are very precious to Him. As He dwells in our hearts and walks among us, He wants to manifest His light and power through us to others.

APPLICATION

1. Am I limiting God right now with my "measuring lines"?
2. Are my plans and decisions so rigid that God cannot penetrate or change according to His will?
3. Does my daily life resemble a fortress of stones, or does it experience the light, fire, and power of God?
4. Is Christ in the midst of my daily life? Do all other activities rotate around Him or me?
5. Do I realize that when I touch others to harm them, to be unkind and unloving to them, I am in effect touching the sensitive eye of God?
6. Do I tear down bridges and erect walls, or do I tear down walls and erect bridges in my outreach to people around me? Why?

LESSON 4

"A BRAND PLUCKED OUT OF THE FIRE"

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

MEMORY VERSE: "And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" (Zech 3:2)

CENTRAL THOUGHT: This lesson shows very clearly the vast and radical difference between the character of Christ and that of Satan and their contrasting attitudes toward man. Satan wants to accuse and destroy, but Christ defends and saves with His mercy and righteousness.

OVERVIEW:

Zech 3:1-10		
3:1, 3	3:2	3:4-8
The Heavenly Court	The Defense	The Vindication and Restoration
1. The Accuser	1. Rebuking Satan	1. Covering: Justification
2. The Accuser	2. A brand plucked out of the fire	2. Walking: Sanctification
3. The Advocate		3. Walking "among these": Glorification
		4. The Brand & the Branch

INTRODUCTION: Joshua's experience in this fourth vision represents the condition of the returned exiles from Babylon. They were like "a brand plucked out of the fire" of exile, hardship, and persecution. They were almost consumed but for God's forgiveness and mercy. God's rescue came just in time. Joshua is the central human figure in this vision on whom the righteousness of Christ was bestowed. The "Angel of the Lord," Christ the Advocate, the second person of the Godhead, is the divine figure in this vision. And the theme is the righteousness of Christ.

E. G. White explains why this vision was given and under what circumstances. "Through an impressive illustration of the work of Satan and the work of Christ, He shows the power of their Mediator to vanquish the accuser of His people" (Prophets and Kings, p. 583). Satan was alarmed to see some progress made in the building program of the Temple, and he was "determined to put forth still further effort to weaken and discourage God's people by holding before them their imperfections of character" (Prophets and Kings, p. 582).

Most of the comments of E. G. White on the book of Zechariah focus on chaps. 3 and 4. White writes a whole chapter on it, "Joshua and the Angel," in the book Prophets and Kings, pp. 582-592. It would be very useful to read it as a whole in studying this lesson and for the future. Why? Because it has a peculiar and specific message for God's people now.

Let us reflect on the following three quotations relating to the relevancy, urgency, and special message that Zech 3 has for us, the remnant, who live in the last days of earth's history.

1. Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the closing scenes of the great day of atonement. The remnant church will then be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the ire of the dragon and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects; he has gained control even of many professing Christians. But here is a little company who is resisting his supremacy. If he could blot them from the earth, his triumph would be complete. . . . (Prophets and Kings, pp. 587, 588--emphasis supplied)

2. It has shown me that the experience recorded in the third chapter of Zechariah is now being acted over, and will continue to be while men, making profession of cleanness, refuse to humble the heart and confess their sins. (Letter 360, 1906)

3. I entreat of you . . . read the third and fourth chapters of Zechariah. If these chapters are understood, if they are received, a work will be done for those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, a work that means to the church: 'Go forward and upward.' (Testimonies, 6:296--emphasis supplied).

The Heavenly Court Scene (Zech 1, 3).

We are indeed fortunate to see the curtain that separates the seen and unseen world rolled back and to have a glimpse of the great controversy going on between good and evil. Here Zechariah and we are shown a heavenly court scene complete with the defendant, the prosecuting attorney, the defense attorney, and judge. Let us observe carefully what goes on in the proceedings, for we are not only spectators but mainly participants in this heavenly tribunal. The issues at stake are very crucial--issues of life and death, condemnation and salvation, in this great controversy between Christ and Satan.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the heavenly court scene found in Job 1:6-12 along with the one in Zech 3:1-7. Compare and contrast the two, then write down in your own words a brief description of each in the space provided.

Job 1:1-6

Zech 3:1-7

The Accused (3:1,3)

Joshua the son of Jehozadak was the first high priest after the return from the captivity in Babylon (Hag 1:1, 12, 14; Ezra 2:2; Neh 7:7). His father Jehozadak was the last high priest who was carried captive to Babylon at the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and probably his son Joshua was born there in exile (1 Chron 6:15). Joshua's grandfather, Seraiah, who was a high priest also, was executed with other leaders of Judah at Riblah by the king of Babylon (2 Kgs 25:18-21).

The name Joshua and the name Jesus are identical. Joshua is the Hebrew form, and Jesus is the Greek. So both names mean "Yahweh is the Savior," or "Yahweh saves." In Matt 1:21 we read, ". . . thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

How appropriate and relevant for the high priest to be called Joshua! The great problem of Israel was the sins which separated them from God. In this fourth vision Joshua symbolizes the "saving of his people from their sins," for he is a type of the Branch, the Messiah through whom the iniquity of the land will be removed "in one day" (Zech 3:8, 9; 6:11-13).

What was the spiritual condition of Joshua, and what was that

condition symbolized by? What did the spiritual condition represent?
(Zech 3:3).

ILLUMINATION:

The high priest cannot defend himself or his people from Satan's accusations. He does not claim that Israel is free from fault. In filthy garments, symbolizing the sins of the people, which he bears as their representative, he stands before the Angel, confessing their guilt, yet pointing to their repentance and humiliation, and relying upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer. In faith he claims the promises of God." (Prophets and Kings, pp. 583, 584)

According to the above quotation, what does Joshua do for himself and his people whom he represented?

1. Joshua does not attempt to defend or excuse his sins.
2. He confesses their guilt before the Angel.
3. He points to their repentance and humiliation.
4. He relies upon the mercy of a sin-pardoning Redeemer.
5. He claims the promises of God in faith.

FOR REFLECTION: What do you personally think of the above five steps outlined in the Spirit of Prophecy for receiving pardon, acceptance, and restoration from God? Why not try this spiritual formula in your own life.

COMPARE: Study Zech 3:3 and Isa 64:6. In your own words write down a brief statement comparing the two texts relating to the "filthy garments" and the "filthy rags" as representing our human righteousness.

Zech 3:3

Isa 64:6

ILLUMINATION:

When Satan comes to tell you that you are a great sinner, look up to your Redeemer, and talk of His merits. That which will help you is to look to His light. Acknowledge your sin, but tell the enemy that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' and that you may be saved by His matchless love." (Steps to Christ, pp. 35, 36)

The Accuser (Zech. 3:1).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare and contrast these four texts from the Old and New Testaments relating to Satan's identity and function: Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6; Zech 1:1 and 1 Pet 5:7-9, Rev 12:10.

The word in Hebrew for Satan is the same as in English, hassatan, which literally means the adversary or the accuser. Also, the word translated "resist" in Zech 3:1 comes from the Hebrew verb 'satan' which literally means "to accuse."

Here in this chapter we see a development of the understanding of Satan. He is the accuser of a specific individual representing the nation. He is more than an evil force, he is one who encounters the Angel of the Lord and Joshua as an individual. He manifests personal

qualities in his one-to-one accusation and attack.

What is the significance of Satan standing at the right hand of Joshua? (Zech 3:1).

Satan seems to act as an official of the heavenly court whose duty it is to prosecute as the prosecuting attorney. He stands at the right hand of the accused; for this was the position of the accuser in a court of justice. He was accusing Joshua who was clothed with filthy garments befitting a sinner.

FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION: What motivated Satan's accusations against Joshua and God's people? Did Satan tell the truth in his accusation?

In the context of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, Christ was doing His utmost to encourage the returned exiles and Satan was doing his utmost also to do the opposite--to discourage and destroy. True, Satan uses facts and tells the truth when it is in his favor to do so. That is why Joshua was speechless to Satan's accusations. But Satan, as the arch deceiver and father of lies, also tells half-truths and lies, if that fits his purposes. Certainly with him the saying "the end justifies the means" is very true.

At least two main facts motivated Satan to hurl his accusations. (1) Joshua sought mercy and restoration from God. Satan certainly was not unhappy with the sins of God's people. After all, he was the very one who had enticed them to sin. That is his double strategy: to entice to sin and then to accuse and condemn for sinning.

As Satan accused Joshua and his people, so in all ages he accuses those who seek the mercy and favor of God. . . . Over

every soul that is rescued from the power of evil . . . the controversy is repeated. Never is one received into the family of God without exciting the determined resistance of the enemy. (Prophets and Kings, p. 585--emphasis supplied)

(2) He has an intense hatred of Christ. In attacking God's people, Satan is trying to get back at Christ and the plan of salvation.

His accusations arise solely from his enmity to Christ. Through the plan of salvation, Jesus is breaking Satan's hold upon the human family and rescuing souls from his power. All the hatred and malignity of the archrebel is stirred as he beholds the evidences of Christ's supremacy; and with fiendish power and cunning he works to wrest from Him the children of men who have accepted salvation. (Prophets and Kings, p. 586--emphasis supplied)

The Spirit of Prophecy sheds some light on Satan's strategy of spiritual warfare as he seeks to accuse, condemn, and secure unto himself God's people. Study the following outline carefully in order to unmask Satan's subtle tactics. This outline of seven steps was gleaned from Prophets and Kings, p. 586.

1. He leads them to become doubtful and skeptical.
2. He causes them to lose their trust in God.
3. He causes them to separate themselves from His love.
4. He tempts them to break the law of God.
5. He presents their sins before them to discourage them.
6. He accuses them in order to secure their condemnation and destruction.
7. He contests Christ's right to take them from him, for he wants to claim them as his own.

In the above section we have attempted to understand how Satan attacked God's people on the spiritual front--pointing out their sins.

But that was not the only strategy he used. Consider the following attempts he used to attack them, and then compare these attacks to the seven steps in the above outline:

1. Only a minority of the Jews returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. Satan tried to discourage them by the fact that only a few had come back.

2. He tempted them, especially the older ones who remembered the former glory of the Temple and Jerusalem, to complain about the inferiority of the Temple.

3. He used the Samaritans as a constant source of irritation --a thorn in the flesh. Also through them he introduced idolatry.

4. He induced them to worry about material things and material prosperity to the neglect of building the Temple.

In Rev 12:10 we are told that the "accuser of our brethren" accuses them "before our God day and night." He has a full-time job. He is an expert accuser who is always minding his field of expertise. He takes no break; no day or night shift. He has a very precise knowledge of all the sins that God's people commit, and he accumulates them to solidify his ammunition against them. "Satan has an accurate knowledge of the sins that he has tempted God's people to commit, and urges his accusation against them" (Prophets and Kings, p. 588).

Jesus does his utmost to defend us in his love and mercy. Is not that enough of an incentive for us to shun sin? Don't we wish we had not given our accuser so much ammunition for him to build a better case against us? Are we going to give him more ammunition tomorrow, next week? For the sake of Christ, and our salvation, will we not

always be on the side of our Advocate? How can we continue in sin and rebellion, teasing and playing with sin, blinded to the unseen forces struggling for our souls? God is pleading in His great love, not to play into Satan's hands, but to submit ourselves completely into Christ's hands.

The Advocate (Zech 3:1,2)

Who is "the angel of the Lord" who was facing and defending Joshua? (Zech 3:1, 2).

The "angel of the Lord" is none other but Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead. This fact of his identity is demonstrated many times in the Bible. Refer back to the discussion on this subject in Lesson 2, "In the Midst of Thee."

ILLUMINATION:

Then the Angel, who is Christ Himself, the Saviour of sinners, puts to silence the accuser of His people, declaring, 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan. . . .' (Prophets and Kings, p. 589)

Jesus Christ is the antitype of Joshua as our high priest and advocate. He, too, carried our sins, became sin Himself that He might cover us with His righteousness. Our sins killed Him. His righteousness gives us eternal life.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare and contrast the following texts relating to Christ our mediator, High Priest, and Substitute:

1. Isa 53:6-12
2. 2 Cor 5:21
3. 1 Tim 2:5, 6

4. Heb 2:17, 18; 4:14, 15; 7:23-27
5. 1 John 2:1, 2

The Divine Defense (Zech 3:2)

Joshua represents God's people in their desperate need for the ministry of Christ in their behalf. There is a great contest between Christ and Satan over them as Satan claims them as his prey and possession. The accuser points to their sins as the reason why they should belong to him and not be restored to Christ. Their eternal destiny hangs in the balances. Satan tells the truth in his accusation; the only way out, their only hope, is found in Jesus and His defense in their behalf. What makes the difference is our acceptance of Christ and His righteousness--the rejection of our self-righteousness, and the acceptance of the righteousness of Christ. "But He who was the hope of Israel then, their defense, their justification and redemption, is the hope of the church today" (Prophets and Kings, p. 583).

Rebuking Satan (Zech 3:2)

What did Christ say in Joshua's defense? What is the significance of Christ rebuking Satan twice in the same verse? Why didn't He debate or argue with Satan? (Zech 3:2).

The defense of Joshua was not a denial of guilt, it was a plea for mercy and sympathy. With Christ guilt is not dwelt upon when true confession and surrender has taken place. He does not excuse Joshua's sins, does not apologize for him or cover up his condition. He is willing to face Satan's accusations right in the open. He does not sneak Joshua in, so to speak. "He who has been most abused by their

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

Christ had several encounters with Satan besides this one in Zech 3. How did He deal with Satan when he came around trying to bargain, tempt, and contest with the Savior? Write down beside each reference Christ's response to Satan.

1. Jude 9
2. Luke 4:3, 4, 13
3. Luke 4:35

When Satan comes to dispute, call on the Lord to rebuke him. When he is tempting and bargaining with you to fall, appeal to God's holy Word, "It is written". And when he is possessing someone and wants to start a discussion, in the name of Jesus rebuke and order him to be silent and come out.

Do not be drawn to the allurements of the Deceiver. Make no deals with him. He is all-together the master of evil. He is a defeated enemy and he knows it. Unmask him with the light of God's spirit and truth. Do not get into combat with him; just hand him over to the "Angel of the Lord" to deal with him. Your Advocate knows how to put him in place and silence his accusations.

What are the two points on which Jesus bases His defense of Joshua? Zech 3:2.

The first point in Joshua's defense is based on what the Lord has done in behalf of His people. The second point in that defense is based on the pitiful condition of Israel. The defense is based on God's initiative in choosing Jerusalem and His people's response of repentance and surrender to Him as "a brand plucked out of the fire." God's saving work and man's response must always go together, hand-in-hand.

The Spirit of Prophecy points to the cross as the basis of the salvation of Joshua and his people. White uses two expressions illustrating this fact as she comments on Joshua's experience. (1) "The blood of Christ is the eloquent plea that speaks in behalf of sinners. This blood 'cleanseth us from all sin'" (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 517). (2) "In his own strength man cannot meet the charges of the enemy. . . . But He (Jesus) pleads their causes, and by the mighty arguments of Calvary, vanquishes their accuser" (Prophets and Kings, p. 586--emphasis supplied).

A Brand Plucked Out of the Fire (Zech 3:2)

ILLUSTRATION: Have you ever thrown into the fire by mistake a precious letter or a rare document along with some waste paper? Then all of a sudden, to your horror, you discover that precious piece of paper burning. Quickly you retrieve it in spite of the smoke and heat. You look at the burned pages protecting what is left--sad that some of it was

burned, but glad that you saved a remnant of it before it was totally consumed.

What is a "brand" and why does Christ describe His people, the returned exiles as "a brand plucked out of the fire"?

The word "brand" comes from the Hebrew word 'ud, which means "a log," "a branch," "a twig," "a stick," This word occurs only three times in the Old Testament; here in Zechariah, in Amos 4:11, and Isa 7:4.

The Israelites passed through the fires of exile so that they were almost consumed by its flames. Satan would have kept them in the fiery flames to be utterly consumed, but God intervened and brought back a few of His people as a precious remnant. Yes, the brand still spewed smoke, smelled of fire, and was disfigured; but God intervened in their behalf, and did not want anyone to "pluck them out of His hand."

Compare "a brand plucked out of the fire" in Zech 3:2, and "for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye" in Zech 2:8. What do these two references have in common?

It is shameful and low for Satan to bother with a brand that is already suffering and almost consumed. But that is Satan. He wants to snuff out any little expectation and hope from the struggling human heart. On the contrary, Christ fans the flickering hope and lifts up the struggling individual. "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench . . ." (Isa 42:3). Thank God for such a Deliverer!

Ellen G. White makes a distinction between succumbing to sin and

being controlled by Satan. It does not mean that when God's people fall occasionally into sin they move automatically into Satan's dominion. When they sin, they reach out to God in true contrition and repentance.

But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have not given themselves up to be controlled by the satanic agencies. They have repented of their sins and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition. . . . They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors, but they have repented. (Prophets and Kings, p. 589)

The Vindication and Restoration (Zech 3:4-8)

This section of Joshua's experience with "the Angel of the Lord" encompasses the totality of salvation. Note the three phases: (1) The covering, symbolizing justification, (2) the walking, symbolizing sanctification, and (3) walking "among these" in Heaven, symbolizing glorification.

It is amazing that in these few short verses we have a summary of the whole plan of salvation shown in the person of Joshua--from a defiled person to a saint serving God in the courts of Heaven! In the Great Controversy, p. 484, we read: "He (Jesus) asks for His people not only pardon and justification full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne."

The Covering (Zech 3:4, 5)

What are the two articles of clothing placed on Joshua, and what do they symbolize? Zech 3:4, 5.

The first article of clothing is the "change of raiment," and the second is the "fair mitre" or turban. The old garments which represented guilt and iniquity were taken away from him.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study and compare the following texts relating to Christ's righteousness, then in your own words write down the main thought in each:

1. Isa 61:10; 64:6
2. Jer 23:6
3. Rom 5:19
4. 1 Cor 1:30

ILLUMINATION:

Israel was clothed with 'change of raiment'--the righteousness of Christ imputed to them." (Prophets and Kings, p. 584)

All who have put on the robe of Christ's righteousness will stand before Him as chosen and faithful and true." (Prophets and Kings, p. 487)

The spotless robe of Christ's righteousness is placed upon the tired, tempted, faithful children of God. The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel. . . . (Prophets and Kings, p. 591)

These quotations were written in the context of Zech 3:4.

What does the "fair mitre" symbolize? The word "fair" comes from the Hebrew word tahar, which means to be clean, to be pure, or to be pronounced clean or pure, hence a clean mitre or turban. In the Old Testament, the turban of the high priest had this inscription on it, "holiness to the Lord" (Exod 28:36-38). By placing the pure turban on Joshua's head, the Lord was declaring him to be qualified to function as high priest to minister before Him in the temple when it was rebuilt. The clean mitre signified that "notwithstanding his (Joshua's) transgressions, he was qualified to minister before in His sanctuary" (Prophets and Kings, p. 584).

FOR MEDITATION: The pure robe and pure turban placed on Joshua's body and head symbolize justification and sanctification, the commitment of heart and mind to Christ. With justification must always result the "holiness to the Lord"--a sanctified life. For Christ was made unto us "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

It is interesting to see that the suggestion of the alert Zechariah placing a "fair mitre" on Joshua's head was accepted. It is also interesting to note that Satan was completely silenced. He had run out of arguments. It was his turn to be silent before the Lord's defense. Yes, Satan can argue against human righteousness, but how could he argue against the perfect righteousness of Christ that covers us.

The Walking (Zech 3:7)

What admonition is Joshua given? Zech 3:7a. What does the admonition signify?

It is plain from Zech 3:7 that walking with the Lord involves walking in His ways, keeping His charge, and serving Him. That is certainly a life of obedience and sanctification. We obey God because He loves and accepts us in the Beloved, and because He covers us with the righteousness of Jesus. After quoting Zech 3:7, the Spirit of Prophecy declares, "If obedient, he should be honored as the judge, or ruler, over the temple and all its services; he should walk among attending angels, even in this life" (Prophets and Kings, p. 585).

"Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world" (Prophets and Kings, p. 587).

Walking "Among These . . ." (Zech 3:7, 8)

Explain the phrase in 3:8 relating to Joshua's "fellows that sit before thee" "as men wondered at."

Literally in Hebrew, "men of wonder." They were to be a living demonstration of what God could do through His people who trusted and obeyed Him. They were to be a masterpiece of His redemptive work. They were to be "honored as the chosen of Heaven among the nations of the earth" (Prophets and Kings, p. 585). Their sanctified life was to attract the nations around them to inquire about their God, and as a result a great evangelistic work was to be done.

What does the phrase, "I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by" in Zech 3:7 mean?

Salvation would not be complete without leaving this wicked world to the new world where dwells righteousness, and where we will enjoy the abode of the angels who "stand by Christ." Justification and sanctification through the righteousness of Christ must lead us to glorification when the Lord returns to take us unto Himself. If we are faithful to the end, Christ will give us free access to the heavenly courts to be with Him, the angels, and the saints for ever. ". . . and at last he (Joshua) should join the glorified throng around the throne of God." And, "Angels of God will walk on either side of them, even in this world, and they will stand at last among the angels that

surround the throne of God" (Prophets and Kings, pp. 585, 587). The best and only way to prepare for the glorious coming of Christ is to walk with Him here on this earth like Enoch of old, so that when He comes we will continue to walk with Him in Heaven.

Eschatological/Messianic Dimension (Zech 3:8)

The eschatological/Messianic dimension is seen under the symbol of the Branch, who is Christ (Jer 23:5; 33:15; Prophets and Kings, p. 585). The emphasis shifts from Joshua and Israel, the immediate to the Branch and spiritual Israel when He "will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (Zech 3:9). The focus is shifted from Joshua the BRAND to Christ the BRANCH. The Branch is alive and will give life to all the "brands" that will submit to Him. The Branch is the heavenly High Priest and Advocate of whom Joshua was the earthly type. "In the Branch, the Deliverer to come, lay the hope of Israel" (Prophets and Kings, p. 585).

We merely mention the subject of the Branch here; lesson seven will deal with it in more detail later.

The complete fulfillment of chap. 3 of Zechariah is taking place now and will take place in the future (see the statements of Ellen G. White in the introduction of this lesson). The chapter on "The Investigative Judgment" in Great Controversy also deals with the final vindication of God's people just before the second coming. White discusses this subject in the context of Joshua's experience (see Great Controversy, p. 484).

There is also an allusion in Prophets and Kings, p. 591, to the

time when the people of God are sealed. Quoting Zech 3:4, Ellen White writes:

The despised remnant are clothed in glorious apparel, nevermore to be defiled by the corruptions of the world. Their names are retained in the Lamb's book of life. . . . Now they are eternally secure from the tempter's devices. . . . While Satan has been urging his accusations, holy angels, unseen, have been passing to and from placing upon the faithful ones the seal of the living God."

FURTHER STUDY: Prophets and Kings, pp. 582-592. Great Controversy, pp. 479-491.

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

APPLICATION

1. Are we too quick to defend ourselves, or do we leave that with Christ our Advocate?
2. Do we criticize and accuse others around us and in the process tear them down instead of build them up? Are we "accusers" of the brethren, or are we "comforters"?
3. Are we doing our best to maintain our daily walk with Christ, and hence keep choosing the covering of His robe of righteousness?
4. Are our lives prepared for the sealing of God. Are our best thoughts of Jesus, and is our priority to prepare for eternity?

5. Ellen White writes that now is the prophecy fulfilled that we become people "wondered at" (See Prophets and Kings, p. 592). Are we reflecting Christ's life in our lives that others are attracted to come and inquire of us about Him?

6. Considering that the eternal destiny of people around us is in the balance, are we preparing them to meet Jesus when He comes?

LESSON 5

"BY MY SPIRIT"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In spite of the seemingly insurmountable problems, it is the Spirit of God who overcomes all obstacles, no matter how big, and finishes the work.

Zechariah 4:1-14

Zerubbabel

4:2, 7-10

The Holy Spirit

4:3, 6, 11-14

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- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Zerubbabel: Person and Mission | 1. The Two Olive Trees and the Golden Oil |
| 2. The Lampstand | 2. "Not by might, nor by power but by My Spirit. . . ." |
| 3. "O Great Mountain!"--
Zerubbabel begins and finishes
the building of Temple | |
| 4. "The day of small things" | |
-

INTRODUCTION: In the introduction of the previous lesson, it was mentioned that there are two central figures in Zech 3. The central human figure is Joshua; the other central divine figure is Jesus the Advocate. The theme is the righteousness of Christ.

In our study this week we focus on Zech 4, where we also find two central figures just as in Zech 3. The central human figure is Zerubbabel, and the central divine figure is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead. The theme is the Holy Spirit empowering Zerubbabel to act, build, and overcome formidable obstacles.

There is another relationship between the two chapters. Just as the righteousness of Christ is needed and sufficient for Joshua, so also the Holy Spirit is needed and sufficient for Zerubbabel. Just as the two olive trees supply the oil for the lampstand, so the Holy Spirit supplies the strength for Zerubbabel.

Moreover, in order to maintain the righteousness of Christ in our own lives, we must maintain our walk with Jesus from day to day. "The righteous will continually follow righteousness, because Christ, who is formed within, is righteousness and truth" (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times Articles, 4:208). Such a continuous experience of righteousness in chap. 3 depends on the unending flow and sharing of the Holy Spirit in and through our lives. We keep the robe of His righteousness not by our human might, but by God's Spirit.

At the outset of this lesson it is interesting to make a few observations on the prophet Zechariah's experience in this chapter. As you remember, in the first lesson we discussed Zechariah's expe-

rience and personality. As he and his accompanying angel continue working together, some interesting points emerge. Let us look at them.

1. The angel awakened him "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep" (4:1). Earlier, he lifted up his eyes and looked. Zechariah's experience here in 4:1 is similar to Daniel's experience when he was awakened by his accompanying angel from his sleep (Dan 8:18). The impact of the presence and power of God often left a prophet without much energy.

2. As we noticed earlier, Zechariah was curious and quick to ask questions. Here he continues asking questions; but then his angel turns the situation around and asks Zechariah a few questions of his own. The angel apparently was interested in what Zechariah saw in the vision.

3. The spirit of insistence and maybe impatience is shown in 4:11, 12 where Zechariah repeats the same question twice before he gives the angel a chance to respond in 4:14. We must sympathize with our friend Zechariah for he asked a similar question in 4:4, and he did not feel he had received a specific response as to what the two olive trees represented.

Zechariah will certainly be an interesting person to meet in heaven.

Zerubbabel (Zech 4:2, 7-10)

Person and Mission.

What light does the Bible shed on the life and work of Zerubbabel? 1 Chr 3:19; Neh 7:6,7; Ezra 3:1-8; Zech 4:1-14; Ezra 2:1,2; Hag 2:23; Matt 1:12, 13; Luke 3:27.

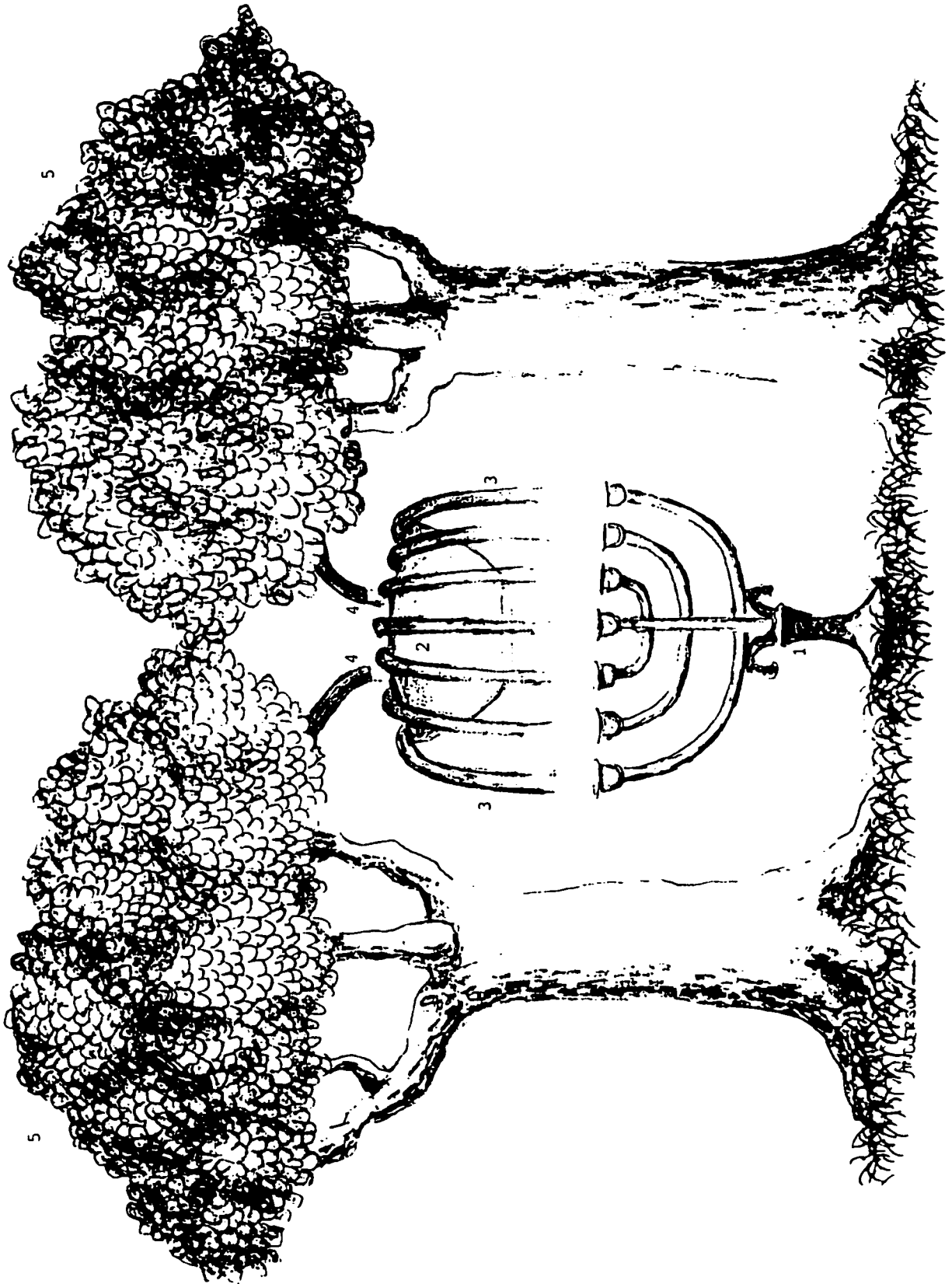
The Bible sheds a fair amount of light on the life and work of Zerubbabel. Study the following points:

1. Zerubbabel was privileged to be a descendant of the royal line of King David. 1 Chr 3:19.
2. He was appointed to the vital position to be the leader of the returned Jewish exiles from Babylon. Neh 7:6, 7.
3. He was the first political leader to restore the worship of Yahweh in Jerusalem after the return from Babylon. Ezra 3:18.
4. He was the leader who rebuilt the temple. The prophecy in Zech 4:9 that Zerubbabel was to finish rebuilding the temple was fulfilled literally, according to Ezra 6:14, 15. See also Prophets and Kings, p. 596.
5. He was governor and a prince of Judah. Ezra 1:8 gives Zerubbabel the Babylonian name of "Sheshbazzar." See also Hag 2:21.
6. He was an ancestor and type of Christ. Hag 2:23; Matt 1:12, 13; Luke 3:27; Zech 6:12, 13.

The Candlestick or Lampstand

What were all the things that Zechariah saw in this fifth vision? Zech 4:11, 12.

Study the following drawing of what Zechariah saw, then describe it in a simple way using your own words.



Note the following items:

1. Candlestick of gold with seven lamps.
2. Bowl above the candlestick.
3. One of the seven smaller pipes leading from the bowl to each one of the seven lamps.
4. The two bigger golden pipes each leading from each of the two olive trees to the bowl above the candlestick.
5. The two olive trees--the source of the golden oil--transmitted the oil through the two golden pipes to the bowl, and from the bowl the golden oil is transmitted to the seven lamps through the seven smaller pipes.

What does the lampstand symbolize? Zech 4:5-10.

The symbolism of the candlestick comes from the ancient tabernacle which had seven lamps and was made from one mold of pure gold (Exod 25:31-40). Even though the candlestick under study has the same symbolic origin, here it is somewhat different and has its own specific applications.

The lampstand in this particular chapter of Zech 4 symbolizes Zerubbabel, the central human figure who is supplied with the golden oil of the Holy Spirit from the two olive trees to do God's work at hand.

The lampstand is completely dependent on the golden oil of the two olive trees to burn and give light. In the same way, we are "the light of the world," as Jesus said in Matt 5:14. However, our light

becomes darkness without Jesus who is "the light of the world" par excellence (John 8:12).

King David, the ancestor of Governor Zerubbabel, was also referred to as "the lamp of Israel" (2 Sam 21:17, RSV). The KJV uses the word "light" instead of "lamp." One chapter later, David says this of God: "For thou art my lamp O Lord: and the Lord will lighten my darkness" (2 Sam 21:29). Another example is found in the story of the five foolish virgins and the five wise ones (Matt 25:1-13). The lamps of the wise virgins supplied with oil symbolized their lives full of God's light and power. However, the lamps of the foolish virgins empty of oil symbolized their lives devoid of the light and power of God.

The wise (virgins) took oil in their vessels with their lamps. This is the holy oil represented in Zechariah (Zech 4:11-14 quoted). . . . The oil is received into the vessels prepared for the oil. It is the Holy Spirit in the heart which works by love and purifies the soul. (MS 140, 1901, as quoted in E.G.W. Comments, SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1179)

It is apparent from the above examples that King David, Governor Zerubbabel, the disciples of Christ, the wise virgins, and we can all be symbolized by lights or lamps who give light and power. But unless such human lamps are feeding on the divine light and power they become darkness.

What contextual evidence do you find in Zech 4 that points to Governor Zerubbabel as symbolized by the lampstand? Zech 4:4, 6.

Consider the following points relating to Zerubbabel from chap. 4.

1. Zerubbabel is the focus as the central human personality to accomplish the work of rebuilding the temple. He needs the Holy Spirit

to do that, and he is the recipient of Him just as the lampstand is the recipient of the golden oil supplied by the olive trees.

2. The angel's response to Zechariah's question in 4:4, "What are these? referring to the lampstand and the olive trees, is addressed directly to Zerubbabel himself: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (4:6). What God seems to be saying is, "Zerubbabel, you cannot rebuild the temple by your own human might, by your own empty lamp; but you can rebuild it by what you see in the vision: the golden oil of the Holy Spirit flowing through the lamp of your life and giving you light and power to accomplish my work."

FOR REFLECTION: No matter how attractive, educated, polished, or rich, without the golden oil of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives, we are lamps without the flame.

DIAGRAM:

The olive trees	supplier	oil	Lampstand

The Holy Spirit	supplier	light and power of Spirit	Zerubbabel

ILLUMINATION: Ellen G. White made several references, in the context of Zech 4, to the golden oil of the Holy Spirit emptying in the lamp of the person's heart to give him light and power. For example:

Each person has his own light to keep burning; and if the heavenly oil is emptied into these lamps through the golden

pipes; if the vessels are emptied of self, and prepared to receive the holy oil, light will be shed. (Testimonies, 6:116 --emphasis supplied)

The inner lamp must be supplied with the oil that flows from the messengers of heaven through the golden tubes into the golden bowl. (Testimonies, 7:249--emphasis supplied)

. . . and as the golden oil flows from the heavenly olive trees into the bowl, it makes the lamp of life flash with a clearness and power that all will discern. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 340--emphasis supplied)

O Great Mountain! (Zech 4:7)

As a result of the Spirit of God infilling Zerubbabel's life, what great events took place? Zech 4:7-10. What "great mountain" did he face?

The Spirit of God accomplished the following through Zerubbabel despite the mountains of discouragement, persecution of the Samaritans, and the unstable, political situation in the empire.

1. The great mountain became a plain (4:7).
2. The headstone of the temple was brought with celebration (4:7) signifying the completion of rebuilding the temple.
3. The hands of Zerubbabel shall finish rebuilding the temple (4:9).

What is the spiritual significance of the mountain becoming a plain?

By faith and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the obstacles thrown in the way of the Christian shall disappear. Let us consider, for example, the experience of Saul of Tarsus. What a great mountain

he was for the early church he severely persecuted! But through the Spirit of God he became Paul, the great missionary.

Study the following diagram, relating the experience of Saul with Zech 4:7. Through the Spirit, obstacles are transformed into plains and triumphs.

Mountain	Saul	Persecutor
Spirit	Spirit	Spirit
Plain	Paul	Missionary

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare what the Holy Spirit did through Zerubbabel in Zech 4:7 in making a great mountain into a plain, and the Messianic prophecies in Isa 40:4 and 49:11. Write down briefly in your own words the main thought in each text.

Zech 4:7

Isa 40:4

Isa 49:11

What spiritual application may the above have in your own life?

How may this be experienced in your daily life?

ILLUMINATION:

Throughout the history of God's people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of the living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of an unfaltering trust. It is thus that the soul becomes a conquering power. (Prophets and Kings, p. 595)

How was the prophecy concerning the completion of the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel literally fulfilled? Ezra 6:14, 15.

ILLUSTRATION: There are individuals who are very efficient in starting new projects but very inefficient in completing them. How many countless programs have been launched with great noise and excitement only to run out of steam and falter into oblivion. It is often easy to discuss new ideas and launch new projects, but more difficult to see such ideas and projects through to the end.

It takes the Spirit of God filling us with His power to continue and persevere. The Holy Spirit helps us to focus not just on the "great mountains," but more importantly on the power of God in making such mountains into plains. God is a beginner and a finisher. He not only initiates a project, He completes it. You and I are His projects. He started the work of salvation in us and He will finish it. The apostle Paul declares: "And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

The Day of Small Things (Zech 4:10)

You've heard the popular saying "bigger is better," haven't you? And because we sometimes think that way we tend to despise the

day of small things. We want to start big and flashy and we are impatient when things are slow. We want it big, flashy, and we want it now. But God often does not work that way. He still works through the "still small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12).

What "small things" are referred to in Zech 4:10?

This temple was not as great as the first one. The resources now were more limited than before. The resources, human and material, were smaller now than during the reign of Solomon. Now, there were many interruptions and persecution; the returned exiles were often discouraged in comparing their "day of small things" with the great days of King Solomon. The returned exiles had to rebuild the temple from rubble. That required a lot of patience and delay, and doing a host of seemingly small things. But according to God, "The glory of this house shall be greater than of the former" (Hag 2:9, 7). God was to fill it with His glory, and Jesus Christ was to worship in it in person during His first advent.

In our own experience, the big events in our lives often start with and result from small beginnings. The big day often results from many ordinary days. The history of the world is just full of great events that started from seemingly insignificant things. Who can accurately estimate the value and lasting impact of a genuine smile, a friendly gesture, a firm handshake, a kind word, or a small loving act? Jesus used a powerful example when He talked about the great potential of one of the tiniest seeds--a mustard seed, in Mark 4:30-32 --that became a giant tree.

ILLUMINATION:

The way of the world is to begin with pomp and boasting. God's way is to make the day of small things the beginning of the glorious triumph of truth and righteousness. Sometimes He trains His workers by bringing to them disappointment and apparent failure. It is His purpose that they shall learn to master difficulties. (Prophets and Kings, p. 595). The church seems content to take only the first steps in conversion. They are more ready for active labor than for humble devotion--more ready to engage in outward religious service than in the inner work of the heart. Meditation and prayer are neglected for bustle and show. (Testimonies, 4:535)

ILLUSTRATION: A story is told about the building of St. Paul's Cathedral in London during World War II. One day a visitor came by to look at the progress of the construction. He spoke to one worker moving debris from one area to another and asked him what he was doing. The man disgruntlingly responded by saying that he was moving dirt from here to there. The visitor saw another laborer doing exactly the same kind of work, and he asked him the same question. With a sense of pride he responded by saying that he was helping to build the great Cathedral of St. Paul.

Both men were doing the same work, yet each responded differently. How do we view our days of seemingly small things? Are we just moving dirt, or are we helping in the building of the kingdom of God?

What do the seven eyes of the Lord signify? Zech 4:10b.

The number seven is symbolic of perfection. The seven eyes of the Lord are a "symbol of the omniscience and omnipresence of God" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1095). Our God uses all His seeing and knowing power to watch over us and to empower us to do His will. He will stand guard around us (Zech 9:8), and He will watch around the clock, day

and night, for He does not slumber nor sleep (Ps 121:4). His eyes also run throughout the world as the heavenly Watcher to empower His people to do His will (2 Chr 16:9). Earthly watchmen grow tired, close their eyes, and sleep sometimes; but the heavenly Watcher is always awake and completely watchful of His children.

The Holy Spirit (Zech 4:3, 6, 11-14)

As you recall, the first section of this lesson dealt with the central human figure in chap. 4. Now we shall study the central divine figure, the Holy Spirit.

The Two Olive Trees (Zech 4:3, 6, 11-;4)

The olive tree plays a very important part in feeding and providing a livelihood for many countries around the Mediterranean Sea. It has done so since ancient times, especially around Palestine. Olives and the oil extracted from them have been a very vital food staple in that part of the world.

The olive tree has many rich meanings and symbolism in the Bible. Let us look at some. This tree is symbolic of: (1) Peace (Gen 8:11); (2) kingship (Judg 9:8, 9); (3) Israel (Jer 11:16); (4) the righteous (Ps 52:8); (5) the faithful remnant (Isa 17:6); (6) the entire church (Rom 11:17, 24).

The oil extracted from the olive tree also has many uses and rich symbolism in the Bible. The uses include: (1) as food (Num 11:8), (2) for anointing (1 Sam 10:1), (3) for illumination (Exod 25:6; Matt 25:3-8), (4) and for beautification (Ruth 3:3). It is symbolic of:

(1) prosperity (Deut 32:13), (2) joy (Isa 61:3), (3) brotherly love (Ps 133:2), and (4) the Holy Spirit (Matt 25:4; 1 John 2:20, 27).

What question did Zechariah repeat twice in Zech 4:11, 12 and what response did the angel give him? Zech 4:13, 14.

What do the two olive trees symbolize? (Zech 4:14).

Zechariah's question, which he repeated twice in 4:11 and 12 is about the two olive trees. In vs 12, he used the word "branches" instead of "trees," but the meaning remains the same.

The accompanying angel responded to Zechariah's insisting questions in 4:14, saying that the two olive trees "are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

The "two anointed ones" literally mean, the "two sons of oil." From the context of the passage in Zech 4, it is clear that the "two sons of oil" furnish the golden oil and do not receive it. The expression "two sons of oil" in Hebrew can mean suppliers of oil and originators of it.

Also in responding to Zechariah's question in 4:5, "What are these my Lord?" the angel gives a message to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." This means that the strength that Zerubbabel needs to accomplish his important work is furnished by God's Spirit just as the oil is furnished to the lampstand by the "two sons of oil." Then the two olive trees, or the "two sons of oil" that originate the oil and supply it to the lampstand are symbolic of God's Spirit and/or what He does, or His holy agencies.

What is the significance of the lampstand being fed by the two olive trees and not by human hand?

The golden oil of the Spirit of God is not supplied by human power; it is supplied by the inexhaustible and unfailing storehouse of the Holy Spirit--the two olive trees. The supply is limitless and it flows continuously. The more the Holy Spirit uses us, the more He provides Himself to us.

The capacity for receiving the holy oil from the two olive trees is increased as the receiver empties that holy oil out of himself in word and action . . . to be constantly receiving and constantly imparting! The capacity for receiving is only kept up by imparting. (Testimonies, 6:117)

ILLUMINATION: The Spirit of Prophecy has more statements on chap. 4 than any other in the book. There are about thirty-three direct references to Zech 4, and many indirect allusions to it. Ellen White emphasizes that the studying of chaps. 3 and 4 will lead to revival and reformation in the church today. See introductory notes for Lesson 4.

The following brief statements show what White understood the "two olive trees" and the "golden oil" to mean. Make a comparison of them:

1. No man can by his own effort make himself a light-bearer for God. It was the golden oil emptied by the heavenly messengers into the golden tubes . . . that produced a continuous, bright and shining light. It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely. (Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 418-419--emphasis supplied)

2. From the two olive trees, the golden oil was emptied. . . . So from the holy ones that stand in God's presence, His

Spirit is imparted to human instrumentalities. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 510--emphasis supplied)

3. So from the anointed ones that stand in God's presence the fullness of divine light and love and power is imparted to His people. (Testimonies, 6:11--emphasis supplied)

4. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate light and power to God's people. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 510--emphasis supplied)

5. But those who do not cultivate the spirit and habit of prayer cannot expect to receive the golden oil of goodness, patience, long-suffering, gentleness and love. (Ibid., p. 511--emphasis supplied)

6. The oil furnished by the olive trees typified the Holy Spirit. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 408--emphasis supplied)

Not By Might, Nor By Power . . . (4:6)

What is the might of God's Spirit? Contrast the power of His Spirit with human power.

The usual interpretation of this well-known text is "not by man's might, but by God's might." There is another way of looking at this text that goes beyond the sheer great power of God to the power of His Spirit of love and mercy. He always prefers to deal lovingly and kindly with people, and does not resort to sheer force as the first measure.

Let us look at some examples from the Bible:

1. God will not deliver Judah by the force of arms, but He will deliver them by His pity and mercy. (Hos 1:7). Satan always prefers to use force and violence. For him might makes right, but for God right makes might. The reason for that is that God has the truth and righteousness on His side, and Satan does not. It is frequently true that when individuals, groups, and nations do not have the truth

and the right on their side, they tend to use coercion, brutality, and violence against others. In essence, this is a telling sign of weakness, and not of real strength.

2. Jesus made his triumphal entry to Jerusalem riding on an ass (Zech 9:9). An ass is a symbol of meekness and humility and peace. Jesus is not victorious by riding on a horse, or in a chariot using the force of the sword. God does not finally win the battle against Satan just because He is more powerful. God wants to win the great controversy by the power of His truth and love, the power to persuade, draw, and hold the loyalty of His people by their own choice. Sheer force can never accomplish that. It is the love and goodness of God that draws us to Him.

3. God communicated with Elijah through the "still, small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12). God was not in the great wind, and He was not in the earthquake and fire, but He was in the still, small voice. God's first priority and preference is to draw and win us through His Spirit of love, truth, goodness.

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

1. Prophets and Kings, the chapter entitled, "Not by Might, nor by Power," pp. 593-597.

2. Testimonies to Ministers, the chapter entitled, "Pray for the Latter Rain," pp. 506-512.

SUMMARY: The golden oil of God's Spirit, His light, love, and power want to fill our lives so that we might overflow to others. Are our lamps trimmed? Are they empty of self and ready to be filled with the

Holy Spirit? God wants to accomplish great things through us if we respond to Him and unite our human weakness to His divine strength.

APPLICATION:

1. Ellen G. White says that we should pray for the outpouring of the Spirit. The Lord expects us to ask Him for the infilling of the Spirit. Have I been following this counsel?

2. Do I finish what I start? How? Have I been focusing more on the mountains rather than on the help that comes from God?

3. When faced with pressures, perplexities, obstacles, and failures, do I falter or persevere? How and why?

4. In my daily life, am I a "right by might" person, or a "might by right" person?

5. What are the "days of small things" that I despise, and why?

6. Is the reason I am not filled with the Spirit daily because I do not share the light and love I receive from God? What are some ways in which I can share the Spirit's blessings that I receive with others?

LESSON 6

JUDGMENT AND VINDICATION

THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Zechariah 5:1-6:8

MEMORY VERSE: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother" (Zech 7:9).

CENTRAL THOUGHT: God is willing to return to us, cover us with His righteousness, and fill us with His Spirit. However, are we willing to accept Him, forsake our sins, and be spiritually fruitful? He is coming in judgment. Will we be condemned, or will we be vindicated?

Zechariah 5:1-6:8

The Flying Roll	The Woman in the Ephah	The Four Chariots
The 6th Vision (5:1-4)	The 7th Vision (5:5-11)	The 8th Vision (6:1-8)
1. A Flying Roll 2. Judgment-- Individual 3. The Penalty a. cut off b. consume	1. The Woman in the Ephah 2. Judgment-Israel 3. Israel purged of wickedness A house in Shinar	1. The Four Chariots --God's agencies 2. Judgment--The Nations 3. God's Spirit at rest

INTRODUCTION: This lesson deals with the last three visions of Zechariah in the context of judgment and vindication. The judgment of

God is pervasive. It will affect the individual, Israel, and the world --to either condemn or vindicate.

It is evident that God wants to eradicate sin from the hearts of His people and from the whole earth. The time will come when He will do just that. This lesson serves as a continuation or as a complement to the lessons earlier in this quarter. As we have seen before, God wants to return to us, to dwell in our midst, to cover us with His righteousness, and to empower us with His Spirit. What more can He do for us! But one thing He cannot do for us, and that is to force our choice and to do our part.

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

The righteous will continually follow righteousness, because Christ who is formed within is righteousness and truth . . . Christ loves His church. He will give all needed to those who call upon Him for strength for the development of Christlike character. But His love is not weakness. He will not serve with their sins, nor give them prosperity while they continue to follow a wrong course of action. Only through faithful repentance will their sins be forgiven; for God will not cover evil with the Robe of His righteousness. (E.G.White, Signs of the Times, 4, Nov. 13, 1901:208)

God who returns to us gives us His righteousness and the fruits of the Spirit produced in our lives. Such fruits are what really show if we are one with Him. If He remains in the midst of our lives we will be vindicated and live with Him forever. But if sin remains in

our midst, and we continue to be attached to it, we will be condemned, and the cherished sin will totally consume us.

Jesus must not only be our Savior but also our Lord and Master here and now. We must accept all of Jesus, not just a part of Him, for He is not divided. We must accept not only His justification, but also His sanctification--what He does for us and what He wants to do in us. He declares us righteous in His righteousness before the universe, but He also wants to make us righteous through His power.

Finally, this lesson has some eschatological implications and applications pointing to the day of atonement, the investigative judgment, the cutting off of the wicked, the eradication of evil, and the close of probation. The Spirit of Prophecy sheds great light on the eschatological aspects of this lesson, hence Ellen White is quoted extensively.

The Vision of the Flying Roll (Zech 5:1-4)

The Scroll (Zech 5:1, 2)

What does Zechariah see when he looks up in this sixth vision?
Zech 5:1, 2.

The roll or scroll (used interchangeably) that Zechariah was shown in the vision had the measurements of twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in width, which is roughly 30 by 15 feet. In Bible times the scrolls that were used for writing were often made of leather. Sometimes the writings on the scroll indicated cursings and judgment as in Deut 29:20 and 2 Chron 34:24.

Zechariah must have seen the scroll open to figure out its dimensions. And these very large dimensions are the same as those of the measurements of the holy place of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Perhaps there is some connection between the flying scroll and the holy place of the tabernacle, for judgment proceeds from the Temple of God.

What is this flying scroll? What does it contain and symbolize?
Zech 5:3.

The scroll had curses inscribed on it. In fact, this very large flying scroll is in itself, declared to be a curse which is flying over all the land actively doing its work. The scroll with writing signifies judgment. It also signifies the law of God which becomes a curse and a condemnation to every disobedient, law-breaking person. See Rom 7:7-14. Those who refuse and do not appropriate in their lives the "change of raiment," the robe of Christ's righteousness, are condemned by the law of God.

Ellen White writes the following, after quoting Zech 5:1-4:

Against every evildoer God's law utters condemnation. He may disregard that voice, he may seek to drown its warning, but in vain. It follows him. It makes itself heard. It destroys peace. If unheeded, it pursues him to the grave. It bears witness against him at the judgment. A quenchless fire, it consumes at last soul and body. (Education, pp. 144, 145)

ILLUMINATION: We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God, but Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to

take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him and accept Him as your Savior, then sinful as your life may have been, for His sake, you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character.

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

Judgment--The Individual (Zech 5:3,4)

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

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

This scroll of judgment shall descend on two groups of "refusers" and "rebels": (1) Everyone who steals--the thief, and, (2) everyone who swears falsely--the perjurer.

ILLUMINATION:

In order to appropriate the robe of Christ's righteousness, men would be required to forsake their evil deeds. Those who refused would be visited by the curse pronounced by the flying scroll. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 316)

Compare these two sins condemned by the eighth and ninth

commandments of the Decalogue in Exod 20:14, 15. Why do you think these two particular sins were condemned?

Stealing and swearing falsely were the two prevalent sins among the returned exiles. The second sin mentioned is related to the ninth commandment of not bearing false witness against one's neighbor. God is concerned with the conduct and the ethical standards of His people. There was good theology presented earlier, but all good theology must be followed by ethical imperatives. The ten commandments are summarized by our love to God and our love to man.

Perhaps the main expression for crime in a struggling, poor, and economically strapped nation is stealing and swearing falsely. There were the individuals who possibly held on to land and would not give it to its rightful owners when they returned from exile. Then there were the ones who obstructed justice, who were perjurers, and who lied secretly in their hearts. Perhaps their secret sins were not known by others, but they were all known by God, for there is nothing hidden before Him. "If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exalts over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would make haste to confess their sins and to put them away" (Great Controversy, p. 489). "Sin may be concealed, denied, covered up from father, mother, wife, children, and associates; no one but the guilty actors may cherish the least suspicion of the wrong; but it is laid bare before the intelligence of heaven. . . . He (God) is not deceived by appearances of piety. . . . Men may be deceived by those who are corrupt in heart, but God pierces all disguises and reads the inner life" (Ibid., p. 486), God "will bring to

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

What difference is there between these two sins mentioned?

The sin of stealing is committed against one's fellow men, but those who swear falsely in God's name commit a sin against God. This sin of perjury is something hidden and undiscovered. It also has to do with obstructing justice and being passive in defending or revealing the truth. This sin of the heart may not be known by others, but God knows all the secrets of the heart, and eventually all is revealed. Sins covered up pursue the sinner and find him out. See Ps 140:11 and Num 32:23.

FOR REFLECTION: What does it mean to say that we have the truth as Seventh-day Adventists? Do we mean by this that we have correct teachings or doctrines? Does it mean more than that? What does it mean to live the truth?

To have the truth also means to simply tell the truth--to be truthful in all of our words and motives. To mean what we say and say what we mean. To be people of our word--honoring what we commit ourselves to even if it proves disadvantageous to us. To have the truth means not being double-faced, telling everyone what he likes to hear, and dealing with subtleties, ambiguities, and half-truths.

The Penalty (Zech 5:3, 4)

What expression is used in Zech 5:3, 4 that is usually associated with judgment in the Old Testament?

In Lev 16 we learn that during the great day of atonement, every person was to afflict his soul and humble himself before God, so that he might receive pardon, cleansing, and removal of his sins and not be cut off from the people.

Sins that have not be repented of and forsaken will not be pardoned and blotted out of the books of record, but will stand to witness against the sinner in the day of God. He may have committed his evil deeds in the light of day or in the darkness of night, but they were open and manifest before Him with whom we have to do. (Great Controversy, p. 486)

What is the significance of the text "and it shall enter into the house of the thief. . . , and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it?" Zech 5:14.

This sounds very much like Mal 4:1 where the wicked will be as stubble in the day of judgment and will be burned up completely. Zechariah describes the condemnation as a person entering the house of the sinner and remaining there till it consumes all completely.

The punishment inflicted here on the wicked person is pictured as an individual punishment, not a group punishment. The children of Israel were punished as a group when they were exiled, but here it is the individual. Each person is responsible for his own actions, and everyone individually has to face the judgment.

Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. . . . The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups. The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another.

Though all nations are to pass in judgment before God, yet He will examine the case of each individual with as close and searching scrutiny as if there were not another being upon the earth. (Great Controversy, pp. 488, 490)

Sin seems to abide with the evildoer and reside in his house till it destroys him completely. When God dwells in our midst, He gives life and salvation, but when sin dwells in our midst, it brings death and destruction. It is what God says to Ephraim who is so bent on rejecting God and doing evil: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos 4:17).

The Vision of the Woman in the Ephah (Zech 5:5-11)

The Woman in the Ephah Closed with Lead (Zech 5:5-11)

Describe what Zechariah saw in the first part of his seventh vision. Zech 5:5-8. What does this vision symbolize?

There are three main terms that are used in describing the first part of this vision: (1) "ephah," (2) "lead," and (3) "woman."

The ephah is a dry measure of about 5 to 8 gallons used to measure the volume of grain and other products in commerce. It can also be a basket which size holds such a dry measure. Amos uses the term "ephah" in connection with dishonest trading; and this goes along with the motif of stealing in the previous vision (Amos 8:5; Hag 2:16). They tried to make the ephah smaller to deceive customers. The "talent of lead" literally means a round disk of lead, which was seen covering the mouth of the ephah. Lead is quite heavy and is symbolic of making sure that wickedness, symbolized by the woman in the ephah, does not get out and escape. Here the woman symbolizes the wickedness of back-slidden Israel, which was always seeking to get out and spread. The

word for wickedness in Hebrew is rishah, which belongs to judgment terminology, and characterizes the one who is declared guilty before a court (see Ezek 18:20). The symbol of the woman also represents wickedness in Revelation (see Rev 2:20 and 17:3-7). There she represents the ecclesiastical Babylon of secular and commercial religion.

Of course, we must add that the term "woman" in the Bible means something very positive, also. She symbolizes the faithful church of God who is clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet (Rev 12:1), and who fled into the wilderness being persecuted for her faithfulness to God. Also, "woman" symbolizes the bride of Christ, His church, who will be prepared to meet Him, the Bridegroom (Rev 21:2, 9). It seems that the symbol of "woman" represents the worst and the best possible in the Bible.

What is the spiritual significance of the drastic action of casting the woman back into the ephah and thrusting the lead disk over it? Zech 5:8.

God is very serious about sin. He wants to rid His people of it individually and purge the whole land from it. The individuals who responded to and appropriated Christ's righteousness and His Spirit in their lives were saved, but the ones who refused and rebelled against the divine offer were cut off. Now, symbolically, God gathers all the accumulated wickedness into a container and seals it with a heavy lid of lead, making sure it does not sneak out to pollute His people again. This also shows that evil is not something to be played with and lived with. If it is, it will eventually consume the wicked completely. This may also refer to the Jews exiled to Babylon who played the harlot

in practicing idolatry (see Hos 2:4; 12:14; 3:1-5).

What is the significance of Israel being judged and purged from sin first before the judgment falls on other nations? Zech 5:4, 11.

Ellen G. White addresses the subject of the investigative judgment in the context of the scene of the heavenly court in Zech 3, Daniel, and Revelation. In the book Great Controversy, Ellen G. White devotes a whole chapter to the subject and describes the "day of atonement":

In the typical service only those who had come before God with confession and repentance, and whose sins, through the blood of the sin offering, were transferred to the sanctuary had a part in the service of the Day of Atonement. So in the great day of final atonement and investigative judgment the only cases considered are those of the professed people of God. The judgment of the wicked is a distinct and separate work, and takes place at a later period. 'Judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel?' 1 Peter 4:17. (Great Controversy, p. 480)

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

The two women with two wings of a stork may represent instrumentalities through whom God executed His justice. The angel does not explain who they are; and it is sufficient to know that they were used for the purpose of removing wickedness far away from Israel.

Israel Purged of Wickedness (Zech 5:9-11)

Where do the two women carry the ephah, and what is the significance of that place? Zech 5:11.

The act of carrying the ephah was a very public and open one "between the heaven and the earth," just like the flying scroll. In the judgment of God nothing will be hidden, for the whole universe will witness His acts of justice and vindication.

Wickedness in this vision is carried symbolically to "the land of Shinar," where it shall be established. Shinar was the first world power that was built by Nimrod (Gen 10:8-10; 11:2), and it was the same as Babylon. The tower of Babel was built in Shinar (Gen 11:2-9).

Revelation has a great deal to say about Babylon. It is a symbol of a world power hostile to God and His people; and it will be exposed, judged, and condemned by Him. Its fall is predicted (Rev 14:8), God's wrath is visited upon it (Rev 16:19, it is described as "the Mother of Harlots" (Rev 17:1-18), and its great fall is described (Rev 18:1-24).

What is the spiritual significance of the expression "to build it a house"? Zech 5:11.

Wickedness must be something foreign to God's people--an intruder; something that does not belong there. It passes by and tries to settle in the lives of God's people, and sometimes succeeds. But wickedness should not abide in Israel, for it belongs to Babylon, the center of all evil. Evil can establish a house there and feel right at home, but it should never feel at home among God's people. It does not belong where God belongs.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare Zech 5:9-11 with Lev 16:20-22. Do you find any relationship between the act of placing all the accumulated sins of

Israel on the head of the scapegoat and sending it away into the wilderness and the sending away of the ephah full of wickedness to Babylon?

Observe the following progressive events:

1. The call to return to God
2. The gift of Christ's righteousness
3. The gift of the Holy Spirit
4. The judgment and day of atonement
5. The "cutting off" of the ones refusing Christ's righteousness and the Holy Spirit--the closing of probation.
6. The purging of sin and placing it on the scapegoat (Lev 16), in the ephah (Zech 5), or on Satan (Rev 20) to be sent away to the wilderness, to the land of Shinar, or to the bottomless pit to be eventually destroyed.

ILLUMINATION:

As the priest, in removing the sins from the sanctuary, confessed them upon the head of the scapegoat, so Christ will place all these sins upon Satan, the originator and instigator of sin. The scapegoat, bearing the sins of Israel, was sent away 'into a land not inhabited' (Lev 16:22); so Satan, bearing the guilt of all sins which he has caused God's people to commit, will for a thousand years be confined to the earth, which will then be desolate . . . and he will at last suffer the penalty of sin in the fires that shall destroy all the wicked. (Great Controversy, pp. 485, 486)

PERSONAL APPLICATION AND ILLUMINATION:

You are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must

be deep, faithful searching of heart. (Great Controversy, p. 490).

The Vision of the Four Chariots (Zech 6:1-8)

It is interesting to note that this eighth and last vision has something in common with the first vision in chap. 1. The first vision has four horses; this vision has four chariots with several horses each. So the visions begin with horses and end with horses and chariots.

It must be admitted that this vision is not as clear as the other seven. There are not as many explanations given as in the others, but there are enough to know that this vision presents the judgment of the nations in preparation for the return of the Messiah. It also follows that judgment started with the house of Israel--individually and collectively--in the previous vision; and now the nations are being judged. First, judgment within, then judgment without.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study, compare, and contrast the horses and chariots in this vision (6:1-8) and the horses in the first vision (1:8-11) and Rev 6:4, 5, 2.

The horses and chariots have the theme of judgment of the nations in common. In vision one, God's scouts went forth to survey the nations and present findings about them to God. Now their findings are executed in this vision by the four chariots and horses. Notice that in Revelation:

1. The red horse signifies war and bloodshed (Rev 6:4)
2. The black horse signifies famine and starvation (Rev 6:5,

6)

3. The "dappled" or "hail-spotted" horse signifies death (Rev 6:8)

4. The white horse signifies victory and conquest (Rev 6:2).

There is one response given in this vision to Zechariah's question. What is the question, and how does the angel respond to it? Zech 6:4, 5.

The word "spirit" comes from the Hebrew word ruach, which can also be translated "wind." Then the response of the angel can refer to the four winds, or directions of the earth, just as we find in Rev 7:1, in the expression referring to the four angels holding back the four winds of the earth. God is in command in this world, and He has His appointed agencies to execute His will over and beyond what all the nations of the earth plan. He has His own plan regardless. God's messengers operate throughout the earth within history, events, and political structures, "silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will" (Education, p. 173). The chariots are commissioned by the omnipresent God to judge and to punish any nation throughout the earth.

What does the term the "north country" refer to? Zech 6:6, 8.

"North" in the Scriptures refers to the political entity where the center of world power lies. Also, the "north country" refers to the place of the enemy of God's people. Through His omnipresence and omnipotence, God is active and in the very center of world power. He asserts His sovereignty even there.

What is the significance of the phrase "quieted my spirit" in the north country in Zech 6:8. Compare that to the phrase "is at rest" in Zech 1:11.

When God sent His agencies to scout the earth, they came back with a report that the nations were indifferent, enjoying false security and ease while God was angry with them and jealous for His people. Now the situation is different in that God's spirit is at rest. God's Spirit was already at work in the northern kingdom on the heart of Cyrus, who issued a decree favorable to the Jews. The angels then were holding the four winds of strife so that God's people could finish the rebuilding of the temple and the work of construction. The four winds of strife are also being held back now so we, God's people, may finish God's work before Christ comes.

SUMMARY: God is doing His utmost to save us. He wants to forgive us, dwell in our midst, cover us with His righteousness, and give us His Holy Spirit, but it all depends on our response. Do we refuse His plan? The day of atonement is now. The investigative judgment is in process for us individually, for the Church and for the world. Are we preparing for eternity?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Read Great Controversy, pp. 418-422, 429-431.

APPLICATION

1. Does sin or righteousness feel at ease and at home in my life?
2. Am I experiencing Christ's righteousness as my security and my victory?

3. Are there secret sins in my life that only God knows about?
Sins that I am attached to and that separate me from God and salvation?
4. Is sin becoming more and more hateful to me? The same?
Or less hateful? Why?
5. Am I fully aware of how souls are being weighed in the balances and their destinies decided? How can I share my concern with others around me and help them accept Christ and His plan for their lives and be saved? When shall I do it, and with whom?

LESSON 7

"MY SERVANT THE BRANCH"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: At the center and heart of the book of Zechariah, the image of the BRANCH emerges as the supreme Personality restoring His people as their Advocate, their Righteousness, their Judge, their High Priest, and their King.

OVERVIEW: (see table on next page)

INTRODUCTION: In this lesson we focus on the BRANCH, who is the Messiah. We discover that this lesson in particular is very rich in its Messianic significance. The BRANCH is the Son of Man and the Son of God; the High Priest and the King; the Servant; the One who builds the Temple and becomes its Cornerstone.

Earlier we discovered that in chap. 3, Joshua, as the high priest, was the central theme. Yet it was very evident that the Messiah, the Branch, was the divine Priest and King who defends Joshua and builds the Temple through Zerubbabel. He is the One who embodies

 Zech 3:8-10; 6:9-15

 "My Servant the BRANCH"
 3:8-10

 "Behold the Man. . . ."
 6:9-15

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Servant 2. The Branch 3. The Stone 4. Removal of guilt in one day 5. The vine and the fig tree
(peace, security, joy and prosperity) | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joshua crowned 2. The Man BRANCH 3. The work of the Branch <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Build the temple b) Bears the glory c) Priest on His throne d) Counsel of peace between them 4. "If you will diligently obey . . ." |
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and unifies in His person the two holy offices: High Priest and King. This High Priest/King in Zech 6:12, 13 is the One who combines the work of Joshua and Zerubbabel in chaps. 3 and 4 in redemption, the building of the Kingdom of God, and ruling over His people. Christ in His first advent became our Savior and High Priest (Heb 4:14); and He will be coming again as our "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev 19:16).

My Servant the BRANCH (Zech 3:8-10)

What is the Messianic significance of the word the "BRANCH"?
 To whom does it refer? Zech 3:8.

The Servant BRANCH is presented in Zech 3:8 in the context of the vision of Joshua's cleansing and restoration as the high priest of Israel, and the restoration of Israel as a high-priestly nation. In this vision Joshua, the earthly high priest, is a type of the heavenly High Priest.

In Hebrew, the word Branch is tsemach, which stands for a Messianic prediction (see Isa 11:1; 4:2; Jer 33:15), and which the Jews came to believe as a clear reference to the coming Messiah. Especially the Jews of Zechariah's time believed that the Old Testament reference to tsemach became the name for the expected Messiah with all the divine and human characteristics that the former prophets attributed to Him.

ILLUMINATION:

In the Branch, the Deliverer to come, lay the hope of Israel. It was by faith in the coming Saviour that Joshua and his people had received pardon. Through faith in Christ they had been restored to God's favor. (Prophets and Kings, p. 385)

What is the significance of the term "servant" in its Messianic context?

"My Servant" portrays Christ as the Redeemer and as the suffering Messiah, who gives Himself totally in service to God and man (see Isa 53:1-10; Phil 2:6-8). Ellen G. White describes Him thus: "Christ is revealed as the Redeemer and Deliverer of his people" (Prophets and Kings, p. 592).

In the Old Testament there are at least four major references to the Messiah as the Branch. Besides the Branch being portrayed as the "servant" in Zech 3:8, how else is He portrayed in the other

references? Compare and contrast: Jer 23:5, 6; 33:15; Zech 6:12; Isa 4:2.

In these four Messianic references to the Branch we find four portraits of Jesus Christ:

1. Jer 23:5, 6; 33:15--The divine and righteous King coming forth from the seed of David, called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, and bringing salvation.

2. Zech 3:8--The servant Branch executing the will of God in man's favor.

3. Zech 6:12--The Man Branch representing the human race in His incarnation as the Son of Man--the true Man and the second Adam.

4. Isa 4:2--The divine Branch, the Branch of Jehovah, the Son of God.

The above four portraits of the Messiah are what we see when we study the life of Jesus in the four gospels. What similarities do you see in the four gospels that correspond to the four above Messianic references to the Branch?

1. In the gospel according to Matthew, the Messiah's line is traced all the way back to the royal line of David. He is the divine King coming in exact fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.

2. The gospel according to Mark presents the Messiah as a Man of action and movement going about and doing good. He is the Servant of God for humanity doing things--helping, healing, and restoring. In this gospel, the emphasis is not placed on Jesus' words and teachings, but rather on His actions of service.

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

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

What is the significance of the stone, and who is referred to here? Zech 3:9.

The symbol of the stone is used to refer to the Messiah climaxing the Messianic reference of the Branch. This one stone is unique, one of a kind, and has seven eyes of perfect omniscience. He is sovereign. He has all knowledge and all authority, searching and seeing all that takes place; from Him nothing is hidden.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare and contrast Isa 28:16 and Ps 118:22 with Zech 3:9:

Isa 28:16

Ps 118:22

Zech 3:9

Christ is the crowning stone, the gable and capstone that completes and perfects the Temple of God. He is the precious cornerstone of the living stones of His people, building up His body. He is the

Head, and we are His body, the church. He completes, unifies, oversees, and infuses His life into the stones, making them living stones.

What is the function of the Stone according to Zech 3:9b?

In this context the Stone or the Branch first of all removes the guilt of the land in one day, and then He provides lasting peace, security, joy, and prosperity. The removal of the guilt from the people corresponds to the removal of guilt from the high priest, Joshua, in Zech 3:4. It has its eschatological implication for the future. On the day of the Lord, when He returns, He removes all guilt and sin from the whole earth by casting it on the head of Satan. We may compare this eschatological "stone" to the One found in Dan 2:34, 35, and 44 where the stone "cut out by no human hands" destroys all worldly kingdoms and establishes His own eternal and only Kingdom. Also, the "one day" can refer to the death of Jesus on the cross when He took upon Himself the guilt and sin of the whole world, that anyone who accepts Him may be covered with His righteousness.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Compare and contrast Zech 3:9b with Heb 9:25-28; write briefly the main ideas in each text.

FOR REFLECTION: Guilt is a terrible thing to experience. It weighs heavily on the mind and its burden crushes the spirit. No psychologists or psychiatrists can remove this burden of guilt, and absolutely no force on earth can resolve this problem except the Lord Jesus. He alone can take our guilt away. How grateful we must always be for this unique and inestimable ministry of Jesus!

What is the other function of the stone? What does the expression "under his vine and under his fig tree" signify? Zech 3:10.

Again, Zech 3:10 had immediate application for the Jews in the first Advent of Christ, but it also has an eschatological implication of the end times and the second coming of Christ.

The vines and the fig trees, which were and still are native to Palestine, came to symbolize the nation of Israel. Planting, enjoying the fruits of and resting unhurriedly with friends under these trees indicated security, peace, joy, and prosperity. Security and peace were to be enjoyed in the open and necessarily in the confines of one's house. Prosperity and contentment were to be enjoyed as everyone had his own trees; none was grasping another's property.

That is what ultimately and perfectly happens when Christ comes again. Guilt and evil will be totally removed from the land, and peace, joy, and prosperity will fill the dwellings of the saints.

"Behold the Man. . . ." Zech 6:9-15

The eight visions of Zechariah end having climaxed in the coming of the Messiah. This significant passage has historical, symbolic, prophetic, and Messianic implications. The work of rebuilding the Temple and the restoration of God's people was to go until the great climax of the Messiah's coming and His establishment of His divine and everlasting kingdom. The fulfillment of this prophecy was conditional on the obedience of Israel (Zech 6:15). This prophecy was fulfilled, is being fulfilled, and will be completely fulfilled in the first advent of Christ, His work now, and His second coming.

It is interesting to note that in this passage Zechariah becomes more of a participant than an observer reflecting the historical element evident here. He also participates in a symbolic and prophetic act that points to the glorious coming of the Messiah.

Who were the men who arrived from Babylon and what did they bring with them? Zech 6:10, 11.

It is likely from the context of Zech 6:10, 11 that these three exiles had arrived recently from Babylon bringing gifts of silver and gold for the Temple as part of an inaugural celebration of Joshua as the high priest and the resumption of the temple services. It is interesting to study the meaning of the names of the three men. As all Hebrew names, they had significant meanings. The LXX gives them the following symbolic names: "the chief men" for Heldai, "the useful men" for Tobijah, and "those that have understood it" for Jedaiah (SDA Bible Commentary, 6:1099). Also, the names, in Hebrew, can mean respectively: "The Lord's world," "the Lord is good," and "the Lord knows."

We are not to attach too much significance to the meanings of the three names. However, it is fitting in this context of restoration to have names that carry the meaning that in God's world, the Lord is good and He knows; and that He uses leaders who are useful and have understanding.

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

As in Zech 3:1-4 Joshua represented the sinful people of Israel,

so here he represents the Messiah crowned as King that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21), and also a type of Christ the King who will act on behalf of His people.

Study the phrase, "and he (the BRANCH) shall grow up out of his place . . ." in Zech 6:12. Compare it with the BRANCH in Isa 11:1 and the "root out of a dry ground" in Isa 53:2.

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

Compare and contrast the BRANCH with the stump. See Isa 53:2; 11:1; 4:2; and Zech 6:12.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST:

The Stump	The Branch
1. Same ground--dry ground	1. Same ground--dry ground
2. Same seed--David's	2. Same seed--David's
3. Dead stump	3. Living Branch
4. Evil stump	4. Righteous Branch
5. No hope	5. Hope
6. No fruit	6. Fruit

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

How is the Messiah referred to in Rev 5:5 and 22:16?

FOR REFLECTION AND MEDITATION: What would you and I do without our hope in Christ! What hope would there be in this dry, evil world without Jesus, the hope and the life of the world! Thank God for the solution we find in Christ. The only remedy for our lifelessness and fruitlessness is to be found in a living connection with the living Branch, and to draw nourishment and life from Him. He is the Source of hope and life. Being disconnected from Him, we have absolutely nothing--we are no more than a dead stump in the middle of dry and parched ground.

The Work of the Man BRANCH

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

The repetition and emphasis placed on the pronoun "He," referring to the Branch, and reinforced by "Even He" is to affirm the definite and grand work that will be accomplished by Him. Such an idea is also reinforced by the use of action words, underlined in the above diagram, such as grow up, build, bear the glory, and sit and rule.

"The Man Whose Name is the Branch"--Zech 6:12, 13

What He will do and become	Reference
1. He shall <u>grow up</u> out of his place	6:12
2. He shall <u>build</u> the temple of the Lord	6:12
3. Even he shall <u>build</u> the temple of the Lord	6:13
4. He shall <u>bear the glory</u>	6:13
5. He shall <u>sit</u> and <u>rule</u> upon his throne	6:13
6. He shall <u>be a priest</u> upon his throne	6:13

The phrase "He shall build the temple of the Lord" is repeated twice for emphasis and definitiveness. What does building the temple refer to besides the material temple? Zech 6:12, 13.

"More than the material temple completed by Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:14, 15) is here foretold. The prophet envisions the spiritual house" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1099). Of course, the real Builder, the Messiah, was the driving force behind Zerubbabel and his building efforts. Zerubbabel's building was a type of Christ's work of building the Kingdom of God in the future.

Christ will build the temple himself. The temple signifies the presence, power, and communion of God among and with His people. He seeks to be with us and to dwell among us because He loves us. His love is never alone--it seeks togetherness with us. "And let them make me a tabernacle, that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25:8).

Then Jesus, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), in his incarnation was the fulfillment of "He shall build the temple of the Lord" (Zech 6:12). That is because, first, in Christ we revealed par excellence God's presence, power, and glory, "He that has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9); and second, in Christ humanity was reconciled to God. He in his person, the embodiment of God's power, presence, and glory (Col 2:9), is the meeting place, the Temple where God and man meet, hold communion, and are reconciled.

It is interesting to note that Jesus referred to the temple of his body (Matt 26:61), that He would destroy it, and that He would build it up again in three days. The temple of his body, his life, was to be given voluntarily for his people, and to be resurrected to live for them and be with them always even to the end of the world (Matt 28:20). Also, the temple of the Lord is referred to by Paul and Peter as the church, the spiritual house of God, and the Body of Christ (see Eph 2:19, 20; 1 Cor 3:16, 17 and 1 Pet 2:5, 6) that will embrace the whole world as His Kingdom is accepted and established in the hearts of men. "In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the churches" (Acts of the Apostles, p. 595).

FOR REFLECTION: Is the living Branch growing in my barren life? Is He building the temple of His presence and power in me? Am I allowing Him to build up His temple, His Body, or His church through me?

The King/Priest

The Branch was to fulfill priestly as well as kingly functions. Zerubbabel and Joshua contributed to and were types of the work of the promised Branch. While they could not perfectly represent His functions as King and Priest, alone or together, He combines perfectly and harmoniously the two offices.

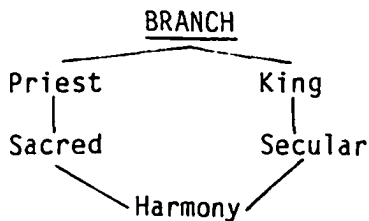
How does Zech 6:13 describe the kingly and priestly functions?

As we study carefully Zech 6:13, we notice the following order for the kingly and priestly functions:

1. "And he shall build . . ." (Kingly)
2. "And he shall bear the glory" (Priestly)
3. "And he shall sit and rule upon his throne" (Kingly)
4. "And he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Priestly)

The verse ends with the fitting conclusion, or summary, to the kingly/priestly functions of the Branch: "and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In other words, harmony, understanding, and peace shall be between such kingly/priestly functions combined perfectly in Christ the Branch.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study Heb 2:17 and Matt 25:31 and show how they refer to Christ as Priest/King.



Christ in his first advent became our high priest (Heb 2:17), and in his second advent will come as victorious King (Matt 25:31). The Branch Messiah is the reality of this perfect blending of these two offices. See also Heb 4:14 and Rev 19:16. Also study Jeremiah's prophecy relating to the Branch reigning as King (Jer 23:5, 6).

This harmony refers not only to this perfect blending of the priestly/kingly functions in Christ but also to the perfect cooperation between God the Father and God the Son in saving humanity. In this divine cooperation, Christ's death on the cross brought peace and reconciliation. He is our peace with the Father. See Great Controversy, pp. 416, 417; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 63; and study Ps 110:1-4 and Eph 2:14, 16, 17.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION: In the different levels of our church leadership, do we experience this harmony, this counsel of peace in working together for the Lord? How do pastors and administrators work harmoniously together to build up Christ's Body? How do academics, evangelists, medical professionals, church members, and others cooperate together in unity and peace to advance the Kingdom of God? Do they? Why and why not?

He can also be compared to Melchizedek who combined the two functions of priest/king: "Like Melchizedek, who held the double office of priest and king (Luke 1:32, 33; Heb 5:5, 6, 10; 7:1, 2, 15-17; 8:1, 2), Christ would be priest and would eventually ascend to the throne of his father David (see Ps 110:1-4). At the time of His first advent Christ qualified to serve as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (2:17), to remove men's sins and transform their characters. At His

second advent He will come to reign over them as king (see on Matt 25:31)" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1099).

What does the phrase "that are far off" refer to? Zech 6:15?
Compare with Eph 2:13, 17; Acts 2:39; 1 Pet 2:3-5.

ILLUMINATION:

In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church. Zechariah refers to Christ as the Branch that should build the temple of the Lord. He speaks of the Gentiles as helping in the work: "They that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord' . . ." (Acts of the Apostles, p. 595)

What is the significance of the conditional "if" in Zech 6:15?

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

SUMMARY: This lesson as a whole is totally involved with Christ as the Servant Branch and the Man Branch. It significantly covers His work of redemption and restoration. He is the one who removes our guilt and gives peace and security. He is the one who builds the Kingdom of God in us through His presence and power and perfectly combines the two offices of Priest/King in the divine plan of God to reconcile and restore humanity unto himself.

APPLICATION

1. What similarities do we have with the children of Israel

and their spiritual condition symbolized by the dry stump and barren land?

2. What is the only solution to spiritual deadness?

3. Has the Branch-Christ sprung up in my life?

4. How am I contributing to the building up of the Body of Christ--His temple in my daily life and witness?

5. How can my church grow into a fruitful tree for the Lord drawing the ones who are far off by its shade and nourishing them by its fruits?

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- b. The four don't's (7:10; 8:17).
 - c. Fasts turned into feasts (8:19).
4. The Response of the People (7:11, 12).
 - a. Shoulder: stubborn (7:11).
 - b. Ears: stopped (7:11).
 - c. Hearts: adamant stone (7:12).
 5. God's Chastisement (7:12-14).

INTRODUCTION: This lesson presents us with a profound encounter between God and His people relating to their ethical behavior and the religion of the heart. True religion is more than a formality or a ritual to hide behind. It is not satisfied merely with the letter of the law, but it goes to the spirit of the law, to the true motives. True religion is not and never was intended to be an end in itself, but it is to bring about willing obedience and ethical reformation inspired by genuine love to God. Fasting in this lesson became a ritual behind which God's people hid. Fasting was intended to focus their attention on God; unfortunately it became self-centered.

The Inquiry of Bethel (Zech. 7:1-3)

Why was a delegation from Bethel sent to Jerusalem?

Zech 7:2, 3.

The RSV renders a more accurate translation from the Hebrew of the beth-'el phrase in 7:2. The opening words of the verse read literally from the Hebrew, "and Bethel sent," referring very likely to the people of the town of Bethel. Of course, the name Bethel, like

other Hebrew names, has a meaning which in this case is the "house of God," as found in the KJV rendition.

Bethel was located about twelve miles to the north of Jerusalem. The delegation from that town came to Jerusalem when the rebuilding of the Temple was well advanced. They came, it is stated, for two reasons: (1) "To pray before the Lord" and (2) to ask if they should continue to mourn and fast in the fifth month (7:2, 3). From God's response, one wonders how sincere they were in entreating the favor of the Lord. The verb "to pray" is translated from the Hebrew chalah, which literally means to become weak, or sink. In this context it is used to convey supplication, pleasing God, and entreating His favor. We need to keep in mind also that Bethel was the headquarters of the religious rivalry with Jerusalem from the old northern Kingdom.

What is the significance of the fifth month mentioned in Zech 7:3?

Several fasts were initiated during the Exile to fall in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months to commemorate the tragic events that took place. Study the chart below to learn what each fast recalled and its Biblical references.

God's Response (Zech 7:4-7)

God responds to the question of the Bethel delegation by asking three questions of His own. These questions were intended to clarify the issues and strip naked human pretensions in order to focus on the truth. The real issue was not fasting, but morality; not mourning and outward show, but a converted heart that seeks to obey God. Also,

FASTS

The Fast Month	The Event Commemorated	References
The fourth	The breaching of Jerusalem's wall	2 Kgs 25:3; Jer 9:2-4
The fifth	The destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.)	2 Kgs 25:8-9; Jer 25:13; cf. Zech 18:19
The seventh	The murder of Gedaliah	2 Kgs 25:25; Jer 41:1-2
The tenth	The beginning of the siege	2 Kgs 25:1

God's questions were intended to cause His people to think and reflect on their actions and to examine their real motives for routine religious behavior.

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

It is evident from God's first question that the subject at hand involved not only the people of Bethel but "all the people of the land" including the priests. God was concerned for the whole nation and its preoccupation with fasts, traditions, and rituals that were initiated by men and not by God. These man-initiated rituals were self-centered and did not lead to genuine repentance from the sins that brought about the calamities in the first place.

It is interesting to note God's use of the personal pronoun "me" reinforced by "even to me." The whole focus of any act of worship

must always be God; and the use of "me" and "even to me" is very emphatic in pointing out this fact. Any religious act, be it a fast, a sacrament, or whatever must be God-centered and must lead people to a closer, more intimate relationship with Him. Otherwise, it is futile and empty.

ILLUMINATION:

A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice, all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself as righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, this man is entitled to heaven, but it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe. (MS 154, 1897)

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

What was God's second question? What two activities did He refer to? What similarities exist between Zech 7:6 and 1 Cor 11:20-22?

It is apparent from Zech 7:6 that the fasting and the mourning of God's people involved eating and drinking. It may have also involved gorging themselves just before and after the fast. They ate and drank and fasted for themselves and not for God. The pronouns "me," referring to God, and "yourselves" in vss. 5 and 6 point out very glaringly the Israelites' self-centeredness in contrast with God-centeredness. "Why

have we fasted, and thou seest it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and thou takest no knowledge of it? Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure. . . ." (Isa 58:3).

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

FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION: Study Jesus' teaching regarding fasting and ask yourself if you are carrying out your church activities as unto God or unto man. What difference in the quality of your life and witness will doing such activities as unto God make? Which is more important to you personally, God's recognition or man's recognition and praise?

What was God's third question and what is the spiritual significance of hearing His words in the context of fasting? Zech 7:7.

Before the Exile when "Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity," God in His mercy sent messages of warning and counsel to avert such calamities as those that took place. Through His prophets He commanded mercy, justice, and kindness to the poor and helpless. It was the result of the children of Israel ignoring these counsels that misfortunes befell them resulting in seasons of mourning, weeping, and fasting in commemorating such misfortunes. They ignored the important fact that what God wanted was for them to hear and obey His words focusing on Him and what He can do, not on themselves and their misfortunes.

This leads us to compare eating and drinking for one's self in

Zech 7:6 with hearing the words of the Lord in the following verse (7:7). True fasting and true eating in a spiritual sense are fasting from eating men's words and self-centered ideas, and hearing or eating God's words. Jeremiah describes the experience of eating the word of the Lord: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart . . ." (Jer 15:16). See also Ezek 3:1-3.

ILLUMINATION:

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

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

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

What "former prophets" can Zechariah be referring to in 7:7, and what counsels did God give through them? Summarize in your own words the counsel of each of these prophets.

1 Samuel 15:22

Isaiah 1:10-17; 58:3-7

Jeremiah 25:3-9

Joel 2:12, 13

Amos 5:21-24

God's Exhortation (Zech 7:8-10; 8:16-19)

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

God's Exhortation			
Do's	Reference	Don't's	Reference
1. Execute true judgement	7:9	1. Oppress not the widow, fatherless, stranger, and poor	7:10
2. Show mercy and compassion	7:9	2. Imagine not evil in your heart against your brother	7:10
3. Speak the truth	8:16	3. Imagine not evil against your neighbor	8:17
4. Execute the judgement of truth and peace	8:16	4. Love not false oath	8:17

It is important to note from the chart that God not only says what we should not do but also what we should do. He starts His exhortation with the positive do's before He mentions the don't's. It is neither enough nor productive to tell people what is wrong without giving them a way out. They need positive things to do to replace the negative things they did before. God not only tells us what the problem is but He shows us the solution to meet that particular problem.

FOR REFLECTION: In examining my relationships with my family members, friends, and colleagues, where do I place myself on a scale of do's and don't's?

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

It is a great blessing in this world to find a person who is fair, just, and not partial or a respecter of persons. Such fine qualities are greatly needed and appreciated, especially in leaders who have to deal with others. Indeed, true religion is manifested in such qualities.

To execute true judgment is to have the moral courage to uphold the right without partiality, irrespective of how high or low the positions of the individuals with whom we are dealing. Such true judgment, based on truth, on facts, and on considering the different aspects of a situation, leads to peace (8:16).

What relationship does preaching the truth and speaking the truth to one's neighbor have in common? Zech 8:16.

What thoughts cross our minds when we hear the word "truth" mentioned in our churches? We hear many such statements: "We have the truth." "We preach the truth." "He has accepted the truth." Of course, what we have in mind is the great body of Bible teachings for these last days. Our church is greatly blessed to have and preach such teachings, but we must remember that the truth involves more than this. To possess the truth means to have the Truth par excellence, Jesus Christ, possess us and change our lives to be more like His. To possess the truth is to be truthful in our words and actions. It is

being true and honest in our dealings with others. It is being men and women of integrity who keep their word, who say what they mean, and mean what they say. If we possess the truth in the mind and in the heart by the indwelling Christ, we will experience this verse in our lives: "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor" (Zech 8:16). It means speaking the same thing from the mouth and heart.

ILLUMINATION:

How often pride, passion, personal resentment color the impression given! A glance, a word, even an intonation of the voice, may be vital with falsehood. Even facts may be so stated as to convey a false impression. And 'whatsoever is more than' truth, 'is of the evil one.' Everything that Christians do should be as transparent as the sunlight. Truth is of God; deception, in every one of its myriad forms, is of Satan; and whoever in any way departs from the straight line of truth is betraying himself into the power of the wicked one. . . . We cannot speak the truth unless our minds are continually guided by Him who is truth. (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 68)

Compare God's exhortation in Zech 7:9, 10; 8:16, 17 with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5. What is the principle element that they have in common?

God goes beyond the letter of the law to the heart and the spirit of the law. Both the Zechariah and Matthew references go beyond the surface and deeper into the real motives and intentions of the heart. That is the level God looks at, "for the Lord seeth not as a man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam 16:7b). Oppressing not the widow, fatherless, stranger, and poor, and imagining not evil in one's heart against one's brother or neighbor are the crux of the heart religion and not

the appearance religion--such as the outward show of mourning and fasting. To be kind to strangers and to widows goes beyond the limits of legal duty. The way we relate to such people shows what we are like inwardly. In the inward life and in the imaginations of the heart evil, murder, and adultery are committed.

What does God hate? Zech 8:17.

The extent of God's intense hatred for sin is as intense as his love for righteousness. He even gave His Son Jesus to rid his people of the sin He hates. He especially hates sin when man tries to pretend it is not sin; when man camouflages hypocrisy as righteous deeds. He declares, in Isa 1:14, "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them."

False oaths or perjury in legal matters was a common sin at that time. It is particularly offensive to God because it is committed against one's conscience and God, in whose name the oath is taken.

ILLUMINATION:

Oath-taking was common among them. Through Moses they had been forbidden to swear falsely, but they had many devices for freeing themselves from the obligation imposed by an oath. They did not fear in what was really profanity, nor did they shrink from perjury so long as it was veiled by some technical evasion of the law." (Mount of Blessing, p. 66)

But if there is anyone who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian. He lives constantly as in the presence of God, knowing that every thought is open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. . . .

Jesus proceeded to lay down a principle that would make oath-taking needless. He teaches that the exact truth should be the law of the speech. 'Let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one.'

These words condemn all those meaningless phrases and expletives that border on profanity. They condemn the deceptive compliments, the evasion of truth, the flattering phrases, the exaggerations, the misrepresentations in trade that are current in society and in the business world. They teach that no one who tries to appear what he is not, or whose words do not convey the real sentiment of his heart, can be called truthful." (Ibid., pp. 67, 68--emphasis supplied)

Compare Zech 8:16, 17 with (1) Ps 24:3, 4; (2) Isa 1:17; and (3) Micah 6:8 relating to God's moral requirements of man (see diagram).

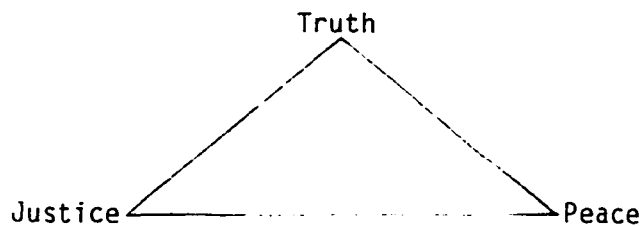
Ps 24:3, 4	Isa 1:17	Micah 6:8	Zech 8:16, 17
1. Clean hands	1. Learn to do good	1. Do justly	1. Speak the truth
2. Pure heart	2. Seek justice	2. Love mercy	2. Execute judgment of truth and peace
3. No falsehood or vanity	3. Correct oppression	3. Walk humbly with God	3. Don't imagine evil in your heart
4. No swearing deceitfully	4. Defend the fatherless		4. No false oath
	5. Plead for the widow		

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

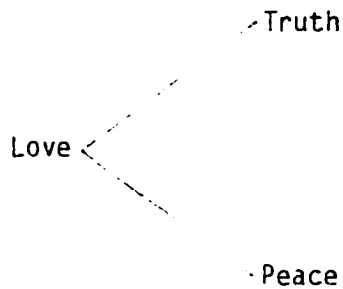
God wants his people to think of his mercy and the restoration of the temple and Jerusalem, and not to dwell on his wrath and the

destruction of their kingdom. After all, He was with them and the temple and Jerusalem were well on their way to being completely rebuilt. Why then commemorate destruction while building was taking place? It was time to obey the word of the Lord and to celebrate his goodness in their behalf. These fast days which reminded them of past calamities must serve now to remind them of the wise and loving ways in which God has dealt with them and how their relationship with Him has been strengthened as a result.

If they love truth and peace, and if they occupy themselves with what is just and righteous, then that will take care of the sad memories of the past and will transform them into happy occasions which were used by God to draw them closer to Himself.



Note the triangle of the three virtues of truth, justice, and peace discussed in this lesson. The moral world stands on these three principles, and in that order. We must always start with the truth. Truth leads to justice; and where there is justice and righteous judgment, there is peace. Then, just as we hate falsehood and evil, we must love, pursue, and seek truth and peace. The great motivation for speaking for truth and being peacemakers is love. In practicing truth, justice, and peace we experience joy and gladness.



FOR REFLECTION: Do I keep rehearsing and "fasting" in commemoration of the unfortunate experiences in my past, which were caused by my own disobedience? Is brooding over my past calamities or blaming others and circumstances for them becoming an excuse for me not to hear the voice of God today and obey his ethical commands?

ILLUMINATION:

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

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

The Response of the People (Zech 7:11, 12)

What are the three actions mentioned in Zech 7:11, 12 that are associated with three parts of the human body?

What is the significance of pulling away the shoulder and stopping the ears, and how does that lead to a hardening of the heart? Zech 7:11-12.

 People's Response to God's Exhortation

The part of the body	The action	Reference
1. Shoulder	Pulled away	7:11
2. Ears	Stopped	7:11
3. Hearts	Made like adamant	7:12

In Zech 7:11, 12 we notice that the phraseology leads progressively to a climax. First, the people did not hearken and cooperate, showing a very negative attitude. Second, they pulled away the shoulder or, in other words, they turned a stubborn shoulder (see Hos 4:16), like an ox that stubbornly pulls away from the yoke to be placed on its neck. Not hearkening to God's voice leads to stubbornness and total disrespect for the messages of God, and that, in turn, leads to closing completely the ears to the voice of God and destroying the chance of being influenced by Him. Then with time, the heart becomes hardened like a stone, even a very hard stone. The word "adamant" is translated from the Hebrew shamir, which refers to a stone of exceeding hardness. The people deliberately chose to ignore God and be indifferent to Him so that His strongest appeal could not soften and penetrate their stony hearts. Gradually and progressively they separated themselves totally from Him. And here, God, in His love, is reminding His people, the returned exiles, of the reasons why calamities befell them before and how they should learn from the history of their fathers and open their hearts to Him. The Exile would have been unnecessary

if their forefathers had obeyed Him; but it became essential to awaken in them and their children after them a moral reformation.

What is the only solution to the stony heart? Ezek 11:19, 20; 18:31; 36:26, 27. Study and compare these three references from Ezekiel relating to the new heart of flesh and the new spirit.

God's Chastisement (Zech 7:12-14)

A true fast results in open communication between God and His people; on the other hand, a self-centered fast results in the breakdown of that communication. In this context, compare and contrast Zech

7:13 and Isa 58:9.

Zech. 7:13

Isa. 58:9

THINK IT THROUGH: Am I hearkening to God's voice and heeding His counsel? Is my heart softened by His appeals? Am I pulling away the shoulder, closing my ears, and, as a result, hardening my heart? Why? What should I do about it and when?

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read E. G. White's comments on the Sermon on the Mount in Thoughts on the Mount of Blessing, pp. 9-88.

SUMMARY: The only acceptable fast before God, and the only one that promotes a genuine relationship with God, is the one that is God-centered and not self-centered, the one that rends our hearts and not our garments, and the one that leads us to submit to the yoke, opens our

ears to hear and obey God's voice, and changes our stony hearts to hearts of flesh.

APPLICATION

1. Is the baptismal service, communion service . . . becoming an end in itself for me? Do I experience the presence of God in such services?

2. Am I so meticulous about certain small things in my Christian life that I bypass the weightier matters of the law?

3. Do I major in minor things, and minor in major things?

4. Does the intensity of my love for truth, justice, and peace match my hate for evil?

5. How do I react to the sometime popular philosophy--doing wrong is okay if you don't get caught; and that getting caught is stupid and even is the same, if not worse, than the crime itself?

LESSON 9

MESSAGES OF HOPE

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Our God is a God of hope who pledges His word and Himself to fulfill His promises in our behalf. Our hope is built on His solid word and promises that culminate in Him being our God and we His people.

OVERVIEW: (see chart on next page)

INTRODUCTION: Zechariah, as the mouthpiece of God, gives the delegation from Bethel and all the leaders and people of Israel an optimistic portrayal of just what Jerusalem will be. In His love and anxiousness for His people to respond to His ethical exhortation and to experience restoration, He paints a beautiful picture of what will happen if they obey. He hopes that such promises of hope will encourage them to return to Him completely.

These messages of hope consist of ten promises, each introduced by the formula "Thus saith the Lord of hosts," except in the case of the second message in 8:3 where the words "of hosts" are not found.

 Zech 8:1-23--Ten Messages of Hope

	Message	Reference
1.	<u>The First Message:</u> God's great jealousy.	8:2
2.	<u>The Second Message:</u> God's presence among His people.	8:3
3.	<u>The Third Message:</u> Jerusalem, the city of peace and joy. 8:4, 5	
4.	<u>The Fourth Message:</u> The God of the impossible.	8:6
5.	<u>The Fifth Message:</u> God will save and gather His Covenant people.	8:7, 8
6.	<u>The Sixth Message:</u> "Let your hands be strong."	8:9-13
7.	<u>The Seventh Message:</u> God's call for social righteousness.	8:14-17
8.	<u>The Eighth Message:</u> Mournful fasts will become cheerful fasts.	8:18, 19
9.	<u>The Ninth Message:</u> The powerful attraction of genuine religion.	8:20-22
10.	<u>The Tenth Message:</u> "God is with you."	8:23

Even the ten promises as a whole are introduced by, "Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me saying" (8:1). It is very evident that the chapter under study this week, chap. 8, is packed thoroughly with the Lord's own words and sayings. In every one of the ten promises He pledges His words and Himself for its fulfillment. That repetition clearly indicates the certainty and trustworthiness of His word.

This week we study each of these ten messages of hope. Let's appropriate these messages into our lives as we prepare ourselves and others for the second coming of Christ and the new Jerusalem. Here we

are graciously forewarned by God. Let us not repeat the insubordination of Old Israel in not responding fully to God and preparing the world for the first coming of Christ.

The First Message (Zech 8:2)

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

This divine jealousy of God is far different from the human jealousy that we are acquainted with. We can be jealous of someone who is better or has more than we do. But God, it goes without saying, is the best and has the most; and He does not get jealous of us, rather He gets jealous for us. His jealousy for us is as intense as His love. Zech 8:2 describes such jealousy as great and furious. It is the expression of His earnestness in His total commitment and love to us. It is His love and sympathy combined with His righteous indignation to draw us to Him, protect us, and defend us against our foes.

What picture emerges in our minds about God when we learn that He expresses His feelings freely toward us--such as His jealousy for us that is tremendously intense and full of fury?

ILLUSTRATION: Just think of a loving father or mother who is dealing with their wayward child. They are not at all passive or indifferent. They literally cannot sit still; they have to do something--they can do no less--to draw him back to them. Their great love moves them to action. They care and they care passionately. This is a small picture

of our heavenly Father's great love and jealousy over us, His wayward children. What a great Father we have!

ILLUSTRATION: Another illustration I believe paints the opposite picture of the one above about loving jealousy. Once I talked to a young man whose teenage sister was abused by a young man who took advantage of her youthful foolishness and naivety. The brother responded in total indifference by saying, "I don't really care what she does with her life!" Well, it is quite obvious that he was not jealous for his sister. God is different. He really cares what happens to us; and that caring jealousy moves Him to act in our behalf.

NOTE: For more discussion on the word "jealousy" and other Biblical texts, refer to Lesson Two.

The Second Message (Zech 8:3)

What is the content of the second message? What does God promise to do for His people? Zech 8:3.

The loving jealousy of God for His people which we've seen in the first message leads Him to be present and to dwell in their midst --as we see in this second message. God's love is never alone. It always seeks togetherness. Notice in the following list what He does in behalf of His people (vs. 3):

1. "I am returned unto Zion."
2. "Will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem."
3. "Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth."
4. "The mountain of the Lord . . . the holy mountain."

Dwelling among His people is God's great desire now and, more perfectly,

in the earth made new. This theme is central to the book of Zechariah and the whole Bible.

FOR REFLECTION: How does it make you feel to know that God Himself longs to be with you and desires your companionship? How does that fact make you feel about God and about yourself?

Verse 3 speaks of a city and a mountain. What two adjectives are used to describe them, and what spiritual significance do they imply? Zech 8:3.

The "holy mountain" refers to Jerusalem (see Isa 27:13; 66:20). So the promised Jerusalem will be characterized by two important virtues: truthfulness and holiness. The word for truth in Hebrew in this verse is 'emeth which means "stability," "trustworthiness," "faithfulness." The RSV renders it "the faithful city."

Jerusalem, the kind of city God had in mind, will live up to its name. Its inhabitants will live the meaning of the name--they will be faithful and holy. God is faithful and holy; and when He dwells in Jerusalem among His people, they, too, become faithful and holy. This is a prophecy that will perfectly and ultimately be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem.

The Third Message (Zech 8:4, 5)

In the previous, second message we discussed a Jerusalem that is faithful and holy. What two new elements are introduced to describe that future Jerusalem in this third message? Zech 8:4, 5.

This message is about Jerusalem, the city of peace and joy. So in

combining the two characteristics of the second message with the two characteristics of this third message we have faithfulness that leads to holiness, holiness that leads to peace, and peace that leads to joy. What four characteristics! No wonder Jerusalem will be new and perfect when waywardness, uncleanness, strife, and mourning will be replaced by faithfulness, holiness, peace, and joy.

ILLUMINATION:

These promises were intended to have "met fulfillment in large measure during the centuries following the return of the Israelites from the lands of their captivity. It was God's design that the whole earth be prepared for the first advent of Christ, even as today the way is preparing for His second coming. (Prophets and Kings, pp. 703, 704)

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

What does the mentioning of old men and women, and young boys and girls signify? Zech 8:4, 5.

In the Bible long life was considered a supreme blessing (see Exod 20:12; Prov 3:2). It also signified a life free from sickness, anxiety, and war--going naturally and dying from good old age. Old men retain the vigor of their age (Isa 65:20). Also the boys and girls play happily in the streets. These present a beautiful picture of peace and security--a picture of the two age groups, old and young, who are most vulnerable and in need of care and peace. They are not adequately prepared to take care of themselves, and the very fact that

they are at peace and are happy indicates the ideal situation of life in Jerusalem.

How is a city evaluated? By its tall buildings, wealth, technology? No, not really. It is measured by how it treats the two groups most overlooked--the old and the young. In this technological and materialistic age, sometimes it is easy to ignore the very young and particularly the old. Especially in industrialized societies, people are often valued by what they can produce. The young and old years are usually non-productive years in terms of earning powers.

FOR REFLECTION: How do I and how does my church relate to the children and the elderly? Do we provide for them an environment of peace, joy, and a sense of fulfillment? Do we encourage their personal fulfillment, and the use of their talents, and do we make them feel worthwhile and needed?

The Fourth Message (Zech 8:6)

How do you explain the use of the word "marvelous" in the fourth message, and what does it refer to? Zech 8:6.

The word "marvelous" comes from the Hebrew word pala'. This word may have two meanings: To be too difficult and to be conspicuous or different. Putting these two meanings together we may say that Israel's lack of faith, in a sense, made it impossible for God to do what He would otherwise have done if they had faith. The meaning is that nothing is too difficult for the Lord (Gen 18:14), for He will do such marvelous things as He has never done before. Verse 6 is not necessarily a question. It is possibly a statement of irony which,

for emphasis' sake, could mean that this marvelous thing is going to be a wonder to God--God excelling Himself (if that is ever possible).

FOR REFLECTION: Am I limiting God from doing the seemingly impossible and marvelous things in my life because of the lack of faith on my part?

The Fifth Message (Zech 8:7, 8)

What does God propose to do for His people according to Zechariah 8:7, 8 in the fifth message?

In this fifth message about the ingathering of His covenant people, God will do the following:

1. He will save them from the east and the west (8:7).
2. He will bring them . . . (8:8).
3. They shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (8:8).
4. They shall be His people (8:8).
5. He will be their God in truth and righteousness (8:8).

The east and the west countries may refer to Babylon and Persia, and Egypt and Assyria, respectively; but it can also signify the whole world--from the land of the rising sun to the land of the setting sun. This promise will be fulfilled when Christ comes and gathers His faithful ones--spiritual Israel--from the four corners of the earth to inherit the new Jerusalem.

What is the significance of the second part of Zech 8:8 in terms of the covenant relationship between God and His people?

". . . and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." Here God pledges that the covenant relationship

will be renewed on the only basis it can succeed. This covenant relationship will be mutual and reciprocal. God always keeps his part of the agreement. He is always true and righteous in His dealings with us. It all depends on our response. Will we be faithful and righteous, too? "My people" and "their God" must always be together in this new covenant: God will be true to His people and perform acts of righteousness for them, and His people will also be true to Him and be righteous with Him and each other.

The Sixth Message (8:9-13)

How does this message begin and how does it end? What words are used? Zech 8:9, 13.

STUDY AND ANALYZE: Verse 11 makes the transition line between the past and the present where God reverses the negative conditions to positive ones. Analyze such a transition of conditions keeping God's words in mind to be strong and not to be afraid. Zech 8:9-13 (see chart on following page).

This sixth message begins and ends on very encouraging words from God to be strong and not to be afraid. God helped them over the terrible condition that existed before when the temple foundation was laid, and He is going to help up to the time of its completion. God's words of hope and encouragement came at a great time of need when courage and hope were needed. And when we are courageous, hopeful, and strong in the Lord, we will become a blessing, not a curse among the nations.

 Zech 8:9-13

The Components of the Sixth Message	When	Reference
1. <u>Introduction</u> : Let your hands be strong	Now	8:9
2. The words of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah	Temple foundation laid	8:9
3. Scarcity of materials, money, food. Poverty	Time of inaction	8:10; (Ezra 4)
4. External opposition--hostile neighbors	" "	8:10
5. Internal dissension--among themselves	" "	8:10
6. God reverses conditions--new state of affairs	Now	8:11
7. The remnant will have plenty of food: a) The seed shall be prosperous; b) The vine shall give her fruit; c) The ground shall give her increase; d) The hearers shall give their dew.	Now	8:12
8. Israel and Judah no more a curse but God will save them and make them a blessing	Now	8:13
9. <u>Conclusion</u> : Fear not, but let your hands be strong	Now	8:13

FOR REFLECTION: At times when adverse conditions assail us from all directions, do we believe that God can and is willing to reverse such conditions? Do we experience at these times courage, hope, and strength in Him?

The Seventh Message (8:14-17)

What were God's thoughts toward the fathers and His thoughts now toward Israel and Judah in Zechariah's time? Zech 8:14, 15.

What do these three references have in common with each other? Zech 8:14, 15; Zech 1:16, 17; Jer 31:28.

In this seventh message God begins by assuring His people of wanting to do good unto them and telling them not to be afraid for He is with them. He does this before He calls them for social righteousness. Only as God remains active in our lives giving us courage and hope can we fulfill His moral and ethical demands. He is always willing to be active in our lives if we let Him.

NOTE: For a complete discussion of this seventh message and God's call for righteousness and reformation, please refer to Lesson Eight.

The Eighth Message (8:18-19)

NOTE: For the discussion of this eighth message of hope, the message of turning mournful fasts into cheerful feasts, refer to Lesson Eight.

The Ninth Message (8:20-22)

What is the main idea in this ninth message? Was the promise fulfilled in the history of post-exilic Israel? Zech 8:20-22.

The main thought in this message relates to the powerful attraction of genuine religion. When Christ abides in the heart, He diffuses love and power that attracts others who come in touch with us to Him. Like the salt, we make them thirsty for what we have; and like the

sweet fragrance, we draw them to the Saviour. We must recommend our religion by its positiveness and attractiveness. We must present Christ with all His beauty and excellence so everyone who meets us will have the greatest incentives to be drawn to Him. Such a religion will attract others, especially as there is a void in the world for such.

Israel's goodly estate was to be a demonstration to all nations of the benefits and results of a sincere worship of Jehovah. As a result of the demonstration many from these nations would be led to worship the Lord. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1104)

Compare Isa 2:2, 3; Mic 4:1, 2 with Zech 8:20-22 and note the glorious purpose God had for the Jews in spreading the truth.

ILLUMINATION:

The real purpose of Israel was to be an attraction, a model to lead other nations to God, but unfortunately they forsook their "glorious destiny, and selfishly appropriated to themselves that which would have brought healing, and spiritual life to countless multitudes." (Prophets and Kings, p. 705)

The Tenth Message (8:23)

What is the reason why ten men would take hold of the robe of a Jew? Zech 8:23.

That was supposed to be the extent of the missionary movement of the post-exilic Jews--to all the nations, preparing them for the first coming of the Messiah. Let us remember that the drawing power was not in them as such, but the fact that God was with them. That is the powerful secret for drawing others to the truth.

The lesson is for the 'Israel of God' (Gal 6:16). God is now accomplishing His purposes through His church on earth. . . . Its members are to disseminate the light of truth to all the nations (Rev 14:6). In their personal lives they are to make the religion of Jesus Christ so attractive that others will be drawn to surrender

their lives to the Saviour. God's church is now to be a blessing to the world (Zech 8:13). (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1104)

FOR REFLECTION: As Adventists we are entrusted by God to carry on the work of evangelism that old Israel failed to do. We are, through Christ's presence in our lives, to be a model, a showcase of what God can do in the lives of His followers. Do we experience others being attracted or repulsed by our lives and witness? Why?

SUMMARY: God is not slack concerning His promises. He is full of courage and hope for us, and anxious to be with us and work through us to accomplish His work of preparing us and the world to meet Christ when He comes again. God forbid that we should fail in this tremendously important task as the post-exilic Jews failed in preparing themselves and others for Christ's first coming.

APPLICATION

1. To the Jews, sitting under the shade of their fig trees in peace and security was a great experience. What are your "fig trees" as you journey toward the heavenly Jerusalem? What makes heaven attractive to you?

2. As a member of spiritual Israel, am I experiencing God's presence in my life, and am I preparing myself and others for Christ's second coming?

3. Does my Christian life and witness attract or repulse others from coming to Christ? Why?

4. How do I relate to older people and younger children? Do

I affirm them in the Lord, and develop and utilize their talents, or do I "shelve" them?

5. How safe is the street I live on? Can young boys and girls play safely on it? Is there crime, traffic . . . ? The streets of new Jerusalem will be different.

6. What does Zech 8 teach me about God, and about myself?

LESSON 10

"BEHOLD, THY KING COMETH"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: In the very center of chap. 9, which is saturated with war and destruction, flashes a beautiful picture of humility, peace, and strength in the person of Jesus riding on an ass into Jerusalem to establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men. This is a prelude of His second coming when He shall ride on the clouds of heaven to establish His kingdom of glory over all the earth.

OVERVIEW

Zech 9:1-17

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 1. God Will Defend His People Against Their Enemies. | 9:2-6 |
| 2. A Universal Remnant for God. | 9:8 |
| 3. God Will Encamp as a Guard. | 9:8 |
| 4. The First Advent of Christ. | 9:9 |
| 5. The Second Advent of Christ. | 9:10-17 |
-

INTRODUCTION: Zechariah 8 stands out as a chapter that is Messianic and eschatological in nature. Its central theme is the Messiah to whom the well-known prophecy of Zech 9:9 clearly points. He is represented in this prophecy as the humble King bringing peace and salvation during His first advent. And immediately following 9:9, in 9:10, we see the allusion to the second coming of Christ in His glory ending wars, bringing peace, and establishing universal dominion over the whole earth.

These two verses of Zech 9:9 and 10, which fall in the center of the chapter and which refer to Christ's first and second advents, are sandwiched between 9:2-8 and 9:11-17. Seven verses before and seven verses after, respectively--both presenting what Christ will do in defending and restoring His people and establishing His spiritual kingdom and His kingdom of glory.

This will be a fascinating study for us this week as it certainly was for the New Testament writers. That is why they quoted from this chapter frequently in connection with the last week--known as the Passion Week--of our Lord's life on this earth. (See Matt 21:5; John 12:15, Matt 26:15; 27:9; John 19:37; Rev 1:7; Matt 26:31; and Mark 14:27). These prophecies were very meaningful for the New Testament writers and carried for them a great spiritual significance relating to the life and mission of our Jesus Christ. These prophecies must also be important and spiritually significant to us, we who are awaiting the coming of the King of glory.

Ellen White dedicates two chapters, "Thy King Cometh" and "A Doomed People," in her book Desire of Ages to Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Study these two chapters this week along with the

lesson, if at all possible. Two brief quotations, one from each of these two chapters must be shared here:

Christ was following the Jewish custom for a royal entry. The animal on which He rode was that ridden by the kings of Israel, and prophecy had foretold that thus the Messiah should come to His kingdom. (Desire of Ages, p. 570)

The triumphal ride of Christ into Jerusalem was the dim foreshadowing of His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, amid the triumph of angels and the rejoicing of saints. Then will be fulfilled the words of Christ to the Priests and Pharisees: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Matt 23:39. . . . (Desire of Ages, p. 580)

As surely as Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ's first advent, just so surely will it be fulfilled in Christ's second advent. The Jewish nation was not ready to meet Him, and it did not prepare the world to meet Him either. Today we are spiritual Israel. Shall we not learn from the experience of ancient Israel? Shall we not prepare ourselves and others for His glorious and soon second coming? God forbid that we should not!

God Our Defense (Zech 9:1-6)

What word is used in Zech 9:1 to introduce the chapter, and what can the phrase "the eyes of man" possibly refer to?

Chapter 9 begins with the word "The burden" of God's word, which literally means the lifting up (of the voice) and is translated from the Hebrew word, massa', which can mean an oracle, a prophecy, or a prophetic saying. Thus in this chapter we are dealing with prophetic utterances relating to the advents of the Messiah and what He will do for His people and the world. This "burden" can be thought of as a

superscription for the total collection of prophetic sayings in chaps. 9 to 11.

The meaning of the expression "the eyes of man" is not very clear, but it may mean that the Lord's eyes look upon all people and Israel, or it may mean that the eyes of man are directed toward the Lord.

What does the Lord plan to do in defense of His people? Zech 9:2-4. Study the following diagram to note three things the Lord will do against the nations in defense of Israel:

What He Will Do With the Nations	Reference
1. He will destroy their <u>wisdom</u>	9:2
2. He will destroy their <u>silver and gold</u>	9:3
3. He will destroy their <u>power</u>	9:4

What three negative feelings were the five cities of the Philistines to experience as a result of the Lord's actions; and what three things were to happen to them? Zech 9:5, 6.

Study the following diagram:

Three Negative Feelings	Ref.	What Will Happen	Ref.
1. Fear	9:5	1. They will perish	9:5
2. Sorrow	9:5	2. They will be desolate	9:5
3. Shame	9:5	3. Their pride will be cut off	9:5

Tyre and Sidon were the great commercial and coastal cities of the Phoenicians. These two powerful cities were thought of as impregnable. But with the sudden rise of Alexander the Great in the early part of the fourth century B.C. both cities were sieged and destroyed by him (see Ezek 26-28) in his swift conquest around 333 B.C.

Tyre was known to be clever and wise in worldly and commercial affairs. It was famous for its wealth and strength. Not only was it greatly fortified against possible attacks, but it also boasted to be one of the strongest and richest city in the ancient world.

God's prophetic utterances do not overlook the evil committed by any nation, including that of His own people Israel. In spite of all their "cleverness" and boasting about their wealth and power, Tyre and Sidon were not really wise. Possessions and wealth do not make a person or a nation necessarily wise or strong. Materialism was the god of Tyre and Sidon but that could not protect them against the time of their visitation. Their fall filled the five cities of the Philistines with consternation, fear, sorrow, and shame (9:5).

FOR REFLECTION: As we await the second coming of our King, do we find ourselves depending too much on our wisdom, resources, and statistics? Don't we need to depend more on the resources of Christ's wisdom and power, and the blessed hope we have in Him?

A Universal Remnant for God (Zech 9:8)

What concept of the remnant of God do you glean from Zech 9:7?

The term "remnant" was mentioned several times in the previous chapter. However, the term referred to "this people" meaning Israel

and Judah and including peoples of other nations. Not only the Philistines who respond to God will be included, but people from all the nations will find their spiritual home in the new Jerusalem as a part of God's remnant (Zech 14:16).

Here the remnant is not only national but universal, for the King is universal. He is universal not only in his chastisement but also in his approval and reward, and such universality extends beyond Israel and Judah to the Philistines, the very bitter enemies of the Jews. Here God is not talking about the destruction of the Philistines, but of their return to Him. Possibly the victories of Alexander the Great over them would bring them closer to God, just as God's chastisement of Israel brought them also back to God.

What is the significance of the words "blood," "abominations," and "governor" in the context of God's remnant? Zech 9:7.

The Hebrew word alluph is translated "governor" in the KJV, but in the RSV it is translated a "clan." The Hebrew alleph is cognate with eleph, which means a "thousand," or a "clan," or a "family." Both translations make sense, but the rendering of "clan," "family," or "tribe" is preferable in the context of "Ekron as a Jebusite," for the Jebusites were the old inhabitants of Jerusalem who were absorbed by Israel and became as another tribe in the Jewish nation (see 2 Sam 5:6; 24:18-25; Josh 15:63; Judg 1:8, 21).

"And I will take his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from his teeth" refers to the heathen practice of eating the sacrifices with their blood (see Ezek 32:25; Lev 17:10, 12). These

sacrifices were offered to idols and were an abomination before God and strictly forbidden. The Philistines and Ekron, when they respond to God by leaving their idolatrous ways, will become a part of the remnant just as the Jebusites, who were the original Canaanite inhabitants of Jerusalem, became part of Israel. They will all enjoy the same privileges as a native family in Judah.

TO PONDER: Who constitutes the true remnant of God in these last days? Obviously, history tells us that the Jews failed to prepare a people, a faithful remnant, from themselves and the nations around them to meet the King Jesus at his first advent. How about us, the spiritual Israel of today? As individuals and as a church, are we preparing a people, a remnant, within the church and outside to meet the King Jesus when He comes again?

God Will Encamp As a Guard (Zech 9:8)

What is the significance of God encamping as a guard about His house, and Him seeing with His own eyes? Zech 9:8.

During the early part of the 4th century B.C., when Alexander the Great destroyed nations and cities around Israel, the temple (God's house) and Jerusalem escaped from Alexander's destruction (Josephus Antiq XI. 8:3). That resulted from God's noble intention toward His people, and He would have continued being a Watchman to them. . . . Now such ultimate deliverance will be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ.

As a vigilant Watchman, God sees with His own eyes, signifying

His attention toward Israel's condition and His intention to offer the help it needs (see Exod 3:7, 9).

Study and compare the following verses as each relates to the Lord's being our Watchman:

1. 2 Kings 6:17 _____
2. Psalm 27:1-3 _____
3. Psalm 34:7 _____
4. Psalm 127:1, 2 _____
5. Zech 2:5 _____
6. Zech 9:8 _____

The First Advent of Christ, the King of Peace (Zech 9:9)

Now we come to the very heart of this lesson, the coming of the Messiah. Zech 9:9 describes Christ's first advent on this earth when He entered Jerusalem. This important prophecy begins with the announcement of great joy and celebration due to the good news of His coming; then it portrays the Messiah's character and what He will do. He is the long-expected Prince of Peace, the Desire of Ages whose coming was predicted by the writers of the Old Testament. He will come to bring Zion's long-awaited salvation.

What does the use of the personal adjective and pronoun, "your" King and to "you" tell us about Christ's relationship with His people? Zech 9:9.

FOR REFLECTION: It is one thing to say that Jesus is their King and that He comes to them; but it is another more crucial thing to say that Jesus is my King and He comes to me personally. Is He your King who sits on the throne of your life? Has He come to you? Have you invited Him into your life, and do you experience His rulership there?

What is the coming King like? How is His character described in Zech 9:9b?

Study the following list from Zech 9:9 relating to the coming of the King:

1. His coming is a source of great rejoicing--His coming is good news.
2. He comes as our King, and He comes to us--He takes the initiative, and He has a personal relationship with us. He is ours and we are His.
3. He is just--He is righteous.
4. He has salvation--He comes to seek and to save. He comes as the Saviour of man.
5. He is lowly--humble and meek.
6. He comes riding upon an ass--in humility bringing peace.

What significance do the two words "just" and "salvation" have in Zech 9:9?

The Hebrew word tsaddig is translated "just" in the KJV and is translated "triumphant" in the RSV. The word tsaddig occurs very frequently in the Old Testament--about 200 times, and is often rendered "righteous," which it literally means. Sometimes it is rendered "just."

The use of the term "triumphant" in the RSV is most probably derived from the idea that someone who is just and righteous is shown to be in the right and is vindicated, and therefore triumphant. However, the primary and essential meaning here is the character attribute of the Messiah of Righteousness (see Jer 23:6; Isa 64:6; and 1 Cor 1:30).

The word "salvation" comes from the Hebrew verb yasha', which means "to save" or "to redeem." Yasha' is the root word of the name Jesus, which means "Saviour." "For she shall bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

What does Jesus "riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" signify? What are some spiritual implications one can find in this act of Jesus? Zech 9:9.

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

Never before had the world seen such a triumphal procession. It was not like that of the earth's famous conquerors. No train of mourning captives, as trophies of Kingly valor, made a feature on that scene. But about the Saviour were the glorious trophies

of His labors of love for sinful man. (Desire of Ages, pp. 571, 572)

Study the contrasts in the following chart between Jesus, the King of peace, and a worldly king:

The King of Peace	A Worldly King
1. Lowly and meek	1. Proud and arrogant
2. An ass, a beast of labor	2. A war-horse, chariots
3. Entourage--children and peasants	3. Entourage--warriors, soldiers
4. Trophies--His friends--the people He helped, healed, saved . . . captivated by His love	4. Trophies--captured enemies bound by force
5. Palm branches	5. Spears and swords
6. Save	6. Destroy
7. Peace	7. War
8. Divine spiritual power	8. Human physical force
9. Spiritual kingdom	9. Earthly kingdom
10. Eternal	10. Temporary

What does Matt 11:29 and Phil 2:5-8 say to us about the true humility manifested in Christ's life?

ILLUMINATION:

The strife for the highest place was the outworking of the same spirit which was the beginning of the great controversy in the worlds above, and which had brought Christ from heaven to die. . . . Lucifer had said, 'I will be like the Most High' (Isa 14:12, 14); and the desire for self-exaltation had brought strife into the heavenly courts. . . . Lucifer desired God's

power, but not His character. He sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. . . . Dominance becomes the prize of the strongest. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a stepping stone on which he himself may climb to a higher place.

While Lucifer counted it a thing to be grasped to be equal with God, Christ, the Exalted One, 'made Himself of no reputation. . . .' (Desire of Ages, pp. 435, 436)

FOR REFLECTION: With a spirit of prayer, reflect carefully on the following questions and then on the very pertinent statement from Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 15.

1. Am I ambitious for power and supremacy? What does it mean to me to be childlike?
2. Am I jealous of my colleagues who occupy a higher position than I? Why and why not?
3. Do I use other people as steppingstones to advance myself?

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

How is this prophecy of Zech 9:9 fulfilled very accurately in the life of Jesus? See Matt 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-15.

This prophecy regarding the first coming of the Messiah was literally and precisely fulfilled in the New Testament. In fact, all four gospel writers refer to its fulfillment in some detail. The reader is encouraged at this point to read the inspiring account in Desire of

Ages, pp. 569-579. Space does not allow an extensive quote from those eleven pages, but one brief statement is given here: "Five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Zechariah thus foretold the coming of the King of Israel. This prophecy is now to be fulfilled. He who had long refused royal honors now comes to Jerusalem as the promised heir to David's throne" (p. 569).

What relationship exists between the description of the coming of the King of Peace in Zech 9:9 and the figure pictured in Gen 49:10-11? What is the identity of "Shiloh"?

Even as early as the times of Genesis, there was an allusion to the coming Messiah as described in Zech 9:9. Probably Zechariah's prophecy draws from the prophecy of Jacob in Gen 49:10, 11. That figure described by Jacob is no other but the Messiah of Zech 9:9.

The scepter is a symbol of royal authority. . . . Judah was to continue as leader among the tribes until the time of the coming of the Messiah.

Until Shiloh come. Neither the explanation of Shiloh as a place name nor the interpretation as "rest" is convincing. However, the majority of commentators have believed Shiloh to be a personal name, and agree that the person referred to is the Messiah. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:481)

The dying words of Jacob filled with hope: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until Shiloh shall come." Gen 49:10. The waning power of Israel testified that the Messiah's coming was at hand. (Desire of Ages, p. 34)

This was Shiloh, the peace giver. It was He who declared Himself to Moses as the I AM. . . . He was the Desire of all nations, the Root and Offspring of David. . . . (Ibid., p. 52)

White goes on to say that "In one of the earliest prophecies of Christ it is written, 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah

. . . until Shiloh come' (Gen 49:10). The people were gathering to Christ" (Desire of Ages, p. 205).

Then right after Gen 49:10 comes the description of Shiloh, the Messiah of Zech 9:9, "Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine. . . ." (Gen 49:11). The SDA Bible Commentary gives this explanation in linking Gen 49:11 to 49:10 and to Zech 9:9 and Matt 21:7. "Binding his foal. The reference to the riding of the Messiah on an ass was fulfilled at the triumphal entry of Jesus (Matt 21:7). It designates him as a harbinger of peace. . . ." (1:482).

The Second Advent of Christ (Zech 9:10-17)

What allusion is found in Zech 9:10 to the second coming of Christ in his glory?

After Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem he weeps over her and tells the priests and Pharisees: "Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:39). Ellen White makes this link between the triumphal entry of Zech 9:9 and the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven containing Jerusalem's rejection of Him at His first coming. This rejection fits between Zech 9:9 and 9:10. Such allusion to His second coming is dealt with again in Zech 12.

The triumphal ride of Christ into Jerusalem was the dim foreshadowing of His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory, amid the triumph of angels and the rejoicing of the saints. Then will be fulfilled the words of Christ to the priests and Pharisees: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Matt. 23:39. In prophetic vision Zechariah was shown that day of final triumph; and he beheld also the doom of those who at the first advent had rejected Christ (Zech. 12:10 quoted). This scene Christ foresaw

when He beheld the city and wept over it. . . . (Desire of Ages, p. 580, emphasis supplied)

Also the internal evidence of 9:10 and 16 shows that Christ will destroy the instruments of war, will establish His universal Kingdom "from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth," and He will reward his remnant as jewels of a crown. All of this must take place and can only happen when Christ comes again in His glory. We still have instruments of war, even greater than ever; Christ's universal Kingdom of glory has not been established yet, and His final reward of the saints has not been given yet. (See Psalm 27:8).

What will the King of glory do when He comes again? Zech 9:10-17.

Study carefully the following chart of what Christ will do to His people and to the wicked. Notice how the six points and even the wording fit into the theme of Christ's second coming and other Biblical passages related to this subject.

How do you explain the phrase "prisoners of hope" To whom does Zechariah refer? How is the liberation of "prisoners of hope" based on the blood of His covenant? Zech 9:11, 12.

Their hope rests on the blood of the covenant sealing that special relationship between God and His people. This covenant was sealed with blood in Eden (Gen 3:15), later with Abraham (Gen 22:18), and again with Moses (Exod 24:7, 8). This blood covenant became known in the New Testament as the new covenant which was sealed with the

What He Will Do	Reference
1. He will <u>terminate war</u> and <u>bring peace</u>	9:10
2. His universal rule, Kingdom of glory will be <u>es- tablished</u>	9:10
3. He will <u>deliver</u> "the prisoners of hope"	9:11, 12
4. He will <u>defend</u> His people:	9:13-15
a) God and His people will <u>triumph</u> over their enemies	9:13, 14
b) He will sound the <u>trumpet</u>	9:14
c) They shall <u>tread down</u> the slingers	9:15
5. He will <u>save</u> His people "in that day"	9:16
6. He will <u>reward</u> His people	9:16-17
a) His remnant will be as <u>jewels</u> of a crown	9:16
b) His remnant will enjoy <u>abundance</u> and <u>prosperity</u>	9:17

blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb 8:8-12).

The captives can be set free from their spiritual bondage only through the blood of Christ. The returned exiles thought they were prisoners of difficult circumstances and difficulties, but with the Lord's presence and blood covenant, there is certainly hope for such prisoners. The Lord's work is to liberate the imprisoned. These prisoners who hoped for deliverance and responded to God's call to turn to the stronghold coming out of the waterless pit will be delivered.

Notice the contrast evident between the waterless pit and stronghold. The waterless pit is dry, low, dark, and just like a prison; but the stronghold is Zion--high, defended by God, and

symbolizing God's deliverance. It also symbolizes Christ Himself.

FOR REFLECTION: In what way are we prisoners of hope? Do difficult circumstances keep us in the dark and dry pits and keep us from going to the stronghold of salvation? The sacrifice of Jesus, the Lamb of God, is what turns our pits into strongholds.

What is the significance of "I will render double unto thee" in Zech 9:12b?

God understands all the difficulties and trying circumstances that we confront in our lives. If we return to Him, who is stronghold, He will compensate adequately for all the sufferings and waterless-pit experiences we have ever had. He will give a double blessing. When Christ comes again, the joys of heaven will more than compensate for all the sufferings of this world. The greatest problems and most difficult circumstances will fade into insignificance.

Ellen White, in the context of quoting Zech 9:12 wrote,

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

What is the significance of "they shall be as the stones of a crown? Whom do these precious stones refer to? Zech 9:16 (see also Mal 3:17).

God's people are precious to Him like the jewels in the crown. We can see the value Jesus places on us when we look at Calvary. His

blood that sealed the new covenant, His very life, was the price with which He purchased us. (See 1 Pet 1:18, 19). When He sees us He sees the investment of His life in us. His heart is with us, and we are very precious and honored before Him. Read carefully the following two statements.

ILLUMINATION:

The disciples of Christ are called His jewels, His precious and peculiar treasure. He says, 'They shall be as the stones of a crown.' 'I will make man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.' Zech 9:16; Isa 13:12. Christ looks upon His people in their purity and perfection as the reward of all His sufferings, His humiliation, and His love. . . . (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 89.

Hearts that have been the battleground of the conflict with Satan, and that have been rescued by the power of love, are more precious to the Redeemer than are those who have never fallen. God looked upon humanity, not as vile and worthless; He looked upon it in Christ, saw what it might become through redeeming love. He collected all the riches of the universe, and laid them down in order to buy the pearl. And Jesus, having found it, resets it in His own diadem. (Zech. 9:16 is quoted). 'They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels.' Mal. 3:17. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 118).

SUMMARY: Christ is coming again soon. We are the spiritual Israel with the Elijah message to prepare the world to meet Christ. We must learn from the experiences of ancient Israel and their failure to prepare themselves and others to meet Christ when He came the first time. He is with us in carrying out this task: He will defend, liberate, and save us. We will be like jewels in His crown.

LESSON 11

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus Christ, the good and true Shepherd, greatly desires to lead all the sheep of his flock--protecting, keeping, and sustaining; but the evil and false shepherds mislead many--abusing them and causing them utter destruction. Yet the good and true Shepherd will ultimately triumph in restoring and making the faithful remnant of the flock strong in Him.

OVERVIEW:

1. God Gives the Latter Rain (10:1)
2. The Impotence of Idols . . . (10:2)
3. God Punishes the Evil Shepherds (10:3)
4. God Visits His Flock--Judah (10:3). Out of Him will Come:
 - a. The Cornerstone (10:4)
 - b. The tent peg (10:4)
 - c. The battle bow (10:4)
 - d. Every ruler (10:4)

5. God Is With His People (10:5)
 - a. They shall be strong (10:5, 6)
 - b. They shall be saved (10:6)
 - c. God will have compassion on them (10:6)
 - d. As though not cast off (10:6)
 - e. God will answer them (10:6)
 - f. They shall rejoice (10:7)
 - g. God will whistle for them (10:8)
 - h. They are redeemed (10:8)
 - i. Enemies defeated (10:11)
 - j. They shall be strong in the Lord, and shall glory in his name (10:12)

6. Israel's Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:1-17)
 - a. Howlings of Evil Shepherds (11:3)
 - b. "Feed the Flock of the Slaughter" (11:4)
 - c. The Two Staffs: Grace and Union (11:7)
 - d. The Staff Grace Broken (11:10)
 - e. "Give Me My Price" (11:12, 13)
 - f. The Staff Union Broken (11:14)
 - g. The Foolish Shepherd (11:15-17)

INTRODUCTION: Chapter 10 of Zechariah begins by explaining the reason for the blessings and the prosperity promised at the very end of the previous chapter. The rain, early and latter, is sent by God, who is the source to make the crops grow and nourish His people. These rains symbolized God's caring and blessings--physical and spiritual. The good Shepherd is not only interested in tending well the flock but

also sends the needed showers of rain for the grass to grow to sustain the sheep--each one of them. Our good Shepherd sends the early and the latter rain of His Spirit to help the spiritual crop of His people germinate, grow, and mature for His glorious harvest.

In studying about the good Shepherd, the theme starts out by presenting the great prospects and promises of following him. He starts by giving them incentives and encouragement to draw them to him and minimizing the possibility of their rebellion. However, the flock rejects the good Shepherd in chap. 11 to accept the evil ones; and what a contrast! Sometimes it seems that the only way to appreciate the good Shepherd is to fall in the hands of the evil shepherds to be harassed and ravaged by them. Our Lord is the only good Shepherd. He is the only One who sends the clouds, the rain, the sustenance, and life. The others are false and evil thieves who oppress, sell, and slaughter the sheep.

God Gives the Latter Rain (Zech 10:1)

What is the significance of the term "the latter rain," and what is its relationship to the growth and maturity of the flock? Zech 10:1.

God promises his people abundance and prosperity in Zech 9:17, and now he invites them to ask for such blessings so that they might be given to them. The early rain began the rainy season in the fall when the seeds were sown in the soil and rain was needed to help them germinate and grow. The latter rain came in the Spring at the end of the rainy season to help mature the crop for the harvest.

The rain is symbolic of the Holy Spirit that was poured out on the disciples at Pentecost. This power will be poured out again on God's people as they endeavor to prepare themselves and others for the coming of Christ. (See Joel 2:23 and Jer 5:24.)

The blessings of the latter rain are intended by God to "everyone." What does that word "everyone" tell us about God's personal concern and consideration of each individual? Zech 10:1.

ILLUMINATION: In Desire of Ages, in the chapter entitled "The Divine Shepherd," Ellen G. White makes a very moving statement relating to Christ's personal interest:

Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. (Desire of Ages, p. 479)

STUDY carefully the following two statements from the Spirit of Prophecy relating to the early and the latter rain:

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

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

The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the

Son of Man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection. (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 506)

STUDY and apply the following statements relating to the outpouring of the latter rain and the experience of the remnant church. Especially during HARVEST 90, what implications does this inspired counsel have for us today?

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

Heavenly intelligences will come among us, and men will speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Spirit of God. But should the Lord work upon men as He did on and after the day of Pentecost, many who claim to believe the truth would know so very little of the operation of the Holy Spirit that they would cry, 'Beware of fanaticism.' They would say of those who were filled with the Spirit, 'These men are full of new wine'. . . . There will be those who will question and criticize when the Spirit of God takes possession of men and women, because their own hearts are not moved, but are cold and unimpressible. (Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 57)

Why do we not hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit, since this is the means by which we are to receive power? Why do we not talk of it, pray for it, preach concerning it? (Testimonies, 8:22)

Our task is not just to continue in the Lord's service, making large gains year after year. The hour is long overdue when we should let God use us to finish quickly the work by the mighty power of His Spirit. 'Intense earnestness should now take possession of us.' Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 44. (B. E. Wagner, Preparation for the Latter Rain, p. 27)

Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times. (The Great Controversy, p. 464)

Thus the message of the third angel will be proclaimed. As the time comes for it to be given with greatest power, the Lord will work through humble instruments, leading the minds of those who consecrate themselves to His service. The laborers will be

qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions. Men of faith and power will be constrained to go forth with holy zeal, declaring the words which God gives them. (Ibid., p. 606)

The Impotence of Idols (Zech 10:2)

Contrast what the Lord, the good Shepherd does in Zech 10:1 and what idols and diviners do in Zech 10:2.

The Lord	Idols and Diviners
1. He shall give bright (thunder) clouds	1. Idols speak nonsense, vanity
2. He shall give showers of rain	2. Diviners see lies
3. He shall give the latter rain	3. Dreamers tell false dreams
4. He shall give grass (nourishment) to everyone.	4. They comfort in vain

What was the result of following false shepherds, idols, diviners, false dreamers, and comforters? Zech 10:2b. Compare with Matt 9:36, focusing on words such as "helpless," "troubled," "harassed."

FOR REFLECTION: What "idols," false "diviners," "dreamers," and empty "comforters" do I depend on in a spiritual sense? How do they cause me to be helpless and troubled? What can the good Shepherd do about that?

The Evil Shepherds Punished (Zech 10:3)

Who are the "shepherds" referred to in Zech 10:3? Compare them with the shepherds in Ezek 34:5-10.

The context of the above verses indicates that these shepherds were false shepherds who led Israel astray from God. The SDA Bible Commentary refers to them as "the apostate leaders of Israel, the princes, priests, and prophets whom God held chiefly accountable for all the woe that had come upon Israel in connection with the Captivity" (4:1108).

Ellen G. White alludes to the Pharisees, the priests, rulers, and scribes of Christ's time as the false shepherds. She writes, "The Pharisees . . . were not fulfilling the work of the true shepherd. The priests and rulers, the scribes and pharisees, destroyed the living pastures, and defiled the wellsprings of the water of life" (Desire of Ages, p. 478).

God Visits His Flock (Zech 10:3)

God likens his flock of sheep with "his goodly horse" in battle in Zech 10:3b. What significance does that reference have?

What a contrast we see between the feeble, troubled, and wandering sheep and the strong horse that is used by God to achieve victory over the enemies. This is a miracle of transformation that God wants to actualize in our lives if we believe and act upon his promises. He will make us his pride and his instruments to gain victory. He will transform us from harassed, lost, weak, and shepherdless sheep to be strong and majestic in the Lord.

Ellen G. White has an interesting description of the characteristics of sheep in Desire of Ages. She writes, "Of all the creatures the sheep is one of the most timid and helpless, and in the East the

shepherd's care for his flock is untiring and incessant" (p. 479). What amazing things God does for his sheep from being most timid and helpless to becoming courageous and strong.

What are the three things that will come out of him (Judah), and what do they possibly represent? Zech 10:4.

The Jews understood Zech 10:4 to be Messianic, predicting the coming of the awaited Messiah. The Targum refers to it as Messianic. Look at the following list in studying this verse:

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

1. The Cornerstone A figurative term for prince. Messianic for Jesus came out of the tribe of Judah, and there are other references such as Isa 28:16; Eph 2:20 and 1 Pet 2:6 that employ the term "cornerstone" in reference to Christ.
 2. The Tent Peg or Stake A figurative term for leader. As the stake supports the tent, keeping it fast and secure, so Christ may give our lives fastness, security, and confidence. See Isa. 22:23.
 3. The Battle Bow A figurative term for warrior. The Bible refers often to Christ as "the Lord of hosts." He is the solid and reliable defense of his people.
 4. Every Ruler The Hebrew word is noges, which may mean "governor," "exactor," or "master." The RSV rendition of "ruler" is preferred over the KJV rendition of "oppressor," for "ruler" fits the context better. See Jer 30:21.
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FOR REFLECTION: What a wonderful description of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is found in Zech 10:4. Is He my prince, the cornerstone of my life? Is He the stake of my tent, and do I receive my support,

security, and confidence from Him? Is He my warrior, my Lord of hosts? Does He give me His courage? Is He my sure defense? Is He the ruler of my life?

God Is With His People (Zech 10:5-8, 12)

What is the deep spiritual significance of God being with His people? What does this fact tell us about Him? Zech 10:5.

What is the result of God being with us and us being with God? What does this togetherness bring about? Zech 10:6-8, 12.

When God is with his people, all is possible. The doors of hope, opportunity, and victory are all wide open. The togetherness with his people is the fulfillment of God's desire throughout the Scriptures and history. He is the faithful Shepherd who remains with the sheep to tend them, and not like the false absentee shepherds who totally neglect them, harass them, and sell them for slaughter.

STUDY carefully the list on the following page relating to the great blessings that come as a result of God being with his people. However, let us continue to remember that these promises were "conditional on obedience" (See Zech 6:15 and Prophets and Kings, p. 704).

What does Matt 9:36 have in common with Zech 10:2 and 10:6? What does it mean to have compassion and what needs does it meet? See also Ezek 34:12.

The religion of Christ is not only a religion of the mind but of the heart also. Many tend to neglect the fact that Christianity

"The Lord Is With Them" Zech 10:5	Reference
1. They shall be <u>strong</u>	10:5, 6
2. They shall be <u>saved</u>	10:6
3. God will have <u>compassion</u> on them	10:6
4. They shall be as though <u>not cast off</u>	10:6
5. God will <u>answer</u> them	10:6
6. They shall <u>rejoice</u>	10:7
7. God will <u>whistle</u> for them	10:8
8. They are <u>redeemed</u>	10:8
9. Their enemies shall be <u>defeated</u>	10:11
10. They shall be <u>strong</u> in the Lord and shall <u>glory</u> in his name	10:12

has a lot to do with compassion, sympathy, and kindness. It is above all a very practical religion that makes people feel the drawing power of Jesus' love and compassion. Where can one find such qualities if not in the lives of Christians? The world is often hard, indifferent, and callous. There is a vacuum, a void for the compassion of Christ in our lives. That is really where the bottom line is: Do we have a heart of flesh that sympathizes like Christ? This genuine compassion and sympathy is what distinguishes the followers of Christ from the followers of Satan. Oh, for a heart that feels like Christ's! Do you know what is our greatest sin? "The inhumanity of man toward man is our greatest sin" (Ministry of Healing, p. 163).

E. G. White has a great deal to say about the compassion,

sympathy, and tenderness of Christ, the good Shepherd. Study carefully the following statements where such words are mentioned, then reflect on their implications for your life.

The souls who came to Jesus felt in His presence that even for them there was escape from the pit of sin. The Pharisees had only scorn and condemnation for them; but Christ greeted them as children of God, estranged indeed from the Father's house but not forgotten from the Father's heart. And their very misery and sin made them only the more the objects of His compassion. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 186, emphasis supplied)

He who took humanity upon Himself knows how to sympathize with the sufferings of humanity. Not only does Christ know every soul, and peculiar needs and trials of that soul, but He knows all the circumstances that chafe and perplex the spirit. His hand is outstretched in pitying tenderness to every suffering child. (Ministry of Healing, p. 249, emphasis supplied)

How many of the wandering ones have you, reader, sought for and brought back to the fold? When you turn from those who seem unpromising and unattractive, do you realize that you are neglecting the souls for whom Christ is seeking? At the very time when you turn from them, they may be in the greatest need of your compassion.

Angels pity these wandering ones. Angels weep, while human eyes are dry and hearts are closed to pity.

O the lack of deep, soul-touching sympathy for the tempted and the erring! O for more of Christ's spirit, and for less, far less, of self! (Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 191, 192, emphasis supplied)

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

Our God is a God of incentives. He uses incentives to appeal and to draw His wandering sheep back to Him. He appeals to His people to project themselves into the future and have a view of what quality relationship they would have with Him if they would respond to His drawing power. In His love He searches for ways to woo us unto Himself.

And, in spite of all that we have done and how low we have sunk, He is willing to turn to a new page in His relationship with us as though that is the very beginning of that relationship. Thank God for that! Often people do not forget, or do not want to forget, their negative past or the negative past of the people around them. But God is different. If we respond to Him, He forgets the worst things about us and remembers the best things only. "To the returned exiles God promised restoration full and free. If they had cooperated with the purposes of Heaven, they soon would have enjoyed a prosperity not to be distinguished from that which it had been their privilege earlier to obtain" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1108).

FOR REFLECTION: Is it difficult for me to accept God's acceptance of me? Is it difficult for me to forgive myself for what God has already forgiven me? Why and why not?

ILLUMINATION:

Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But God has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned. (Steps to Christ, p. 62, emphasis supplied)

It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. . . . We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent. (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 189)

FOR REFLECTION: Do we tend to remember the good or the bad things

about others? How can we experience Zech 10:6, ". . . as though I had not cut them off" in our relationship with others, especially the ones who have insulted or offended us? Study carefully the following statement and see how it may be applied to your personal experience:

If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others, we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; but if our thoughts dwell upon the wondrous love and pity of Christ to us, the same spirit will flow out to others. . . . This will kill out all narrowing selfishness, and make us large-hearted and generous. (Steps to Christ, p. 121)

What does the anthropomorphism of God hissing or whistling to His flock tell you about God? Zech 10:8.

The word "hiss" or "whistle" comes from the Hebrew sharaq. The picture of God whistling comes from Isa 5:26 and 7:18 where He whistles to a nation, to a fly, and to a bee.

In this context the Lord, the good Shepherd, is calling His scattered people with a whistling sound to gather them to Him just as the shepherd whistles to draw the sheep around him. Whistling may indicate not only the calling of His people but also His soothing, comforting, and assurance. What a beautiful picture of our God! He is willing to compare Himself to a hissing, whistling shepherd in order to let us know that He cares and loves.

Where is our real strength found? Zech 10:5, 6, 12.

Israel's Rejection of the Good Shepherd (11:1-17)

In Zech 10 God has done His best, as we have clearly seen, to allure and gather His flock to Him. He even would again be willing to repeat the great miracles that He wrought in their behalf in the past,

such as the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14). But in chap. 11 we see the rejection of Israel's only Hope in spite of all the encouragement and promises of the previous chapter. There the flock follow evil and false shepherds instead of the good Shepherd, and what a different result!

Compare the resume of the good Shepherd in Zech 10 and Ezek 34:11-16 in the following table, then contrast such characteristics with those of the foolish and false shepherds of Israel in Zech 11:16 and Ezek 34:1-10. See also John 10.

It is hard to believe that the Jews chose the false shepherds over the Good Shepherd. The comparison study below presents the facts about good and evil shepherds. Satan does not want us to know such facts and unmask his true identity. The choice seems obvious. How could anyone want to fall into the hands of the evil shepherd! Yet that is what most people choose. What choice have we made? Is Jesus our Good Shepherd? Do we belong to His flock?

The foolish shepherds do not even take care of the healthy sheep, but the good Shepherd takes care of the weakest--"the flock of the slaughter" and the "poor of the flock." What does this fact say about the character of the good Shepherd? Zech 11:4, 7.

The apostle James defines what is pure and undefiled religion. It is to take care of orphans and widows in their afflictions (see James 1:27). Pure religion is manifested not so much in doing the pleasant tasks, but by helping the needy, wanting the unwanted, and seeking the forgotten. It is so easy to ignore and bypass such people,

The Evil Shepherd vs. The Good Shepherd

The Evil Shepherds	The Good Shepherd
1. Do not care for the perishing	1. Rescues the perishing
2. Do not seek the wandering and lost	2. Searches for the lost
3. Do not heal the maimed and sick	3. Heals the sick
4. Do not nourish the sheep	4. Feeds the sheep
5. Devour the fat ones	5. Watches over the fat and strong
6. Do not strengthen the weak	6. Strengthens the weak
7. Do not bind up the crippled	7. Binds up the crippled
8. They are harsh. They howl.	8. He is gentle--He whistles
9. Absentee shepherds--indifferent	9. He is present--on the job He identifies with them
10. They kill and feed on the sheep	10. He dies for the sheep

but reaching out to them is the true test of genuine religion.

The good Shepherd, who is meek and lowly in heart, seeks the lonely and the poor of the flock--the ones who are humble, appreciative, and teachable. This is a sign of true greatness and strength. Jesus, from a position of power, of glory, reaches to the weakest, the most miserable, and the ones ready to die.

What depraved spirit do the false shepherds show when they

say, "Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich. . . ."? What commandment of the Decalogue are they breaking? Zech 11:5.

The evil shepherds traffic in selling the sheep for the slaughter and for the motive of selfish profit. What audacity to attribute to God the blessing over their evil action! It seems clear that their consciences were seared, and they did not even feel any guilt for their actions of mistreating the flock in their trust.

It is like an act of blasphemy to thank or give credit to God for that which He cannot condone or bless. There are people who involve God and hold Him responsible and attribute certain actions to Him that He has nothing to do with. This is a breach of the third commandment of not taking the name of God in vain (Exod 20:7).

What are the names of the two staffs taken by the good Shepherd, and what do they signify? Zech 11:7.

Here the prophet Zechariah is commissioned by God to perform, or act out, a prophetic symbol of the good Shepherd. He, in this particular context, is a type of the Messiah, who will be mistreated and rejected by His own whom He came to save. Zechariah took two staves "Beauty" and "Bands" symbolizing by such a prophetic act, God's final attempt to restore His wayward people.

The name of the first rod, "Beauty," comes from the Hebrew word no'am, which means kindness, friendliness, or graciousness. The name of the second rod, "Bands," comes from the Hebrew word chobelim related to the word chebel, which is the singular form of the word for

"rope" or "cord." Thus the plural form means cords or bands, symbolizing union.

According to Ps 23:4, the shepherd carried a rod and a staff --rod to ward off attacks against the sheep and a staff with which to direct and guide the flock. The two key words are defense and guidance. We may interpret the rod Grace to mean God's power and goodness in His defense of Israel against its enemies. The staff Bonds may be interpreted to mean God's blessing of unity between Judah and Israel, between His people. The shepherd's staff, or crook, is used to gather and guide the sheep to stay united and thereby remain strong.

What did the two acts of breaking the two staves symbolize? Zech 11:10, 14.

It is amazing to consider how long-suffering and patient God is. Before he rejected the Jewish nation as a whole, He "cut off" the three shepherds (11:8), representing the evil shepherds, in order to awaken the flock of His people to their desperate condition. The three shepherds possibly refer to the three types of leaders--priests, prophets, and kings. All were unfaithful to Him. "God delivered His people from all opposition and from oppressive leadership. He did everything possible in order that His plans with respect to Israel might succeed" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1111).

The shattering of the two staves did not take place at the same time, which is another indication of God's long-suffering. The breaking of the staves Grace and Union denotes the withdrawal of God's gracious protection and defense, His patient dealing with His people,

and the dissolution of unity between Israel and Judah. It is the dissolution of the restored covenant which was finalized in its fulfillment at the death of Christ.

Did all the nation reject the good Shepherd? What element of a faithful remnant do you see in Zech 11:11? See also Zech 11:7. What characteristics did they exhibit?

The "poor of the flock," the small faithful remnant, is like a breath of fresh air, so to speak, in the middle of broken covenants, rebellion, and rejection. Throughout the ages no matter how gloomy the situation, there has always been a small, faithful remnant to God. This remnant manifested the following characteristics: (1) Poor, or what Christ calls them in the Sermon on the Mount, "the poor in spirit" --the ones who are meek, humble, and teachable; (2) patient--they waited patiently on the Lord trusting in Him; and (3) aware--they acknowledged Him as the One sent from God. The "poor" represent spiritual Israel, the church today.

What very important event took place between the breaking of the two staves? Zech 11:12-13.

The rejection and betrayal of the Messiah by the Jewish nation was symbolized by the wages He received--thirty pieces of silver. This subject is discussed fully in the next lesson. Suffice it to quote Ellen G. White here when she says that

. . . the last appeal to Jerusalem had been in vain. . . .
 In every age there is given to men their day of light and privilege, a probationary time in which they may become reconciled to God. But there is a limit to this grace.
 That day had come to Jerusalem. Jesus wept in anguish over

the doomed city, but He could not deliver her. He had exhausted every resource. (Desire of Ages, pp. 580, 587)

What does the foolish shepherd do to the flock? Describe his end. Zech 11:16, 17.

This evil shepherd is described in different Bible translations as foolish, worthless, and idle. The Hebrew word is 'elil, which means nothingness or worthlessness (11:17). In 11:15 the word in Hebrew is 'ewili, which means useless. All of the above adjectives are true about this shepherd. Also the root word in the Hebrew may mean to grow thick. It is obvious from what this foolish shepherd does to the sheep that he is utterly insensible and callous to the needs and welfare of the sheep.

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

SUMMARY: One cannot help but be utterly amazed at how patiently God attempts to shepherd His ungrateful and rebellious flock. He exhausts all the means at His disposal to restore His people even sending His own Son. The two staves of the covenant were not broken because of the good Shepherd, but because Israel made that choice. Yet, in the very midst of gloom, God's Spirit remains with individuals, the remnant, those who appreciate His work, wait upon Him, and acknowledge Him in their lives.

APPLICATION

1. In my daily life, what shepherd am I following?
2. Is my daily religion more a religion of the mind or the heart?

3. Do I find myself attracted to help and lift up the "poor" of the flock? Or am I attracted to the seemingly strong and successful? Why and why not?

4. Have I exhausted all my resources, and have I done my best in restoring a wayward brother or sister, or in healing a broken relationship?

5. How sensitive am I to the needs and hurts of others? What kind of shepherd am I to others?

6. Am I really a member of God's faithful remnant? Do I, in my daily life, show meeekness and teachableness? Do I wait on the Lord? Do I acknowledge Him as Saviour and Lord?

LESSON 12

"THE LAMB SLAIN"

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

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

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When the Good Shepherd loves, He loves to the end. He not only becomes the Shepherd of a rebellious flock, but in His incarnation He becomes one with the flock. He becomes indeed the "Lamb of God slain from the foundations of the world" giving His life for the sheep.

OVERVIEW:

1. The blood of the covenant (Zech 9:11)
2. Thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:12, 13)
3. Whom they have pierced (Zech 12:10)
4. A fountain opened (Zech 13:1)
5. Wounds in the hands (Zech 13:6)
6. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd . . . my fellow" (Zech 13:7)

INTRODUCTION: In the previous lesson we contrasted the characteristics of the Good Shepherd with those of the evil ones. The evil shepherds do exactly the opposite to the sheep to what the Good Shepherd does.

They ignore, abuse, feed on, and kill the sheep. On the other hand, the Good Shepherd takes care even of the weakest and searches for the lost. And not only that. He so identifies with the sheep that He becomes one with them; and instead of taking their lives away, He gives His own life for them. He is the Lamb of God who shed His blood on Calvary for the cleansing of sin and eternal redemption. He was betrayed and wounded by the very people He came to save. The righteous judgment of God that was to fall upon the flock fell upon the Shepherd, the Lamb as the ultimate substitutionary sacrifice and surety for His ungrateful people. However, His precious blood that was shed on the cross is the very source of cleansing and salvation for anyone who accepts the Saviour. Remember the words of the old hymn: "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains".

The Blood of the Covenant (Zech 9:11)

What does the term "blood of the covenant" signify? Zech 9:11.

The above term has two principal words: "blood" and "covenant." In its broader aspects the covenant refers to the promise made to man in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:15) that the seed of the woman (Jesus) shall bruise the head of the serpent (Satan). That covenant was sealed with the blood of the two innocent lambs killed to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve. That covering symbolized the righteousness of Christ realized on the cross of Calvary by the shed blood of the Lamb of God.

This covenant was renewed to Abraham (Gen 22:10-19) when God provided the sacrificial ram that was slain in place of Isaac. The

renewed covenant between God and Abraham was also sealed with the shed blood of the ram symbolizing the Lamb of God.

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

When the Lamb of God became the actual sacrifice, and symbol met reality, this covenant became known as the new covenant sealed not with the blood of animals but with the very blood of Jesus (Heb 8:8-12; 9:11-14).

ILLUMINATION:

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

Another compact--called in Scripture the "old" covenant--was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. The Abrahamic covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and it is called the 'second,' or 'new,' covenant, because the blood by which it was sealed was shed after the blood of the first covenant." (Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 370-371)

How far back does the plan of redemption through the sacrifice of Jesus go? Rev 13:8; 1 Peter 1:19, 20; Eph 1:4.

The plan of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus was conceived before the world was created. In that divine plan that goes back to the time when nothing and no one was created in this world, God included the redeemed, "foreordained" and "chosen." That divine agreement that Christ will die for the human race someday, was based on the solid and unchangeable promise of God. Therefore, Christ may

be regarded as "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." So the decision was reached before the world began, confirmed at the cross of Calvary.

ILLUMINATION:

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

Before the Father He pleaded in the sinner's behalf, while the host of heaven awaited the result with an intensity of interest that words cannot express. Long continued was that mysterious communing. (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 63).

Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man if he should be overcome by Satan. They clasped their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should become the surety for the human race. (Desire of Ages, p. 834).

FOR REFLECTION: Knowing that Adam would fall, why did God take the risk of creating him? How does God's act of creating man fit into His love and man's freedom of choice?

Thirty Pieces of Silver (Zech 11:12, 13)

Where did the idea of thirty pieces of silver originate in the Scriptures, and what significance does it have? Exod 21:32.

This was the price given to the master of a male or female slave killed by an ox. The thirty pieces or shekels of silver were to be paid in compensation of the loss of the slave. That amount was accordingly the price, or the worth, that was placed on a slave. "Thirty shekels of silver would be equivalent to approximately \$8.75 today" (SDA Bible Commentary, 1:615). In the Commentary 4:111, the present value is

given as about \$12.60. "However, the more ancient shekel was of smaller weight than the one in use in the time of Zechariah" (Ibid.; see also SDA Bible Commentary, 1:168). So the price is shamefully low for the life of a person; \$8.75--\$12.60 was the price of a slave, and the same price that the Messiah, the Creator of the world, was betrayed for!

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

The very fact that the Good Shepherd asks for His wages or the people's evaluation of His service shows the total contempt and ingratitude of God's people. He leaves it to their sense of justice. Contrary to the other false shepherds, He does not threaten or use force with the flock, rather He leaves Himself and the value of His work at their mercy.

When the Jewish leaders paid Judas thirty pieces of silver, they showed exactly what they thought of Jesus--total disregard, contempt, and ungratefulness. The payment of thirty pieces of silver was given when a slave died; so when they paid Judas that sum for betraying Jesus, they showed their intention not only of not being grateful, but to take the life of their Good Shepherd.

How was Zech 11:12, 13 fulfilled in the New Testament? Matt 26:14-16; 27:3-4.

FOR REFLECTION: The all-worthy Christ was treated as worthless by humankind, but He treated unworthy humanity as worth everything, even His life. Think of the contrast between the price of the thirty pieces

of silver and the price with which Jesus purchased humanity. All the silver and gold was not an adequate price for an individual. Compare and contrast 1 Peter 1:18, 19 with Zech 11:12.

ILLUMINATION:

Rich and poor, high and low, free and bond, are God's heritage. He who gave His life to redeem man sees in every human being a value that exceeds finite computation. By the mystery and glory of the cross we are to discern His estimate of the value of the soul. When we do this, we shall feel that human beings, however degraded, have cost too much to be treated with coldness or contempt." (Ministry of Healing, pp. 162, 163)

Where was Zechariah instructed to cast the thirty pieces of silver? What does the adjective "goodly," in describing the Good Shepherd's price, mean? Zech 11:13.

ILLUSTRATION: The Lord's abhorrence of the price they gave Him is evident in the strong irony seen in "goodly price." No, it is not a splendid price, far from it! It is a price worthy only of being thrown away. It is an insult. It can be illustrated by an incident I witnessed sometime ago. A laborer had spent a whole day repairing the house of a landlord. At the end of a hard day of work, the laborer waited for his wages for a job well done only to receive a few coins. Feeling insulted by the landlord's low opinion of his labor, he refused to accept the little money casting it to the ground at the feet of the landlord and leaving.

How was Zech 11:13 fulfilled in the New Testament? Matt 27:1-10; Acts 1:16.

Whom They Have Pierced (Zech 12:10)

Who is the one who was pierced? How do you explain the outpouring of the spirit of grace and supplication upon Israel? What is the significance of their mourning? Zech 12:10, 11.

The word "grace" is translated from the Hebrew word chen, which means to be gracious. When "favor" is joined with "supplications," we have the meaning of a spirit poured out seeking grace.

Zech 12:10 introduces a new element of mourning and seeking God's favor. We may glean from the context that a very important spiritual leader had been martyred through the connivance and ignorance of the leaders. Then remorse and mourning and a spirit of supplication took firm hold of the people after they had fully realized what they had done.

. . . the prophet is here envisioning a far reaching spiritual revival, brought about by a new glimpse of the sinfulness of sin, and characterized by an earnest search for the righteousness of Christ. Looking upon the 'pierced' Messiah, seeing in Him the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types, perceiving as never before the marvelous love of God in the gift of His Son, men would deeply mourn over their past defects of character." (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1113)

The apostle Peter presented this "pierced" Messiah to the Jews right after the Pentecost in Acts 2. In Acts 2:23 Peter tells them that they had crucified and killed the Messiah. Then in Acts 2:37 we are told, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles men and brethren, what shall we do?" That was the day when three thousand souls repented, were baptized, and joined the early Church.

What important role does conditional prophecy play in interpreting this text of Zech 12:10 and 11?

The mourning as one mourns for his only son may also be in grief over the death of the Messiah. A grief such as a nation prepared to receive the Messiah would have experienced. Zechariah is here (Zech 12:10) presenting Israel's future as it might have been. It was God's design that the whole earth should be prepared for the first advent of Christ (see Prophets and Kings, p. 704). How different would have been the history of the Jewish nation and of Jerusalem if the people had accepted the gift of God's beloved Son (see Desire of Ages, p. 576, 577)! Had he come to a nation thus prepared to receive Him, and had He suddenly been 'pierced,' how deep their grief would have been. The poignancy of their grief would have been heightened by the realization that their own sins had caused His death.

FOR REFLECTION: Meditate carefully on the following moving words of the Spirit of Prophecy relating to Jerusalem's rejection of the Messiah:

Jesus raised His hand,--that had so often blessed the sick and suffering,--and waving it towards the doomed city, in broken utterances of grief exclaimed: 'If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!--' Here the Saviour paused, and let unsaid what might have been the condition of Jerusalem had she accepted the help that God desired to give her,--the gift of His beloved Son . . . she might have stood forth in the pride of prosperity, the queen of Kingdoms. (Desire of Ages, pp 576, 577)

Jerusalem had been the child of His care, and as a tender father mourns over a wayward son, so Jesus wept over the beloved city. How can I give thee up? . . . One soul is of such value that, in comparison with it worlds sink into insignificance, but here was a whole nation to be lost. When the fast westering sun should pass from sight in the heavens, Jerusalem's day of grace would be ended. (Ibid, p. 578)

What valuable lessons must we learn individually and as a church from the tragic experience of Jerusalem, especially in preparing for Christ's soon return?

The Lord desires to teach us, His people in the last days, valuable lessons from the experience of Jerusalem of old. What experiences do we have in common with Jerusalem that rejected and was rejected by the Messiah? Can history be possibly repeating itself in our lives individually and in the life of our church? God forbid! Study carefully these sobering lines from Ellen G. White, and ask yourself the question, 'Where do I fit in all of this?'

The warning is for all time. Christ's act in cursing the tree which His own power had created stands as a warning to all churches and to all Christians. No one can live the law of God without ministering to others. But there are many who do not live out Christ's merciful, unselfish life. Some who think themselves excellent Christians do not understand what constitutes service for God. They plan and study to please themselves. They act only in reference to self. Time is of value to them only as they gather for themselves. (Desire of Ages, p. 584)

In every age there is given to men their day of light and privilege, a probationary time in which they may become reconciled to God. But there is a limit to this grace. Mercy may plead for years and be slighted and rejected, but there comes a time when mercy makes her last plea. The heart becomes so hardened that it ceases to respond to the Spirit of God. (Ibid., p. 587)

That day had come to Jerusalem. Jesus wept in anguish over the doomed city, but He could not deliver her. He had exhausted every source. (Ibid.)

The Jewish nation was a symbol of the people of all ages who scorn the pleadings of infinite love. The tears of Christ when He wept over the sins of all time. In the judgments pronounced upon Israel, those who reject the reproofs and warnings of God's Holy Spirit may read their own condemnation. (Ibid.--emphasis supplied)

In this generation there are many who are treading on the same

ground as were the unbelieving Jews. They have witnessed the manifestation of the power of God; the Holy Spirit has spoken to their hearts; but they cling to their unbelief and resistance. (Ibid.)

How was this Messianic prophecy of Zech 12:10 fulfilled in the New Testament? John 19:34-37.

The Jewish leaders were so particular in 'keeping' the Sabbath, in 'obeying' the law that they asked Pilate to break the legs of Jesus to make sure He was dead, and to take him down from the cross before sundown Friday. Here is a prime example of keeping the letter of the law, but not its spirit. The letter of the law without the spirit of the law literally kills. Here were the Jewish leaders 'keeping' the Sabbath commandment while murdering 'the Lord of the Sabbath'! It is incredible! But how about us? Do we hurt people around us in the process of being religious, of keeping the letter of the law, but not the Spirit of the law? It is a sobering question for each of us.

ILLUMINATION:

The priests and rulers were amazed to find that Christ was dead. Death by the cross was a lingering process, it was difficult to determine when life had ceased. It was an unheard-of thing for one to die within six hours of crucifixion. The priests wished to make sure of the death of Jesus, and at their suggestion a soldier thrust a spear into the Saviour's side. From the wound thus made, there flowed two copious and distinct streams, one of blood, the other of water. (Desire of Ages, pp. 771, 772)

Why did Jesus die so quickly? What caused His death? Was it the physical suffering, the thrust of the spear?

But it was not the spear thrust, it was not the pain of the cross, that caused the death of Jesus. That cry, uttered 'with a loud voice' (Matt 27:50, Luke 23:46), at the moment of death,

the stream of blood and water that flowed from His side, declared that He died of a broken heart. His heart was broken by mental anguish. He was slain by the sin of the world. (Desire of Ages, p. 772--emphasis supplied)

How will this Messianic prophecy of piercing Jesus and mourning for Him yet meet another fulfillment of the second coming? Matt 24:30 and Rev 1:7.

It is clear from the language and the context that Zech 12:10, 11; Matt 24:30; and Rev 1:7 describe the regret and mourning of those who scorned and rejected Christ at His advent. When He shall come on the clouds of heaven with all His glory as a conquering King, those who "pierced" Him will realize painfully the gravity of their deed. "The word translated wail in Rev 1:7 is the same as the one translated 'mourn' in Matt 24:30, and represents the reading of the LXX in Zech 12:10." (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1113)

ILLUMINATION:

The triumphal ride of Christ into Jerusalem was the dim foreshadowing of His coming in the clouds of heaven with power and glory . . . then will be fulfilled the words of Christ to the priests and pharisees: 'Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Matt 23:39. In prophetic vision Zechariah was shown that day of final triumph; and he beheld also the doom of those who at the first advent had rejected Christ: 'They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him. . . . Zech 12:10. . . . This scene Christ foresaw . . . In the temporal ruin of Jerusalem He saw the final destruction of that people who were guilty of the blood of the Son of God. (Desire of Ages, p. 580)

All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified . . . : They also which pierced Him' (Rev 1:7), those that marked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the

honor placed upon the loyal and obedient. (Great Controversy, p. 637)

The very men who thrust the spear into the side of the Lord of life will behold the print of the spear and will lament with deep anguish the part which they acted in marring His body. (Early writings, p. 179)

A Fountain Opened . . . (Zech 13:1)

What period of time does the phrase "In that day . . ." refer to? Zech 13:1a.

In Zech 3:9 we find the reference to "one day" when the iniquity of the land shall be removed. It is referring to the same day mentioned in Zech 13:1 when Christ died once and for all for humanity, and whose atoning blood shed on the cross removed guilt, iniquity, and sin. This is the same day when Jesus was pierced (Zech 12:10). In a sense there had always been a fountain open for forgiveness and cleansing since Jesus is "the Lamb of God slain from the foundations of the world" (Rev 13:8). Before the cross, men by faith looked forward to the Savior who was going to shed His blood for the forgiveness of their sins.

Praise be to God! On the day of Calvary the fountain once opened was never to be shut. By faith people looked to it before the cross; and they will always be able to do that. The force of the Hebrew words convey the idea of not only the fountain shall be opened, but shall remain open. This continual flow is available free and efficacious to all, and it transcends time and space.

What is the spiritual significance of this term "A fountain opened . . ." and what does it refer to? Zech 13:1.

The background of the above figurative term is rooted in the Levitical ritual. The water of expiation was used to purify and consecrate the Levites (Num 8:7). Also the prophet Ezekiel mentioned the purifying effect of sprinkling water on the children of Israel. "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek 36:25). See also Num 19:9).

In Zech 13:1, there is no sprinkling, but complete washing from the fountain opened. "A fountain" suggests a plentiful and abundant supply for cleansing of sin. It is ever flowing with abundance to wash clean the most defiled. It is not the cleansing of bodily or ceremonial defilement, but the purification from moral defilement--it is the cleansing of the heart, the inward being. It is the cleansing, or the saving of His people from their sins (see Matt. 1:21).

ILLUMINATION:

That flowing stream was a symbol of the ever flowing, ever cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, the fountain that was open for Judah and for Jerusalem, wherein they may wash and be clean from every stain of sin. We are to have free access to the atoning blood of Christ. (Ellen G. White, SDA Bible Commentary, 1:1111)

John 19:34 tells us that blood and water flowed out of the Savior's side when the Roman soldier pierced Him. Do you see how this text combines the 'piercing' in Zech 12:10 and the 'fountain opened' in

Zech 13:1? What other complimentary elements do you see in these verses?

ILLUMINATION:

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

SEARCH AND LEARN: The subject of the blood is very prominent in the Bible as symbolic of cleansing, life, and redemption. The shed innocent blood of Christ does not cry out for vengeance, but for pardon and restoration. Study and compare the following verses, then state briefly in your own words the main idea in each:

1) Lev 17:11 _____

2) Rom 5:9 _____

3) Eph 1:7, 8 _____

4) Heb 9:13, 14, 22 _____

5) 1 John 1:7 _____

6) Rev 7: 14 _____

7) Rev 12:11 _____

Wounds in the Hands (Zech 13:6)

What do the following verses have in common in relationship to the suffering Messiah? Zech 10:12; 13:1 13 6,7.

In the above three references from Zechariah three events are interrelated to show the salvation wrought by the suffering Messiah. These important events are the piercing of Christ, the opening of the fountain for sin, and the wounded hands of the smitten Shepherd in Zech 13:6,7. There is no question that Zech 10:12; 13:1 and 13:7 are referring to the same person, the Messiah; but who is Zech 13:6 referring to? Bible commentators raise the question as to the identity of this person. There seems to be some ambiguity.

Who is the person questioned in Zech 13:6, What are these wounds in thine hands?'

The four verses that precede Zech 13:6 have to do with the act of sanctification that was introduced by the fountain opened for pardon and cleansing from sin. The two sins that are specifically mentioned are idolatry and false prophecy that were wide-spread at that time.

Contextually the question relating to the wounds in the hands (literally, between thy hands) seem to be addressed to the false prophet who got wounded in connection with idolatrous worship and in order to appease the heathen gods. The SDA Bible Commentary, 1:1115 offers the following explanation: "Some interpreters have applied this text to Christ as predictive of His scourging and wounds received at the hands of those who should have been His friends (see Matt 27:26; Mark 14:65

. . .). This must be done by secondary application or by making a break after Zech 13:5 and by connecting vs. 6 with vs. 7, which is clearly predictive of Christ (Matt 26:31)."

Also Zech 13:6 seems to begin a new thought of being wounded in the hands which introduces and reinforces 13:7 of the smitten Shepherd. The striking of the Shepherd--the piercing of His side (12:10), and the wounding of His hands (13:6) go together, and as a result a fountain is opened for cleansing from sin.

Christ personally applied the prophecy of Zech 13:7 to Himself in Matt 26:31 and Mark 14:27. Ellen White comments on the wounds of Jesus in His hands and the piercing of His side. She combines this piercing and wounding in one statement in Early Writing, p. 179; "Jesus will present His hands with the marks on His crucifixion. The marks of this cruelty He will ever bear. Every print of the nails will tell the story of man's wonderful redemption . . . the very men who thrust the spear into the side of the Lord of life will behold the print of the spear and lament with deep anguish. . . ."

It is clear from the Acts of the Apostles, p. 226, that Ellen White understood Zech 13:6 to refer to no other but Jesus Christ. She quotes Zech 13:6, "One shall say unto Him, what are these wounds in thine hands?" with other Bible references relating specifically to Christ's suffering and death.

What is the significance of the expression, "wounded in the house of my friends"? Zech 13:6.

FOR REFLECTION: The innocent and precious blood of Christ that was shed for you and me does not cry out in vengeance over the guilty; it flows as a continual stream of love and forgiveness. The wounded hands are not raised defiantly as clenched fists, but are stretched out to embrace us in reconciliation. We deserved to be wounded and pierced, but He took the initiative and died in our place. We did not have to appease Him by our wounds like the heathen, "but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Even though while we were sinners, He called us friends (John 15:13) and "God commandeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

Awake, O Sword, Against My Shepherd . . .
My Fellow' (Zech 13:7)

What does the "sword" that is commanded to "awake" signify?

Zech 13:7. See also Jer 47:6,7; Ps 22:15 and Isa 53:10.

ILLUMINATION:

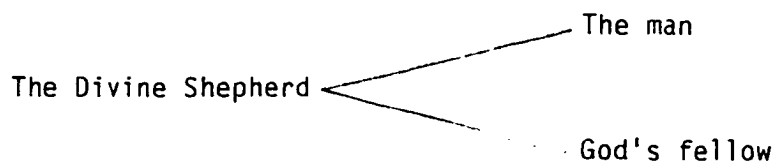
Of the suffering Saviour Jehovah Himself declared through Zechariah, 'O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow.' Zechariah 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was to suffer under divine justice. He was to understand what justice meant. He was to know what it means for sinners to stand before God without an intercessor. (Prophets and Kings, p. 691--emphasis supplied)

After quoting Zech 13:7, Mrs. White writes, "As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for

others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself" (Desire of Ages, p. 686).

What theological implications can we glean relating to the nature of the Shepherd from the use of the two words "man" and "fellow"? Zech 13:7.

The Shepherd Messiah is fully divine and fully human, the perfect Mediator between God and man. Yes, the Shepherd is a "man," but He is also God's "fellow," One united with Jehovah's divine nature and of its very essence.



Here we have a clear indication of Christ's divine and human nature. He is equal with God, yet also He is a distinct person. The word "fellow" in Hebrew refers to fellowship, brotherliness, and closeness in communion and vocation. He is the closest to the Father in all things, for He and the Father are one (John 10:30). He is the Father's equal. He is a baby born in Bethlehem, but He is also "the Mighty God, the everlasting Father" (Isa 9:6).

How was the prophecy of Zech 13:7 fulfilled in the New Testament, and how did Jesus apply it to Himself? Matt 26:31. How were the sheep scattered? Matt 26:56; John 16:32.

SEARCH AND LEARN: In Isa 53:10, we read that "it pleased the Lord to

bruise Him." Study this Messianic chapter of Isa 53 and indicate other verses that point to Christ suffering under the justice of God as our substitute and surety.

ILLUMINATION:

Jesus is not only our shepherd; He is our "everlasting Father." And He says, "I know Mine own and Mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father." John 10:14, 15, R.V. What a statement is this!--the only begotten Son, He who is in the bosom of the Father, He whom God has declared to be "the Man that is My fellow" (Zech 13:7),--the communion between Him and the eternal God is taken to represent the communion between Christ and His children on the earth! (Desire of Ages, p. 483)

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

SUMMARY: God predestined all of us to be saved from the foundations of the world through Christ's blood of the covenant (see Eph 1:4, 5). Christ was betrayed, pierced, wounded, and experienced all what sinners deserve in the presence of a holy and sin hating God for you and me. A fountain was opened for forgiveness, cleansing and restoration. Are we washed in that blood of the Lamb? Reader, He loves you. Heaven itself can bestow nothing greater, nothing better. Therefore trust! (Desire of Ages p. 483).

APPLICATION

1. Christ gave His life in His blood covenant with us. In our relationship with Him, do we give Him our life?
2. By the way I am living now, what value do I place on the life and work of the Good Shepherd in my behalf? What value do I place on people around me? How do I show it?
3. Do I lack the spirit of gratitude and thankfulness to God and to others in my daily life? Do I tend to take things for granted, and expect others to serve me? Why is that? How can it be changed?
4. The Jews of old crucified Christ, while at the same time being very particular in guarding the edges of the Sabbath. Do I hurt, undermine, and tear down people in practicing my religion?

LESSON 13

THE VICTORIOUS KING

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

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

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

OVERVIEW:

1. "On that Day . . ." Zech 12:8, 9; 13:1; 14:1, 4, 9.
2. The Lord is Jerusalem's strength and defense. Zech 12:5, 6, 8, 9; 14:3.
3. The remnant refined. Zech 13:8, 9.
4. His feet on the Mount of Olives. Zech 14:4, 5.
5. The final judgment and destruction of the wicked. Zech 14:3-5, 12.
6. The New Jerusalem and the New Earth. Zech 14:6-8, 9, 11, 16, 20-21.
7. The King over all. Zech 14:9.

INTRODUCTION: In this old and wicked world, we are so conditioned to see suffering, evil, and death that sometimes it seems impossible for all of that to come to a final end. But all of that will come to an end when salvation and restoration is complete and Christ will establish His kingdom in the earth made new. What a day that will be! No more pain, sickness, evil, and death. Throughout this quarter we have had the opportunity of studying how the Messiah endeavors to save and restore His people before and after His first advent. Now He comes to His very final act of restoration in bringing the great controversy between good and evil to an end.

Zechariah 14 takes us all the way in the future to the third coming of Christ immediately after the millennium. As we study some of the events leading to that great day of the Lord, let us examine carefully our experience with Him. Is Jesus our daily strength? Are we allowing Him to prepare and refine us as His precious remnant? Are we preparing ourselves to be citizens of the New City Jerusalem whose builder and maker is God? Is Jesus the King over all our life now, and will He be when He is crowned as King over all the earth? May these sobering and vitally important questions find their positive answers in our daily experience with Christ as we come to the close of our study of the book of Zechariah.

A word of caution is in order when Zech 14 is studied. One must be careful not to arrive at unwarranted conclusions and defective interpretations. We must keep in mind that a maze of interpretations exists today on the prophecies of Zechariah, especially chap. 14. We as Seventh-day Adventists believe that "generally speaking, the promises

and predictions given through the Old Testament prophets originally applied to literal Israel and were to have been fulfilled to them on the condition that they obey God and remain loyal to Him. But the Scriptures record the fact that they disobeyed God and proved disloyal to Him instead. Accordingly, what He purposed to do for the world through Israel of old He will finally accomplish through His church on earth today, and many of the promises originally made to literal Israel will be fulfilled to His remnant people at the close of time" (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:25, 26).

In some of the previous lessons we alluded to conditional prophecy and the role of literal and spiritual Israel in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. However, it is highly recommended that the SDA Bible Commentary, 4:25-38, be carefully studied. Here it suffices to quote a few excerpts from those pages.

The following simple rules are suggested as a safe approach to the study of each prophetic passage of the Old Testament:

1. Examine the prophecy in its entirety. Note by whom it was spoken, to whom it was addressed, and the circumstances that called it forth . . .
2. Observe the conditional aspects of the prediction and ascertain whether or not, or to what extent, the conditions were met.
3. Discover what later application inspired writers make of the prophecy, and on this basis determine its possible significance for God's people in this time.
4. Remember that the record of God's dealings with His people in ages past has been recorded for the benefit of all later generations to the end of time. (Ibid., p. 38)

The prophets did not always clearly understand messages they themselves had born pointing forward to the distant future, to the coming of the Messiah (1 Peter 1:10, 11). . . . (Ibid., p. 36)

Though the prophet looked at events about him, he also could see far beyond his own day. In a mysterious way known only to God the prophet's words were sometimes intended to meet their fulfillment in the then far-distant future. At times they had an import,

not only for the age in which the prophet lived, but also for a day far future; in other words, they had a dual application

. . .
 He (the student of the Bible) will listen to the prophet speaking to Israel of old and endeavor to understand what his words meant to the people who originally heard them. But he will listen also for the further import the prophet's words may have for later times, particularly, our time. Indeed this secondary application is for us today the more significant. (Ibid., p. 37)

Promises not already fulfilled to literal Israel either would never be fulfilled at all or would be fulfilled to the Christian church as spiritual Israel. Prophecies that fall into the latter classification are to be fulfilled in principle but not necessarily in every detail, owing to the fact that many details of prophecy were concerned with Israel as a literal nation . . .

The fundamental principle by which we can tell unerringly when any particular promise or prediction of the Old Testament made originally to literal Israel is to meet its fulfillment with respect to spiritual Israel is - when a later inspired writer makes such an application of it . . . (Ibid., pp. 36, 37--emphasis supplied)

"On that Day . . ." (Zech 12:8, 9; 13:1; 14:1, 4, 9)

The expression "Day of the Lord" or "On that Day" is common in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. What does this day point to in the Bible? See Isa 13:6, 9; Jer 46:27, 28; Joel 1:15; 2:1; Matt 10:15; 2 Cor 1:14; 2 Pet 3:7.

The Bible writers refer to the "Day of the Lord" or similar expressions to mean the time when God intervenes in the affairs of this world in order to execute judgment on the wicked and/or deliver His people from bondage in order to escape from destruction. It can also refer to His judgment upon His own people in order to chastise them and draw them back to Him. Also it points to the time when God would defeat all the world powers and establish His own rule.

In its ultimate sense, the expression refers to the day when the affairs of this earth would come to an end. In the New Testament

it is specifically associated with the coming of Christ to resurrect the righteous from their graves (John 6:39), to purify the earth with fire, and to establish His eternal kingdom over all the world (2 Pet 3:7-14).

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study the following verses from Zechariah then indicate what "in that day" refers to in each verse:

- 1) Zech 3:10 _____
- 2) Zech 9:16 _____
- 3) Zech 11:11 _____
- 4) Zech 12:8, 9 _____
- 5) Zech 13:1 _____
- 6) Zech 14: 1, 4, 9 _____

The most frequent and significant expression in the last chapters of Zechariah is the phrase "in that day." It appears only two times in chaps. 1-8; however, it appears nineteen times in chaps. 9-14, and as many as fourteen times in chaps. 12-14. It is mentioned eight times in chap. 14 alone.

It is evident that in chaps. 12-14, apocalyptic and eschatological considerations become progressively dominant and more focused and intensified, especially in chap. 14 as reflected by the gradually increased frequency of the use of "in that day." Chaps. 12-14 deal with the same themes as in 9-11, but with increasing intensity as they progress towards the events in the "last days" when the armies of the wicked make their last attempt to destroy God's people, and how God will subdue them and rule forever.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study and compare the use of the expression "in that day" in chaps. 12 and 14 of Zechariah.

As you study the following chart, notice how the eschatological and apocalyptic elements become more intensified and sharpened in chap. 14. Notice also how God Himself is the principal actor on His day.

Comparison of what happens "in that day"	
Zech 12	Zech 14
1. God will make Jerusalem a heavy stone . . . 12:3	1. Spoils taken, Jerusalem attacked, God fights against the nations . . . 14:1-3
2. God will strike every horse with panic . . . 12:4	2. His feet on the Mt. of Olives . . . with His saints . . . 14:4, 5
3. God will make Judah an hearth and torch of fire . . . 12:6	3. Perfect nature. Perfect climate. Continuous light . . . 14:6, 7
4. God will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem . . .	4. Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem . . . 14:8
5. God will destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem 12:9	5. The Lord shall be King over all the earth. Plagues on wicked. No more destruction . . . 14:9, 11, 12
6. God will pour out a spirit of compassion, supplication . . . mourning . . . 12:10, 11	6. A great panic among the wicked. A remnant from the nation survives . . . 14:13, 15, 16
	7. Total commitment. All holy unto the Lord . . . 14:20, 21

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Ezek 38-39; Mal 4:1, 14; 2 Chr 20:15; Rev 16:14; Ezek 11:23; Mic 1:3, 4; Matt 25:31; Isa 30:26; Rev 21:23; 22:1; Eph 4:5, 6; Rev 19:17, 18.

The Lord Is Jerusalem's Strength and Defense
(Zech 12:5-6; 8-9; 14:3)

Where is the true strength of Judah to be found? Zech 12:5.

How is God the true strength and defense of His people? Zech 12:5, 6, 8, 9; 14:3.

Real and lasting strength comes only from its source--God. He who stretched out the heavens, founded the earth, and created life is certainly able to strengthen and defend His people (Zech 12:1). The real strength of God's people had never been the strength of arms, chariots, and fortifications, but in the Lord of hosts (Zech 12:5). The real might of Israel was always found in their trust and confidence in their God, and in their obedience to His will. God wanted to give them victory over their enemies by fighting on their behalf, for the battle is His (2 Chr 20:15).

Here in Zech 12 and 13 we notice specific illustrations and promises showing how God is His people's strength. Observe the following:

1. God will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling to her enemies (Zech 12:2). The creative powers of God will make the seemingly weak Jerusalem into a great force that will make her enemies tremble and reel in defeat. Imagine different invading kings gathering around a big cup. The nations desired to dispose of Jerusalem and swallow it like a cup of wine. But in drinking the wine, they stagger as

drunkards, and become impotent by the wine of God's wrath. The Bowl remains standing.

2. God will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the people (Zech 12:3). God will make His people a heavy stone, a boulder with rough edges, half-embedded in the earth. Those who try to move it and get rid of it shall be wounded. So in trying to hurt Jerusalem, they hurt themselves; and the rock stays firm and unmoved because God's special protection is upon His people.

3. Their strength shall be in the Lord their God (Zech 12:5); not in things, riches, or achievements, but in the person of God and their trust relationship with Him.

4. God will make His people--like Himself--into a consuming fire that will devour to the right and to the left. He uses two powerful illustrations to make that point: (a) He will make them a hearth of fire among the wood, and (b) He will make them like a torch of fire in a sheaf (Zech 12:6).

5. God shall defend Jerusalem. He will put a shield around its inhabitants. Even the feeblest among them shall be as David, strong in the strength of the Lord (Zech 12:8).

6. God will wage the war, and He will fight against Jerusalem's enemies. It is His battle; and in trusting Him, His people, though weak and tempted, will be strong in His strength and victorious in His victory (Zech 12:9; 14:3).

These promises of conquering might were to have met fulfillment in the remnant of Judah. It was hoped that after their return from captivity they would cooperate fully with the purposes of Heaven. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1112)

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

FOR REFLECTION: In every age God has His true representatives. Am I His true representative today as a part of spiritual Israel making His interests my own? Am I learning from the failings of ancient Israel, or am I repeating their same mistakes?

The Remnant Refined (Zech 13:8-9)

We have alluded in previous lessons to the "remnant"; however, in this lesson we shall mainly focus on the remnant of God's people in Zech 13 and 14. The remnant refined and prepared to meet the victorious King "on that day," and to live with Him forever.

Compare and contrast Zech 3:2 and Zech 13:9 relating to the remnant being refined through fiery trials.

Both verses mention fire as a means of testing and refining that the remnant go through. The word "remnant" refers to those who survive an ordeal or a calamity, and those who remain faithful to God in the middle of persecution and apostasy.

In Zech 3:2, the "brand plucked out of the fire" conveys the idea that other branches were burned to ashes, but this brand remained and was plucked by God from almost certain destruction. The word "remnant" is mentioned in Zech 8:6, 11, 12; 9:7. In the eschatological section the idea of the remnant is alluded to. Words such as the

"residue" and the "third part" were used in Zech 13:8, 9 and 14:2; and the ones that are "left" in Zech 14:16.

The remnant will and must pass through the fiery furnace of refining and trying as silver and gold. Following Christ is not an easy religion. It takes the commitment of the whole being. Tribulation and testing are integral parts of being a follower of Christ. The fire burns and sifts out what is of straw; and takes out the dross and impurities from the silver and gold to make them refined and pure. The remnant that is refined as silver and gold and sustained through Jesus will be the only group that will be prepared to meet Jesus and live with Him forever when He comes.

What is the significance of the terms "two parts" and "third part" in Zech 13:8 and 9?

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

What does Jesus say about the persecution of those who follow Him? Mark 13:7-31; Luke 21:12; John 15:20. See also 2 Tim 3:12.

ILLUMINATION:

God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched. . . . The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it

seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay our burdens at His feet. . . .

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

What does the apostle Peter say about the gold tested by fire that corresponds to Zech 13:9? 1 Pet 1:6, 7. See also Jas 1:2-4.

E. G. White associates the testing and refining of the remnant as gold with the time of trouble. She links such refining with preparation for the day of God and the time of Jacob's trouble shortly before Christ comes. These concepts are discussed in detail in the chapter entitled "The Time of Trouble" in Great Controversy, pp. 613-634. It is highly recommended that such a chapter be read prayerfully and applied personally. It addresses very precisely and vividly our spiritual situation as we await Christ's soon coming. Here are a few excerpts:

Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless. (p. 620)

Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God's love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful for them to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected. (p. 621)

The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger--a faith that will not faint though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. . . . Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for

His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God--how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God. (p. 621)

"The 'time of trouble, such as never was,' is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess and which many are too indolent to obtain. . . ." (p. 622).

What does Daniel say about this time of trouble? Who will be delivered and why? What will immediately follow? Dan 12:1, 2.

His Feet on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4, 5)

Apocalyptic Chronology of Zech 14

1. The last great battle for Jerusalem	14:1, 2
a. The Lord and the nations battle against Jerusalem	14:2
b. Apocalyptic tensions between a rebellious Jerusalem on one hand and a faithful remnant in its midst	14:2
2. The Lord's intervention in behalf of Jerusalem	14:3-5
a. The Lord Himself will fight against the nations	14:3
b. The Lord and the heavenly host will descend on the Mount of Olives	14:4, 5
3. Nature recreated: climate, light, living waters	14:6-8
4. The Lord's universal reign	14:9
5. The land of Israel made into plain, Jerusalem blessed and secure	14:10, 11
6. The punishment of God's enemies. Plagues	14:12-15
7. Universal, faithful remnant will worship God in Jerusalem	14:16-19
8. All things will be holy to the Lord	14:20, 21

Chapter 14 is a description of events in connection with the second coming of the Messiah in terms of how this spectacular event would have come about if the Israelites who returned from captivity had fulfilled their destiny Inasmuch as they turned again and again from their high privileges and ultimately rejected the Messiah (Acts 3:13-15), God turned from them. He is now accomplishing His purposes through the Christian church. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1116)

Then the SDA Bible Commentary in commenting on Zech 14:4 states, "Certain features will now be fulfilled as the New Jerusalem makes its descent at the end of the millennium. However, not all the details must be so applied . . ." (Ibid., p. 1117).

In the light of many interpretations relating to the return of the Jews to Palestine in this century, and the establishment of the modern state of Israel, how is Zech 14 to be interpreted?

The apostle Paul affirms the fact that God's rejection of literal Israel as His instrument to save the world does not mean the rejection of individual Jews. Spiritual Israel, or the Christian church, is open to all, including Jews who accept Christ as their Savior and Lord (Rom 9-11). A real and spiritual Israelite is one who is converted at heart no matter what race he represents. All who accept Christ are one in Him and form the spiritual seed of Abraham (Gal 3:9, 28, 29).

But when the Jews rejected Christ there was no such assurance of reinstatement. The present-day return of the Jews to Palestine and the establishment of the modern state of Israel do not imply reinstatement as God's people, present or future. Whatever the Jews, as a nation, may do, now or in time to come, is in no way related to the former promises made to them. With the crucifixion of Christ they forever forfeited their special position as God's chosen people. Any idea that the return of the Jews to their ancestral home, that is, to the new state of Israel, may in any way be related to Bible prophecy is without valid scriptural foundation. It ignores the plain statements of the Old Testament

that God's promises to Israel were conditional. (SDA Bible Commentary, 4:33)

FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION: How do you explain the sudden shift between the Lord and the nations attacking Jerusalem in Zech 14:2 and the Lord's intervention in behalf of Jerusalem in Zech 14:3? There seems to be a faithful remnant within the remnant--a faithful remnant in the midst of a rebellious Jerusalem. Does this have any ramifications for the "time of shaking" of the remnant in these last days? Compare and contrast Zech 14:2, 3 with Isa 29:5-7 and Mic 4:8-13. We may conclude that judgment will come first to God's people (to shake away, and to refine the faithful remnant), and then to the nations. During that time, even some people from the nations shall join God's faithful remnant and replace the unfaithful ones thus constituting a last and faithful universal remnant for God ready to meet Him.

ILLUMINATION:

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

What is the Biblical significance of the Mount of Olives, especially as it is associated with the life and work of Christ in the New Testament?

The Mount of Olives is only 200 feet higher than the Jerusalem Temple area from which it is separated by the Kidron Valley to the east. Even at 2,600 feet above sea level, it is one of the highest

mountains in Palestine. The name appears only two times in the Old Testament. One time in 2 Sam 15:30 when David fled from Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion, and the second time in Zech 14:4, our text under discussion.

However, the name appears twelve times in the New Testament, especially in connection with Christ. He frequently spent the night on it, He entered Jerusalem from it, and He gave His sermon on His coming and the end of the world from it; the final sufferings of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane were on its slopes. His ascension into heaven took place from it, and there the angels promised the disciples that He would come back in the same manner (Acts 1:11).

Who will accompany Jesus when His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives? What will happen to the mountain from the impact of His descent? Zech 14:4, 5; Jude 14, 15. See also Hab 3:6 and Mic 1:3, 4.

In commenting on the text of Zech 14:4, the SDA Bible Commentary, 4:1117, states that this event refers to the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven at the end of the millennium. Not all the details of Zech 14 can be precisely applied to that time; however, Zech 14 has many features in common with Rev 20-22, which should help us to know more clearly what details are applicable to Christ's third coming after the millennium.

The saints or the "holy ones" (RSV) accompany Christ. The word "saints" is translated from the Hebrew word qedoshim, which literally means holy ones. This word is applied in the Old Testament to

both men and angels (see Deut 33:3; Job 15:15). So Christ will be accompanied by the redeemed of all ages, who spent a thousand years with Him in heaven, and also by the holy angels.

The Mount of Olives will not be able to bear up under the feet of Christ. It will cleave in the midst, from east to west, forming a great valley. There are allusions to such an event in Mic 1:3, 4; compare Hab 3:6.

Ellen G. White points out that Christ attached a special significance to His experiences on the Mount of Olives. He had special sentiments toward it. She notes that after the millennium, Christ, the angels, and the saints will descend with Him on that Mountain. His presence will purify the valley formed by it and prepare it to receive afterwards the Holy City coming down from heaven. Study carefully the following statements:

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

At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise to receive their doom . . .

Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives, whence, after His resurrection, He ascends, and where angels repeated the promise of His return. Says the prophet: 'The Lord my God, shall come, and all the saints with thee.'

Then White immediately quotes Zech 14:5, 4, 9 and proceeds by saying,

As the New Jerusalem, in its dazzling splendor, comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and angels, enters the Holy City. (Great Controversy, pp. 662, 663--emphasis supplied)

Also in Early Writings, Ellen White saw these events in vision. Study carefully the important order of such events in the following statements:

The saints will rest in the Holy City and reign as Kings and priests one thousand years; then Jesus will descend with the saints upon the Mount of Olives, and the mount will part asunder and become a mighty plain for the Paradise of God to rest upon. The rest of the earth will not be cleansed until the end of the one thousand years, when the wicked dead are raised, and gather up around the city. The feet of the wicked will never desecrate the earth made new. (pp. 51, 52, emphasis supplied)

With Jesus at our head we all descended from the city down to this earth, on a great and mighty mountain, which could not bear Jesus up, and it parted asunder, and there was a mighty plain. Then, we looked up and saw the great city . . . and it came and settled on the place where we stood. (pp. 17, 18, emphasis supplied)

After the judgment of the wicked dead had been finished, at the end of the one thousand years, Jesus left the city, and the saints and a train of the angelic host followed Him. Jesus descended upon a great mountain . . . (p. 291--emphasis supplied)

What internal evidence is there in Zech 14 to indicate that when the Lord descends on the Mount of Olives in vss. 4 and 5, that will be His third coming after the one thousand years?

Consider the following points:

1. Jesus comes to earth not only with His angels but also with His saints who had been resurrected in the first resurrection, and who had spent 1000 years in heaven with Him. Zech 14:4 and 5.

2. Nature will be recreated, such as continuous light, etc . . . the earth will be made new after the millennium. The earth will be desolate during the millennium. Zech 14:6-8. See also Rev 21:23 and 22:5.

3. Living waters shall flow out of Jerusalem that will be

inhabited by the saints. Zech 14:8. See also Rev 22:1.

4. Jerusalem will dwell in security and there shall be no more curse or traders. Zech 14:11, 21. See also Rev 21:27; 22:3, 15.

5. The Lord will become King over all the earth. The final coronation of Christ over the earth where evil and evil doers will be totally eradicated. That will take place after the millennium. Zech 14:9.

What does John the Revelator say about the descent of the Holy City from heaven? Rev 3:12; 21:2, 10.

The Final Judgment and the Destruction of the Wicked
(Zech 14:3-5, 12)

What will the Lord do against the nations which go against Jerusalem, and when will this take place? Zech 14:3-5, 12. Compare with Zech 12:6, 8-9.

SEARCH AND LEARN: Study Rev 20:7-9. What correspondence does this passage have with Zech 14:3-5, 12? What does "Gog and Magog" refer to?

Gog and Magog represent all the unsaved from the beginning of time who come forth in the second resurrection after the millennium; and under the leadership of Satan try to take over the Holy City. When are these wicked hosts resurrected? "Then at the close of the one thousand years, Jesus, with the angels and all the saints, leaves the Holy City, and while He is descending to the earth with them, the wicked dead are raised . . ." (Early Writings, p. 53--emphasis supplied).

Satan, the mightiest of warriors, leads the van, and his angels unite their forces for this final struggle. Kings and warriors are in his train, and the multitudes follow in vast companies, each

under its appointed leader. With military precision the serried ranks advance over the earth's broken and uneven surface to the City of God. By command of Jesus, the gates of the New Jerusalem are closed, and the armies of Satan surround the city and make ready for the onset. (Great Controversy, p. 664)

What will the outcome of this great battle be? What will the end of Satan and all his wicked hosts be? Zech 14:12 and 13; Rev 20:9, 10. See also Ezek 28:6-8; Mal 4:1; 2 Pet 3:10.

Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up . . . Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire . . . The earth's surface seems one molten mass--a vast, seething lake of fire . . .

The wicked receive their recompense in the earth . . . Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished 'according to their deeds.' . . . he (Satan) is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit . . . After all have perished . . . he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch - Satan the root, his followers the branches. (Great Controversy, pp. 672, 673)

The New Jerusalem and the New Earth
(Zech 14:6-8, 9, 11, 16, 20, 21)

FOR REFLECTION: In the days of Noah, God provided His faithful remnant with the ark to preserve them from the flood of water. When God will destroy and cleanse the earth with a flood of fire, He will also provide the ark of the Holy City Jerusalem. Am I preparing myself now to enter that City whose builder and maker is God?

How does Zechariah describe the New Jerusalem? Zech 14:6-8, 11, 16, 20, 21.

The New Jerusalem will have the following features "on that day":

1. There will be neither cold nor frost (RSV)--a perfect climate.
2. There will be neither day nor night--continuous day and light.
3. Living and continuous waters shall flow out of Jerusalem.
4. The whole land shall be turned into a plain.
5. Jerusalem will be inhabited. Not cursed anymore, but blessed and secure.
6. The universal faithful remnant from all the nations shall worship together the King.
7. All will be holy unto the Lord. People, work, things . . .

How does the above find its correspondence in Revelation? Rev 21:23, 24, 27; 22:1, 3, 5. See also Ezek 47:1-12; Rev 21:1-4.

What is the spiritual significance of keeping the feast of tabernacles in Zech 14:16. What does the reference to "Canaanite" in Zech 14:21 mean? See also Lev 23:34, 40; Matt 21:12.

ILLUMINATION:

A fear of making the future inheritance seem too material has led many to spiritualize away the very truths which lead us to look upon it as our home. Christ assured His disciples that He went to prepare mansions for them . . . And yet, 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.'

1 Cor. 2:9. Human language is inadequate to describe the reward of the righteous. It will be known only to those who behold it. No finite mind can comprehend the glory of the Paradise of God. (Great Controversy, pp. 674, 675)

The King over All (Zech 14:9)

What does Zechariah say about the universal rulership of the Lord? Zech 14:9. Compare this with Dan 2:44 and Rev 11:15 and Rev 20:11, 12.

Who constitute the faithful remnant under the rulership of the Lord? Zech 14:16. See also Rev 7:9.

As the armies of Satan surround the Holy City, Christ appears in full view of His enemies. "Far above the city, upon a foundation of furbished gold, is a throne, high, and lifted up. Upon this throne sits the Son of God . . ." (Great Controversy, p. 665).

As Christ on His white throne prepares to judge the throngs that surround the New Jerusalem and eradicate forever evil and evil doers from the whole earth, He is coronated as King of the whole world.

In the presence of the assembled inhabitants of earth and heaven the final coronation of the Son of God takes place. And now, invested with supreme majesty and power, the King of kings pronounces sentence upon the rebels . . . (Great Controversy, p. 666)

FURTHER STUDY AND MEDITATION: Read "The Controversy Ended" in Great Controversy, pp. 662-678.

SUMMARY: God in His love and mercy for us, who live in history's last hour, has revealed to us through His word what we need to know to be among those who enter the Holy City. Now is the time to heed His entreaties to enter His ark of safety from what is coming upon the world. Mrs. E. G. White writes to us the remnant church, these pricking

words: "I saw that the remnant were not prepared for what is coming upon the earth. Stupidity, like lethargy, seem to hang upon the minds of most of those who profess to believe that we are living the last message" (Early Writings, p. 119). Am I allowing Christ to refine me as gold? Am I preparing for eternity?

APPLICATION:

1. What spiritual battles am I fighting? Is my fight against Satan and my sins, or is it a fight of faith and trust in God? How does He fight my battles?

2. What does God's refining tell me about Him? Do I squirm from such testing? Do long trials weary my faith and exhaust my patience?

3. Is Jesus King over all in my life? That is the only way He will be my King when He comes again.

4. Mrs. White says that we need a spiritual experience that we do not now possess to prepare us for the time of trouble. What is that experience, and how can I obtain it.

5. Just as surely as the flood of water came upon this world there will also be a flood of fire . . . where will I be? Outside or inside the ark/New Jerusalem? Am I helping others around me to prepare for this flood?

The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love. (Great Controversy, p. 678)

Dear Reader, don't you want to be a part of those who declare
Him so?

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The book of Zechariah has unique relevance to Seventh-day Adventists, for today and for the future. It is the type of work that seems to demand more than just a sporadic use of a verse here or a passage there; a thorough study of the entire book is especially useful.

In just fourteen chapters Zechariah gave to ancient Israel and to the remnant church quite a sweep of vitally important issues. The book contains themes from all the Scriptures--the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, particularly the books of Daniel and Revelation. We can think of Zechariah as standing between Daniel and John grasping their hands--complementing, clarifying, and reinforcing their messages.

The book of Zechariah has two main divisions: chapters 1-8 and 9-14. Zechariah's messages are Messianic, both in the first and the second halves, apocalyptic and eschatological especially in the second half. The Messiah emerges as the central Figure from its sacred pages in spite of the maze of history and eschatology that is often intermingled. Jesus shines brightly through its pages as the golden thread penetrating and holding together every part. The book of Zechariah not only deals with Christ's first advent but also with His second and third advents. It not only deals with evil in this world

but also its final and total eradication. It is concerned not only with the judgment of God now, but His final judgment and vindication. It teaches not only how Jesus justifies us by faith, but also how He sanctifies us here and how He will glorify us when He comes again--all in the context of the great theme of the great controversy between good and evil.

This series of thirteen lessons, besides addressing theological topics, takes into serious consideration devotional as well as ethical imperatives. We are to lift up our eyes and commune with God in the middle of our hectic lives. We are to return to God in true repentance, not thinking evil in our hearts. This is something which is possible only if we experience Christ's presence in our midst and have the Holy Spirit empowering us to do His will. We are to execute justice and to love mercy and truth in our interpersonal relationships with others. In the middle of discouraging circumstances, in this time of uncertainty and flagging zeal, we are to get hold of God's promises of hope and restoration while awaiting Jesus' glorious appearing. He is our good Shepherd who so identified with the sheep that He became the Lamb of God who suffered and died for the sake of His sheep; He is our coming victorious King. This spectrum of thought in Zechariah provides a rich portrait of the Messiah with all His beautiful characteristics.

This study has been greatly beneficial to me. Hopefully it will be of great benefit to Seventh-day Adventists around the world. It has aided me in sharpening my study skills, and contributed to revitalizing and molding my life and character. I have experienced the joy and satisfaction that come from discovering gems of truth and

the Pearl of the great price. It has made me keenly aware of the issue of the great controversy as it relates to the Adventist message in these last days.

I have discovered again the great value of actually studying the Word of God, not merely studying about it. The joy of discovering and tasting that the Lord is good in the book of Zechariah. The Word of God is the bread of life. It is not sufficient to simply analyze and describe the bread without actually eating, digesting, and assimilating it. The Word of life must infuse our lives and become an integral part of our being.

Often commentators disagree on the interpretation of Zechariah. This disagreement propelled me into a complete immersion in the Word. I am grateful for the inspired comments of Ellen G. White that shed light on several crucial passages. However, this series of lessons would not have become a reality without many long hours of heart-searching, prayer, meditation, and reflection. The lessons came into existence as a result of seeking earnestly after God; He is the One who receives the credit for His willingness to enlighten one of His earthen vessels.

One must keep in mind that the primary purpose of these lessons is devotional and instructional in nature. They are written with the purpose of awakening and preparing God's followers to meet Christ when He comes. In this context I would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Like Zechariah of old, we must stop daily what we are doing,

no matter how important it may seem, to lift up our eyes and commune with God.

2. Bible study must go beyond the superficial and hasty routine to which we may have become accustomed. It must involve our greatest energies with a heart and mind subdued by the presence of the Holy Spirit. We must wrestle with Scripture and actually taste and assimilate it in our lives. Prayer, meditation, reflection, and genuine heart-searching are indispensable here.

3. Before rushing here and there to find spiritual truth, we must first and foremost seek the truth from the Source--God and His Word. Often we get accustomed to being spoon-fed without any serious effort on our part. We listen to sermons, cassettes, discussions, and read books and commentaries about the Bible. All such activities have their proper place, however, they must never take the place of earnest personal Bible study.

4. These lessons need to be studied in their sequential order --chapter by chapter and topic by topic. For example, the chapters and topics relating to repentance, communion with God, salvation by faith, and the empowering of the Holy Spirit come before the later topics on ethical imperatives and preparation for the coming of Christ. There is certainly great value in studying a book like Zechariah, verse by verse and chapter by chapter, in an organized and consistent fashion so that specific details and broad outlines can be understood in relation to each other.

5. Zechariah is uniquely relevant to Adventist theology and mission at the present time. It deserves greater attention on the

part of Seventh-day Adventists. It should be emphasized and studied as are Daniel and Revelation, for it parallels these two important books in its Messianic, apocalyptic, and eschatological content.

6. In order to actualize the importance of Zechariah, this series of lessons can be used in prayer and Bible study groups and as sermons. Each one of the thirteen lessons can be used as the basis of a sermon for one quarter; or a series of sermons can be gleaned from the lessons dealing specifically with such themes as the portraits of the Messiah, His three advents, and those teachings especially appropriate to Adventist doctrine and mission--i.e. righteousness by faith, the ministry of Christ as advocate, atonement, millennium, and judgment.

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