

The Last Four Night Visions

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Text: Zechariah 4:1-6:15

Introduction:

- I. A quick survey of those who have had the sheer audacity to put pen to paper with regard to the meaning of Zechariah will make it evident that we should approach this effort with a great deal of humility! Let me illustrate briefly with a few observations from the vision in Zechariah 4:1-14. The vision is fairly simple in one way; it is a lampstand and two olive trees.
 - A. It has been confidently asserted that the lampstand has seven, fourteen or forty-nine lamps. (Klein, p. 155-156)
 - B. The two olive trees / olive boughs have been identified as the two firstborn virtues who receive the law and the prophets. (Methodius, in ACCoS, Vol. XIV. p. 244) Jerome says in his day that the trees and or branches were understood to be Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the Old and New Testaments and Enoch and Elijah! (Jerome, p. 27-28)
- II. It seems to me that the problem, both ancient and modern, is to look at Zechariah with a microscope when a telescope is what is needed. Zechariah's purpose is to connect the immediate circumstances of God's people to God's vision for the future. This has a couple of implications.
 - A. First, we must keep the reason for this prophesy ever before us. "When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them." (Ezra 5:1-2)
 - B. Second, the visions set forth here look well beyond the immediate circumstances of the post-exilic community. God's vision for them has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ and will be consummated when He comes. Thus, it has a great deal in common with New Testament teaching. As Christians we must not neglect this because it is difficult; we must embrace it because it is true!

Body:

- I. Context: the text leading up to Zechariah 4-6
 - A. Background:
 1. The Man: Zechariah's name means Yah remembers. (Yah is a shortened form of Yahweh.) He was the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. (Zechariah 1:1, 7; Nehemiah 12:4) Zechariah was both a priest and prophet who came at a time when God was in fact "remembering" His people.
 2. The Circumstances: As promised, God had delivered them from Babylonian captivity. When they returned, they began to rebuild the temple. (Ezra 3:8-13)
 - a. However, the people in the land quickly discouraged them and the building ceased. (Ezra 4:1-5, 24)
 - b. It is upon this occasion that Zechariah enters the scene. (Ezra 5:1-2)
 - 1) However, Zechariah's prophecy is much more than just encouragement to rebuild the temple.
 - 2) The prophet sees the temple and those that are leading the people to rebuild it as a type of something much greater. We must constantly keep this in view as we examine Zechariah's visions.

B. The Structure of the Visions: The eight night visions in Zechariah 1:7-6:8 are widely acknowledged to be one of the major literary divisions in the book. Some would include the symbolic actions recorded in Zechariah 6:9-15 as part of this section. This is done with good reason.

1. Dividing the book into two major sections, chapters 1-6 and 7-14 is indicated by the headings at 1:1 and 7:1.
 - a. “In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,” (Zechariah 1:1)
 - b. “In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.” (Zechariah 7:1)
2. The visions fall, fairly naturally, into two groups of four. The opening statements to each group indicate this.
 - a. “On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows: I saw at night, and behold...” (Zechariah 1:7-8)
 - b. “Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.” (Zechariah 4:1)
3. Baldwin suggests a chiasmic structure. (Baldwin, p. 80)
4. Visions 1 and 8 are clearly parallel.
 - a. Both feature four horses or groups of horses.
 - b. Both go to patrol the earth. (Zechariah 1:10; 6:7)
 - c. The first vision highlights God’s wrath at the injustice done to His people. (Zechariah 1:14-15) The last vision resolves that issue by appeasing God’s wrath in the land of the North. (Zechariah 6:8)
5. Visions 2 and 3 as well as visions 6 and 7 function together and have related themes.
 - a. Both pairs of visions begin with, “Then I lifted up my eyes [again] and looked and behold...”
 - b. The first pair of visions deals with God’s punishment of Israel’s enemies and God’s protection of Israel.
 - c. The second pair of visions deals with the punishment of the wicked in Israel and God’s removal of wickedness.
 - d. This pairing may be more structural than thematic. It is important to remember that the structure is meant to serve the message and not the other way around!
6. Visions 4 and 5 revolve around “the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:14)

C. **Introductory call to repentance. (Zechariah 1:1-6)** Zechariah begins his message with a powerful call to change.

1. He reminds them that their fathers had refused to hear God's prophets. Now their fathers are gone and even the prophets are gone. The one thing that endured was the word of God. Things had happened and continued to happen just as God said.
2. Just as we see in Haggai the people respond positively to this message. They repent and acknowledge that things are just as Zechariah has described them.

- a. This is a critical development in the book. It would have been pointless for Zechariah to move forward with God's vision for the future if his audience refuses to see the world from God's perspective.
- b. This is true for us as well. We need to adopt God's values and purposes if we are to understand what the prophet is saying.
3. From this point forward the tone of things changes. Zechariah records a series of visions in 1:7-6:8 which are intended to give hope and direction to the restoration community.

D. First Vision: The four horsemen patrol the earth. (Zechariah 1:7-17) This vision occurs four months after Haggai's final vision. The temple is still under construction.

1. While certain details of the vision are difficult, the main point is straightforward. The horsemen are sent to patrol the earth. They find that the nations who have punished God's people are at peace. Meanwhile, God's people struggle and suffer.
2. God is not pleased with this injustice. While he was only a little angry with His people the nations had "furthered the disaster" beyond the bounds of justice. God is going to begin to right this wrong by restoring the covenant blessings to Jerusalem.
3. As noted above there are clear parallels between this vision and the last of the night visions in Zechariah 6:1-8. In many ways the final vision is a resolution to the problem raised in this vision.

E. Second Vision: The four craftsmen punish Israel's enemies. (Zechariah 1:18-21) The second vision is directly connected to the first.

1. In the first vision God began to set things right by restoring Jerusalem.
2. In this vision God sends out "craftsmen" to "throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah."
 - a. The horns here seem simply to be indicative of power and not connected to the horns of an altar.
 - b. The craftsmen are significant in that they represent the workers who rebuild the temple. (cf. Exodus 28:11; 35:35; 38:23; 2 Kings 12:11; 22:6; 1 Chronicles 22:15; 29:5; 2 Chronicles 24:12; Ezra 3:7)
 - c. It is the restoration of the temple and the presence of God in the midst of His people that will ultimately defeat those who have oppressed them. This is precisely what the next vision asserts. (Zechariah 2:5)

F. Third Vision: God will dwell among His people and be a wall around them. (Zechariah 2:1-13) This third vision may be divided into two sections. The vision is found in 2:1-5. A corresponding divine oracle is found in 2:6-13.

1. In the vision, Zechariah sees "a man" going forth to measure the length and width of Jerusalem. An angel comes and tells the angel with Zechariah to go and tell the first angel to stop what he is doing. Walls will be inappropriate for Jerusalem for two reasons:
 - a. There will be so many people in Jerusalem that the city walls would not contain them all.
 - b. God will be a wall of fire around his people.
2. In the oracle that follows, God's people are encouraged to make a decision about who they will stand with.

- a. Many of God's people are still in Babylon. However, God is about to restore Jerusalem and punish Babylon.
- b. The time has come for them to make a choice. This choice will, necessarily, be based on faith. The nations are powerful, and God's people are weak and helpless. If they return it will be because they trust God.

G. Fourth Vision: Joshua is cleansed before the Lord. (Zechariah 3:1-10) In the fourth vision we find the High Priest Joshua standing before the Lord. With him is Satan who is there in the role of an accuser. The Lord rebukes Satan even though the accusations are evidently true.

1. Joshua's clothes are then changed from filthy garments to priestly robes.
2. Joshua is then told that if he walks in God's ways, he will govern God's house (temple).
3. Finally, God promises to bring in His servant Branch and through Him to cleanse and bless His people.
 - a. This is a particularly important aspect of the vision for us.
 - b. There is a straight line from the visions of Zechariah to the inauguration of the kingdom in the New Testament.

II. Fifth Vision: The lampstand and the olive trees (Zechariah 4:1-14)

A. The Vision: "Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it; also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.'" (Zechariah 4:1-3)

1. A number of questions suggest themselves immediately.
 - a. Where has the angel been?
 - b. What is the significance of the prophet being awakened?
2. Whatever we may speculate about these things, the important question is the one posed to the prophet, "What do you see?"
 - a. He sees a lampstand...
 - 1) The lampstand has been variously interpreted as having 7 lamps, 14 lamps or 49 lamps. (Klein, p. 155-156)
 - 2) In any case the imagery is drawn from the tabernacle / temple and as we will see the lampstand has the same significance in the vision as it did in the tabernacle / temple.
 - 3) The larger question is, "What does the lampstand represent?"
 - a) If we take Leviticus 24:1-3 and Revelation 2:5 together it would seem that the lampstand was a symbol of God's perpetual presence in the tabernacle / temple.
 - b) That is almost certainly the point here. The text certainly points us in that direction.
 1. "Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.'" (Zechariah 4:6)

2. "Then he said, 'These are the two anointed ones *who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.*'" (Zechariah 4:14, *emphasis mine*)

b. He sees two olive trees beside the golden lampstand, one on the right and one on the left. We will defer further discussion until the imagery is fleshed out in the question and answer portion of this vision.

B. Questions and Answers:

1. The First Question: "Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?" (Zechariah 4:4)
2. The First Answer: So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord." Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts. 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"" Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. "For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth." (Zechariah 4:5-10)
 - a. It should be noted that the use of "Spirit" is significant in this vision because it was the Holy Spirit who was the divine agent of presence in Israel.
 - 1) "In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old. *But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit;* Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them. Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? *Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,* Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, Who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; As the cattle which go down into the valley, *The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people,* To make for Yourself a glorious name." (Isaiah 63:9-14, *emphasis mine*)
 - 2) You, in Your great compassion, Did not forsake them in the wilderness; The pillar of cloud did not leave them by day, To guide them on their way, Nor the pillar of fire by night, to light for them the way in which they were to go. *"You gave Your good Spirit to instruct them,* Your manna You did not withhold from their mouth, And You gave them water for their thirst." (Nehemiah 9:19-20, *emphasis mine*)
 - 3) The point here is the same as it was in the wilderness and throughout the history of God's people. They are sustained and empowered through their relationship with God.
 - a) "But Moses said to the people, 'Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.'" (Exodus 14:13-14)

- b) “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:23-24)
- b. Several suggestions have been made with regard to the “mountain” in verse 7.
- 1) Some suggest that the mountain represents the ruins of the old temple which must be cleared away.
 - 2) A more likely interpretation is that the mountain represents any obstacle in the way of God’s purpose. (Smith, p. 206)
 - a) There certainly was opposition from a number of fronts:
 1. There was resistance from the people around them. (Ezra 4:1-5)
 2. The physical or earthly priorities of the people was also a barrier. (Haggai 1:2-11)
 3. Their discouragement in the face of the results of what they had done was another source of resistance. (Ezra 3:10-13; Haggai 2:2-3; Zechariah 4:10)
 4. Origen believed that the mountain here represented the devil. (Fragments on Jeremiah, 41, ACCoS, Vol. XIV. p. 245) As moderns, we are probably too quick to dismiss this approach.
 - b) This approach is consistent with other prophetic uses of this imagery.
 1. “A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. “Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;” (Isaiah 40:3-4)
 2. “I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them And rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, And I will not leave them undone.” (Isaiah 42:16)
- c. Zechariah declares that Zerubbabel has begun the temple and by the grace and power of God he will complete the temple. (Zechariah 4:8) That is plain enough!
- 1) The prophet tells those who discount what Zerubbabel and others have done not to “despise the day of small things.” It is evident that the very thing had happened. (Ezra 3:12; Haggai 2:3)
 - 2) Zechariah makes the point that God is pleased. Although he does it in a somewhat cryptic manner.
 - a) These Seven: The seven are defined for us. “...these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.” (Zechariah 4:10)
 1. This could be a reference back to Zechariah 3:9.
 2. Alternately, it is a reference to the seven lamps in 4:2.
 3. In any case the reference is to God’s seven-fold or perfect sight of all that goes on, Zerubbabel’s humble efforts are in keeping with the purposes of the omniscient God.

- b) The plumb line / stone of distinction: There is a question about the meaning of “plumb line.” The JPS translation reads. “...When they see the stone of distinction in the hand of Zerubbabel, they shall rejoice...” (Zechariah 4:10)
1. If plumb line is correct it is a reference to Zerubbabel’s building efforts.
 2. Stone of distinction may be a reference to the cap stone and thus a reference to the completion of the temple.
 3. Neither approach is without problems. However, the latter seems more likely. (cf. Zechariah 4:9)
3. The Second Question(s): “Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?” And I answered the second time and said to him, “What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?”” (Zechariah 4:11-12)
- a. This part of the vision has caused much consternation among commentators.
 - b. The natural interpretation would be to see the lampstand as a symbol of the presence of God. This is objected to by many because the lampstand is supplied by the olive trees. A number of things should be noted.
 - 1) The lamp in the tabernacle was a symbol of the presence of God and it was supplied with oil by the priests. (Leviticus 24:1-3)
 - 2) It has already been established that everything that is done will be accomplished by the strength that God supplies. (Zechariah 4:6) Therefore, any resources that come from the two anointed ones are supplied by God’s Spirit.
 - 3) Finally, the lamp is a symbol of the perpetual presence of God. That is precisely what Zechariah is encouraging Zerubbabel and Joshua to restore!
4. The Second Answer: “So he answered me, saying, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ Then he said, ‘These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.’” (Zechariah 4:13-14)
- a. A couple of interpretations have been suggested. One approach is to see this as a reference to Haggai and Zechariah. (Boda, *ad loc.*)
 - b. Given the centrality of Joshua and Zerubbabel in these visions, all other interpretations seem to ignore the obvious.
 - 1) Joshua and Zerubbabel are the ones who are leading the people in realizing the purposes of God. (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:12)
 - 2) Joshua and Zerubbabel represent God’s plans for the future. (Zechariah 3:8-10; 4:8-10; 6:11-15)
 - 3) Zerubbabel is associated with the Messiah in Haggai, Matthew and Luke! (Haggai 2:20-23; Matthew 1:1, 12; Luke 3:21-22, 27; 4:18)
 - 4) The offices of priest and king are to be realized in the Branch. (Zechariah 6:11-15) Joshua is the priest and, while Zerubbabel is no king, he is in the line of David.

C. Application Then:

1. Their success does not depend on their strength or resources.

- a. “The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength.” (Psalms 33:16)
- b. “Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.” (Psalms 33:20) (Klein, p. 159)
2. Zerubbabel and Joshua must continually maintain what they have done!
 - a. It will require that they empty themselves in the service of God’s eternal purpose.
 - b. Building the temple of the Lord is not an event but a process. It entails more than finishing the 2nd temple.
 - 1) This is evident in Zechariah 3:7 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.'”
 - 2) It is also made clear in the references to the Branch and in Zechariah 6:15!

D. Application Now:

1. “Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 4:6)
 - a. This is easily one of the best-known verses in Zechariah and with good reason.
 - b. This sentiment resonates throughout the New Testament.
 - 1) “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)
 - 2) “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.” (1 Corinthians 3:6-7)
2. We are the temple and we are building the temple!
 - a. “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)
 - b. “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.” (1 Corinthians 3:11-14)
 - c. The same point could be made from Ephesians 2:19-22 and 4:11-16.

III. **Sixth Vision: The flying scroll of divine judgment (Zechariah 5:1-4)**

- A. The Vision: “Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll.” (Zechariah 5:1)
 1. In this vision and the next one, Zechariah is shown the implications of what it means for a people to dwell in the presence of a holy God.
 2. Scrolls that declare judgment are a frequent symbol for the prophets. (Isaiah 30:8-11; Jeremiah 36:2-32; Ezekiel 2:4-3:7) The very sight of such a scroll may have seemed ominous.

B. Question & Answer: “And he said to me, “What do you see?” And I answered, “I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.” Then he said to me, “This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land; surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. “I will make it go forth,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones.”” (Zechariah 5:2-4)

1. The proportions of the scroll are immense, and it is flying through the air. One is reminded of an airplane with a banner streaming behind it for all the world to see.
 - a. Baldwin, Hailey and others have pointed out that the size of the scroll is the same size as the holy place in the tabernacle. (cf Exodus 26:15-28) (Baldwin, p. 126) It is also the same size as the porch on Solomon’s temple. (1 Kings 6:3)
 - b. Whether this is significant or not is not clear.
2. It is written on both sides.
 - a. The tablets of Moses were written on both sides. (Exodus 32:15)
 - b. Ezekiel’s scroll was also written on both sides. (Ezekiel 2:9-10)
 - c. As this was not typical of scrolls, the implication is probably that the curse is exhaustive or complete.
 - 1) The curse is connected with the covenant.
 - 2) Such curses are expressed in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. This is the consequence of violating the covenant.
3. Two specific curses are written on either side of the scroll.
 - a. One side deals with the thief. (3-4)
 - 1) This is a reference to the eighth commandment, “You shall not steal.” (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19)
 - 2) It may incapsulate the laws about our neighbor.
 - b. The other side deals with the one who swears falsely. (3-4)
 - 1) This is a reference to the third and ninth commandments.
 - a) “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” (Exodus 20:7)
 - b) “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Exodus 20:16)
 - 2) This, at least, includes the law about reverence for God.
 - c. It seems that these are examples of what is intended. Those who violate the law will be consumed by the law. It will come on them and their house.

C. Application Then:

1. Zechariah had called the people to repentance at the beginning of these visions. “Therefore say to them, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says the LORD of hosts. “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, “Thus says the LORD

of hosts, "Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." But they did not listen or give heed to Me," declares the LORD." (Zechariah 1:3-4)

2. This must not be forgotten! They must continue to "return to the LORD."

D. Application Now: It is easy for us to take sin lightly. Nothing in the New Testament would lead us to that conclusion.

1. We are the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-9 *et al.*)
2. Our call to holiness is no less stringent than theirs. (1 Peter 1:14-16)
3. We must constantly strive to be more like the Holy God who has called us!
 - a. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
 - b. "Now may our God and Father Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you; and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13)
 - c. "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)
 - d. Such references could be multiplied!

IV. Seventh Vision: Wickedness is carried away. (Zechariah 5:5-11)

A. The Vision: "Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth." I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah." Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens." (Zechariah 5:5-9)

1. The ephah with the lead cover:
 - a. Several commentators find moral significance in the ephah.
 - 1) "You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. "You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." (Deuteronomy 25:14-15)
 - 2) "Saying, "When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain, And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market, To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, So as to buy the helpless for money And the needy for a pair of sandals, And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" (Amos 8:5-6)
 - b. The lead cover is used by the angel to confine wickedness to the basket.
2. The woman inside: The woman inside is wickedness.
 - a. Wickedness is a woman. Different explanations are given.

- 1) Wickedness is feminine in the Hebrew and so represented by a woman. (Baldwin, p. 128-129)
 - 2) The woman is a Canaanite goddess. (Klein, p. 177) If Klein is correct we could again be faced with imagery that encompasses moral and religious transgression.
 - a) This position is supported by the fact that she is carried off to Shinar to be worshipped.
 - b) At the very least wickedness is venerated by the world.
 - b. Wickedness is powerless to resist the purpose of God.
 - c. This is undoubtedly a direct result of the previous vision. Wickedness is removed from the midst of God's people.
 3. The two-winged women: A number of students of Zechariah have observed the following:
 - a. The word for stork sounds like the Hebrew word for loyal or faithful.
 - b. They have the wind / spirit in their wings.
 - c. In any case they are carrying wickedness away.
- B. Questions & Answer:** "I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?" Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal." (Zechariah 5:10-11)
1. Zechariah only has one question, "Where are they taking the ephah?"
 2. The answer is suggestive! They are taking it to Shinar the figurative birthplace of worldly rebellion. (cf. Genesis 11:1-9)
- C. Application Then:** The theme of God purifying His people is frequent in this time period.
1. As it turns out there are two temples being built!
 - a. One is the temple in Jerusalem. The other is the temple in Shinar.
 - b. There is a choice demanded by this reality.
 2. In many ways this harkens back to what Zechariah said earlier: "'Ho there! Flee from the land of the north," declares the LORD, "for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens," declares the LORD. "Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon." For thus says the LORD of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye." (Zechariah 2:6-8)
- D. Application Now:** There is an ark in 1 Peter that seems to move in a similar direction.
1. We have the same exhortation: "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;" (Revelation 18:4)
 2. We have to choose!
 - a. We are either citizens of the earth or citizens of the kingdom of heaven.
 - b. We are either the harlot or the bride.
 - c. We cannot be both! This choice will affect every other choice. "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is,

seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” (Colossians 3:1-2)

V. Eighth Vision: The four chariots (Zechariah 6:1-8)

A. The Vision: “Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains. With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.” (Zechariah 6:1-3)

1. The four chariots are obviously reminiscent of the four horsemen in the first vision. The addition of chariots is an ominous indication of their purpose. This time they will go forth for something more than reconnaissance.
2. Two bronze mountains: If this were another context we might wonder about the mountains. However, given the subject, one is immediately reminded of the two bronze columns in front of Solomon’s temple. (1 Kings 7:15-22)
 - a. The name of one was Jachin – “he shall establish.”
 - b. The name of the other was Boaz – “in it is strength.”
 - c. Presumably these two mountains are before a greater temple than Solomon’s. We are told in verse 5 that they were “standing before the Lord of all the earth.”

B. Question and Answer: “Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’ The angel replied to me, ‘These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth, with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country. When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth.’ And He said, ‘Go, patrol the earth.’ So they patrolled the earth. Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, ‘See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north.’” (Zechariah 6:4-8)

1. The Four Spirits: Like the two anointed ones which were standing by “the Lord of the whole earth.” (Zechariah 4:14) These four “spirits of heaven” are going forth after “standing before the Lord of all the earth.” (Zechariah 6:5)
2. Like the horses in the first vision they go out to patrol the earth. (Zechariah 1:10; 6:7)
 - a. Some would amend the Hebrew text of verse 6 to say “to the east” instead of “after them.”
 - b. Whether they only departed north and south or northeast and south. They patrolled the earth.
 - c. At any rate, the emphasis is on the north. This is where Israel had been held captive and this is where God will “appease [His] wrath” on the enemies of His people.

C. Application Then:

1. God is a protector and vindicator of the righteous. This is especially true for those who are powerless.
2. “O LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.” (Psalms 10:17-18)
3. The nation judgments in Ezekiel, among other places, are a powerful testimony to this. (Ezekiel 25-32)

D. Application Now: God will vindicate His people. The New Testament resonates with this theme in the same way the Old Testament does.

1. “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—for our testimony to you was believed.” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10)
2. This has a number of practical implications:
 - a. The trials that we face in this world make us stronger. (Romans 5:3-5)
 - b. We do not need to return evil for evil, because God will vindicate us in the end. (Romans 12:17-21)
 - c. We should persevere to the end; knowing that God will deliver the faithful. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

VI. The Crowning of Joshua. (Zechariah 6:9-15)

A. The Crown: “The word of the LORD also came to me, saying, "Take an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon. "Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.” (Zechariah 6:9-11)

1. Zechariah is told to “take an offering from the exiles.” He is to take this offering to the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Presumably, Josiah is the one who will fashion the crown.
2. This is very similar to Exodus 25:1-9.
 - a. In Exodus they take a contribution from the people who have come out of Egypt.
 - b. In Zechariah they take a contribution from the people who have come out of Babylon / Medo-Persia.
 - c. In both cases as we see the result is the construction of the temple. (Exodus 25-40; Zechariah 6:12)
3. The crown is placed on Joshua the priest. Once again Joshua is used as a symbol. (cf. Zechariah 3:8ff) He is not the king, and he does not retain the crown. He points to something greater! He points, once again, to the Branch...

B. The Branch: “Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” (Zechariah 6:12-13)

1. Once again Joshua anticipates the One who is “Branch.” (cf. Zechariah 3:8-10)
2. Zechariah is told to proclaim three things about the Branch.
 - a. He will build the temple of the Lord. (Zechariah 6:12-13; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:19-22) This is a clear indication that the temple being built in Jerusalem is only a type of something far greater.

- b. He will be both priest and king in His temple. (Zechariah 6:13; Psalm 110:1-7; Hebrews 5:1-10; Acts 2:29-31)
 - c. He will unite the two offices. (Zechariah 6:13; Hebrews 7)
- C. The Reminder: “Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah. “Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD.” Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.” (Zechariah 6:14-15)
- 1. Two of the names listed in verse 10 are changed in verse 14. Heldai becomes Helem and Josiah becomes Hen. Helem means strength and Hen means grace or favor.
 - 2. The crown will be kept in the temple.
 - a. It will be a reminder in the temple. Clearly it is a reminder of God’s kingdom purposes realized through His Servant the Branch.
 - b. It is also a reminder that just as those who came from Babylon made a contribution to this crown so also will men come from far off to build the temple of the Lord!

VII. **Other Considerations:** What follows are a few notes on some issues that appear in multiple visions but are not addressed above.

- A. The Branch: An in-depth study of “the Branch” in the Old Testament is beyond the scope of this study. However, we will note some of the contributions that Zechariah makes to this messianic theme.
- 1. This terminology, with some variation first appears in Isaiah.
 - a. “In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.” (Isaiah 4:2)
 - b. “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:1-2)
 - 2. Jeremiah also uses this language: “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. “In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, “The LORD our righteousness.” (Jeremiah 23:5-6)
 - 3. Zechariah makes a significant contribution to this:
 - a. The Branch is going to be the means through which God will “remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” (Zechariah 3:8-10)
 - b. The Branch will also be both a priest and a king. (Zechariah 6:12-13)
 - 1) He will build the temple of the Lord.
 - 2) He will unite the two offices. He will reign on the throne as a priest!
- B. Then you will know: Fulfilled prophecy is a significant sub-theme throughout this part of Zechariah:

1. The book of Zechariah kicks off with this: “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers?...” (Zechariah 1:5-6)
2. The phrase, “Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me...” occurs throughout these visions. Interestingly, we do not see it in the latter half of the book.
 - a. “For behold, I will wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. *Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me.*” (Zechariah 2:9)
 - b. “Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and *you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.*” (Zechariah 2:11)
 - c. “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. *Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.*” (Zechariah 4:9)
 - d. “Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD. *Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.* And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.” (Zechariah 6:15)
3. It is helpful to summarize. We will know that the Lord sent Zechariah when the enemies of God’s people become plunder and the nations join themselves to the Lord. We will know that the Lord sent Zechariah when the temple is built and those who are far off come and help to build it.
 - a. Even a cursory reading of the latter history of Israel and the New Testament would indicate that this has indeed come to pass.
 - b. We should probably pay more attention to Zechariah than we have!

C. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord.

1. There is a surprising redemptive theme throughout these visions. It is surprising because from the first “the nations” are seen as enemies who have “furthered the disaster.” (Zechariah 1:15)
2. However, there is another group of people among the nations. It is those who recognize the glory of the Lord in His people and are drawn to it.
 - a. “Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.” (Zechariah 2:11)
 - b. “‘In that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.’” (Zechariah 3:10)
 - c. “Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.” (Zechariah 6:15)
3. The implications for us should be obvious!

Conclusion:

- I. The book of Zechariah in general and these visions in particular are a rich repository of hope and exhortation. With proper reflection they will inevitably expand our understanding God’s kingdom purposes and our role in it. We will also have a better and clearer understanding of the New Testament in consequence. To avoid Zechariah because it is difficult would be a real tragedy.

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