

# If The Lord's Not Our Shepherd, We're in Big Trouble

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**Text:** Zechariah 9-11

## **Introduction:**

- I. “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself...’Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:27, 32<sup>1</sup>)
  - A. I wish I had been walking alongside Cleopas and his fellow disciple when Jesus preached this sermon. It would have been a welcome heartburn to hear that message.
  - B. Or would that I had been a fly on the wall in Luke 24:44-45:
    1. ““These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures...”
  - C. What do you think Jesus said in these sermons? What passages in the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings do you think He explained? And wouldn't it be amazing to have the Lord personally open our minds to understand those Scriptures (or any, for that matter)?
    1. I am going to take an educated guess: at least one of the books Jesus explained was Zechariah. Since the gospel writers reference it during the triumphal entry, Jesus's instruction to His apostles, the institution of the Lord's Supper, Judas's betrayal, the crucifixion, surely Jesus included this book in His lessons.
    2. I wish I had heard those parts of the lecture because about the only thing modern students and scholars of Zechariah can agree on is how impossible it is to understand, especially chapters 9-14.
    3. Yet, after recounting all the different views people have, rehearsing all the disparaging comments previous commentators have made about how enigmatic and difficult the chapters are, and providing caveats about how humble and non-dogmatic we should be when explaining these chapters, they all give their opinion as if all right-thinking people should just see it their way. And, of course, I'll be no different.
- II. Zechariah 9-11 is set off as a self-contained unit of text within the book.
  - A. This section of text begins with the sectional marker, “The oracle of the word of the LORD...” (Zechariah 9:1).
    1. This particular marker is found only three times in Scripture: Zechariah 9:1; 12:1; Malachi 1:1.
    2. It is clearly a divisional marker in the latter half of the book of Zechariah marking off Zechariah 9:1-11:17 as a self-contained literary unit.
    3. By self-contained, I do not mean it is unconnected from the rest of Zechariah.
      - a. “The primary genre of most individual prophetic books is anthology. There are exceptions among the Twelve, but it is the general trait of Old Testament prophetic books. As anthologies, prophetic books are collections of oracles and associated subgenres—a literary collage representing, in some cases, decades of prophetic ministry. As such, most prophetic books are difficult to outline, as they belie logical, linear progression. Yet prophetic anthologies are not without structure. The collection of individual units that comprise most prophetic books do reflect thematic cohesion, often facilitated through repeated catchwords and

thematic content. Many prophetic books reflect repeated cycles or alternating panels of judgment and salvation” (Fuhr and Yates, *Message of the Twelve*, 28-29).

- b. Though it can be broken down into scenes, Zechariah 9-11 is one such oracle. The oracle is connected to the rest of the book and does have thematic cohesion with it, but it is its own oracle.

B. Though I pray I can communicate multiple lessons about and from this oracle of the word of the LORD, I hope to convey one point (which I see as the unifying theme of the four scenes of this literary unit) above all others:

1. **If Jesus Christ the LORD is not our Shepherd, we're in big, big trouble!**

### Body:

#### I. A PRELIMINARY WARNING

A. “Here there be dragons!”

1. I have read ancient map makers had a common device when they reached the edge of their geographical knowledge. With a picture, a flourish, and an arrow pointing off the edge of the map, they would write, “Here there be dragons!”
2. The warning: don't venture beyond what you know. It will likely destroy you.
3. Perhaps a warning should be placed at the beginning of Zechariah 9: “Here there be dragons!” We are venturing into dangerous and risky territory, bordering the limits of knowledge. If we do so without care, we will sail off the edge of God's map.
4. That being said, we of course need Columbuses, de Gamas, and Magellans who will take the risk and sail into the unknown. In the venture, new discoveries await us, but proceed with caution. For every Magellan there were, no doubt, a dozen sea captains whose names are completely lost to history and whose ships are lost at sea.

B. Remember the aim of our charge (a more biblical warning).

1. When Paul wrote to his protégé, Timothy, he began with a warning and a charge.
  - a. “As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions” (1 Tim 1:3-7).
  - b. Teachers of the law: νομοδιδάσκαλοι/nomodidaskaloi
    - 1) Paul does not say these persons “desire to teach the law.” He says they desire to be “teachers of the law.” They do not want to teach; they want a title. They do not want a responsibility; they want a rank. They do not want a work; they want award. They do not want to do something important; they want to be seen as someone important.
    - 2) In order to attain this position, they “devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.” After all, how better to demonstrate superior status than arguing the speculative, the esoteric, the mystical, the abstruse? Making deep, philosophical, complicated arguments about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin secures my place as a “doctor of theology” no

matter where I land on the issue. No one knows, no one can know, and no one can prove me wrong. They can only hear how deep, scholarly, intelligent, and intellectual I sound, and they cannot prove me otherwise. You and I can stand on opposite sides of the quarrel, but both take our stand among the ranks of scholars, teachers of the law, doctors of theology.

- 3) To add insult to injury, they did so “without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.”
- c. Paul repeatedly warned against this danger while training his successors.
- 1) “Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths” (1 Timothy 4:7).
  - 2) “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of great gain” (1 Timothy 6:3-5; perhaps here we see the reason they wished to be νομοδιδάσκαλοι, see also Titus 1:11).
  - 3) “Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called ‘knowledge,’ for by professing it some have swerved from the faith” (1 Timothy 6:20-21).
    - a) Do not be too quick to assume Paul is addressing Gnosticism. No doubt, the warning would apply to a false system of teaching which literally names itself “knowledge.”
    - b) However, in context, Paul is referring to the supposed νομοδιδάσκαλοι who do not know what they think they know and are trying to belittle Timothy and the Ephesians Christians into agreeing with them.
  - 4) “Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth” (Titus 1:13b-14).
  - 5) “But avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless” (Titus 3:9).
  - 6) “Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers” (2 Timothy 2:14)
  - 7) “But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene” (2 Timothy 2:16-17a).
  - 8) “Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels” (2 Timothy 2:23).
  - 9) “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).
- d. By contrast, he encouraged his trainees to pursue a different approach.
- 1) “...wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Timothy 1:18b-19a).

- 2) "If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed" (1 Timothy 4:6).
  - a) "These things" being the instruction of the previous two chapters: prayer, submission, spiritual maturity in godliness, receiving God's gifts with thanksgiving, the word of God, and prayer (sidenote: yes, the section of Scripture begins and ends with prayer, take note).
- 3) "Set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity...devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching...Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:12-16).
- 4) "Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith. Take hold of eternal life" (1 Timothy 6:11b-12a).
- 5) "But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1).
  - a) Please, note: issues of church organization, pattern for worship, the limits of congregational work, and doctrines such as these are, no doubt, part of sound doctrine. We must teach them. We fail in our work if we avoid them.
  - b) However, do not miss Paul's actual focus when he gave this charge: the behavior of older men, older women, younger men, and younger women who are members of God's household. Even his previous teaching on the eldership focuses more on the attitudes, behaviors, spirituality, and godliness of the men than it does on lining out the organizational structure of the congregation.
- 6) "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us" (Titus 2:7-8).
- 7) "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us" (Titus 2:7-8).
  - a) Yes, I included this passage twice. I wanted to stop you in your tracks because I know at this point, your eyes have glazed over and you are just reading through all these verses hoping to get to the "good stuff" about Zechariah.
  - b) I cannot stress enough how important this passage is. More than understanding all the prophecies of Zechariah twice over, understanding this passage will benefit us and those who hear us. Go back and read it again. Print it on a piece of paper. Tape it on your bathroom mirror. Tape it to the front of your Bible. Tape it to the lectern where you preach. Read it before every Bible study you have.
  - c) And, above all, read it before you engage on social media!
- 8) "Bondservants are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all

good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior" (Titus 2:9-10).

- a) Again, your eyes do not deceive you. Have you ever wondered why Paul talks about slaves out of the blue in this passage? It does seem straight from left field, doesn't it? Perhaps it is because slaves need special teaching to encourage them to remain faithful under the hardship of enslavement. If he didn't bring it up here, where would he? Other passages surely bear out the need for slaves to hear this teaching.
  - b) But perhaps Paul is not referring to the δοῦλοι (douloi, slaves/bondservants) of men, but to the Lord's own δοῦλοι (see 2 Timothy 2:24 below [I.B.1.d.13]).
  - c) In context, Paul is taking what everyone in his day believed was proper behavior for slaves/bondservants and applying it to the slaves/bondservants of the Lord; that is, to evangelists/preachers. While there is a sense in which all disciples are bondservants of the Lord, in these epistles, Paul treats Timothy and Titus, preachers and evangelists, especially as slaves and bondservants.
- 9) "The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people" (Titus 2:8).
  - 10) "Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).
    - a) See note about Titus 2:1 above [I.B.1.d.5)].
  - 11) "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - 12) "So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22).
  - 13) "And the Lord's servant (δοῦλος/doulos) must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness" (2 Timothy 2:24-25a; See Titus 2:9-10 above [I.B.1.d.8])).
  - 14) "I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching...As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5).
2. I repeat, remember the aim of our charge.
    - a. The aim of our charge is not to pull back the curtains of the cosmos and answer all eternal questions Christians can conjure. "The secret things belong to the LORD our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29).
    - b. The aim of our charge is definitely not to promote and position ourselves as the teachers and doctors of God's law (or prophecy), as the go-to guys for answering all the complicated questions. "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice" (James 3:16; see also Philippians 1:15-17).

- c. "The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Timothy 1:5).
- C. Why the need for this warning? And why make it so thoroughly before actually getting to the assigned topic of Zechariah 9-11?
1. Because the study and teaching of Zechariah, especially the second section of Zechariah (9-14), seems to me to be a seedbed for the kind of ignorant, speculative, selfishly ambitious, self-aggrandizement against which Paul warns.
  2. Consider a smattering of statements from commenters about various topics within the chapters we will discuss.
    - a. "Didymus the Blind begins his comments on Zech 11 with an idea echoed throughout the literature. 'Words that make announcements in a hidden manner are riddles. The text of the prophet before us, for example, is phrased in the manner of a riddle and proposes an obscure teaching.' 'Scholars regularly name this passage as one of the most difficult in the book.' 'As James Nogalski comments, 'To interpret the shepherd narrative in 11:4-17 is in many respects--to paraphrase Winston Churchill--to interpret an enigma wrapped in a riddle.' Eugene Merrill says, 'Chapter 11 is clearly one of the most difficult in all the book.' Carol Stuhlmueller goes further and places it 'among the most obscure passages in the OT'" (Seufert, *Allusions and the Messiah*, 218).<sup>2</sup>
    - b. "This prophecy is the most enigmatic in the Old Testament" (Driver, *The Minor Prophets*, 253).
    - c. "Scholars have already extensively discussed these questions, but no consensus has emerged so far" (Menken, *Old Testament Quotation in Matthew*, 310).
      - 1) This statement is specifically about Matthew's use of "thirty pieces of silver" and attributing it to Jeremiah.
    - d. "Beyond this, we can only speculate" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 28).
      - 1) This is merely about Zechariah's identity and parentage. And while Webb does a great job in his commentary, I couldn't help but include this statement because it describes so much of every discussion about Zech 9-11 and every topic within it.
    - e. "This chapter's difficulty, recited throughout the ages, makes it a prime candidate for a fresh view of the whole" (Seufert, *Allusions and the Messiah*, 219).
      - 1) This statement is about the shepherd sign-acts/allegories in Zech 11.
      - 2) While I greatly appreciate Seufert's article and found it very helpful, I distrust the notion that the reason a chapter demands a fresh view is because everyone who has studied it throughout history says it is hard and almost impossible to understand.
      - 3) Honestly, over and again it seemed to me commenters and writers took the southern "bless their heart" approach to writing about Zechariah and especially about these chapters. You've heard the approach. We can say whatever we want about someone, no matter how cruel, as long as we begin with "bless their heart." Writings about Zechariah often come off as if we are allowed to engage in all manner of unknowable speculation, scholar signaling, and cross-commentary quarreling as long as we start by saying, "Everyone agrees this is enigmatic, mysterious, and nigh impossible to understand...bless their hearts."

- 4) Repeatedly, commentators and article writers initiate their statements about these passages and questions within them with lists of all the theories scholars have had throughout the centuries. Then they discuss how hard the passage is and make a statement about lack of consensus. Then they proceed as if to say, "But all those are not enough, allow me to add my theory on top of the preceding list."
- f. "[Zechariah] is the longest and most obscure of all the Minor Prophets and is the most difficult of any of the Old Testament books to interpret. When this is recognized, one should approach an interpretation of it with prayer and humility, acknowledging his own limitations and knowing that he cannot afford to be dogmatic" (Hailey, *Minor Prophets*, 318).
- 1) Hailey's warning is apropos of the entire book, and even more of the section we take up in this paper. May we/I heed it.
  - 2) The Lord will judge us, our hearts, and our motivations. However, at times, these kinds of studies cannot help but come across as a desire to prove ourselves before the great cloud of scholars and take our place among them before the great cloud of students. We must all proceed with caution; we are handling dynamite.
3. Allow me a particular application of Paul's warning in 1 Timothy 6:20-21.
- a. "O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called 'knowledge,' for by professing it some have swerved from the faith."
  - b. I have no desire to be anti-intellectual. I fear there is too much of that among "us" as it is. However, I do not want to run in so much fear from being anti-intellectual that I become pro-intellectualism. Being intellectual in order to take our places among the intellectuals is a danger.
  - c. We must all study and know the Scriptures more deeply. But that is not the same as striving to take our place among and be seen as a scholar. We should pursue the study of truth wherever it leads us, even if it takes us away from our present fellowship of brothers and sisters or if it takes deeper within that fellowship.
  - d. However, in studying what the scholars call 2 Zechariah (Zech 9-14), I have seen a repeated approach to scholarship which I believe Paul is specifically warning Timothy, Titus, and us against.
    - 1) Some have begun to pursue knowledge and ceased to pursue God. In their pursuit, they have delved into extremely speculative aspects of "Bible study," developed theories even they know they can't prove, and then looked back at everyone else who doesn't follow them with disdain.
    - 2) Like biological naturalists and evolutionists who pepper their science-based arguments with pejoratives against creationists, these men sprinkle their writings with under-handed *ad hominem*s. They develop names and labels for all who won't follow them into their level of speculation. They convince people to walk with them not by the depth of their scriptural arguments but by the weight of their derision and scorn. "Only foolish fundamentalists would believe what you believe," they intimate. "The consensus of scholars is..." "The intelligent all know..." "No true Scotsman thinks as you do."
    - 3) A continual, repeated onslaught of this kind of subtle (and sometimes not so) attack takes its toll even on the most careful of students. I believe this is why Paul so often and so forcibly warned Timothy and Titus about these things.

None of us wants to be seen as foolish, backwards, ignorant, and stupid. We all want to know, therefore we are all susceptible to being taken in by what is called knowledge, even if it is falsely called that.

- e. If studying the actual Scriptures leads you to a different place from your present peers, so be it. Follow what God has revealed in Scripture and let every man be a liar. But, please, do not follow speculations about things no one can possibly know about Scripture and about which they actually have no actual, real evidence for simply because the scholars in their quest for something new and publishable have formed a consensus.

D. If these dangers exist, why proceed with the study on Zechariah 9-11?

1. Zechariah 9-11 is part of Scripture.
  - a. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
  - b. Paul doesn't say, "All easy-to-understand Scripture," but "All Scripture."
  - c. Though all admit Zechariah is hard to understand and Zechariah 9-11 is even harder to understand, and though we are walking in a minefield as we interact with the history of study and scholarship on this section of Scripture, it is still profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. If we ignore it, we will not be completely equipped for every good work.
2. God didn't include Zechariah 9-11 in Scripture so we could ignore it, but so we could work to rightly handle it.
  - a. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
  - b. We are always in danger of wrongly handling Scripture, even the ones we all agree are easy. Even discussions on and commentaries about Acts 2:38 are a minefield of false teaching and judgmental attitudes threatening to lure us away from God's truth. If we steered clear of every Scripture over which folks disagree, we might as well close our Bibles and tear down our lecterns.
  - c. Let us, therefore, having been warned of the dangers, do our best to present ourselves as workers who have no need to be ashamed. Let us learn to rightly handle Zechariah 9-11. Let us be taught, reproved, corrected, trained, and equipped.

## II. ASSUMPTIONS IN THIS LESSON

A. Scripture is Inspired by God.

1. I believe 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God..."
2. Additionally, I believe Zechariah is Scripture and therefore God-breathed.
  - a. Other studies will make the case for inspiration, this lesson assumes it and, therefore, asserts any approach to Zechariah or any part of Scripture treating them as purely of human origin is wrong.
  - b. Further, this lesson asserts any approach that claims God-breathed inspiration but is beholden to purely naturalistic theories about the origin and recording of Scripture is suspect.
3. Acts 4:24-25 encapsulates my understanding of inspiration.



- a. "Sovereign Lord,... who through the mouth of our father David your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage...'" (quoting Psalm 2:1).
  - 1) See in the above passage, God's message made known by the Holy Spirit through the instrument of David's mouth and pen.
- b. Inspiration is the publishing of God's message as the Holy Spirit works through men as His instruments of communication.
- c. The Holy Spirit does not always work miraculously to pass on God's message. Surely, when God wanted the world to know about the conversion of Matthew, the Holy Spirit did not need to miraculously reveal to Matthew how that occurred so it could be included in Matthew 9:9-13.
- d. By inspiration, I mean *God has in Scripture what He wants in Scripture*. Further, *God has organized Scriptures the way He wants them organized*.
  - 1) Certainly, part of man's present work is to study and compare manuscripts to better figure out what really is to be included in Scripture, and I am very thankful for those who develop this level of proficiency not only with ancient languages but with manuscriptal evidence to make educated choices about these matters.
  - 2) However, this work should be done with the actual manuscriptal evidence we have available, not with imaginary evidence of assumed but unknown and unseen sources.
- e. I appreciate Dallas Willard's assertions about the human and divine sides of inspiration:
  - 1) "On its human side, I assume that it was produced and preserved by competent human beings who were at least as intelligent and devout as we are today. I assume that they were quite capable of accurately interpreting their own experience and of objectively presenting what they heard and experienced in the language of their historical community, which we today can understand with due diligence" (Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 4).
  - 2) "On the divine side, I assume that God has been willing and competent to arrange for the Bible, including its record of Jesus, to emerge and be preserved in ways that will secure his purposes for it among human beings worldwide. Those who actually believe in God will be untroubled by this. I assume that he did not and would not leave his message to humankind in a form that can only be understood by a handful of late-twentieth-century professional scholars, who cannot even agree among themselves on the theories that they assume to determine what the message is" (ibid. 4-5).

B. With work, Scripture is understandable.

1. "There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3:16b-18).
2. Hard to understand and impossible to understand are not the same.
3. Scripture is not always easy to understand and takes work. The prophets are no exception. In fact, they likely take more work than the rest of Scripture.

a. “We noted in chapter 1 that there is a popular notion that everything in the Bible ought to be clear to everyone who reads it, without study or outside help of any kind. The reasoning is that if God wrote the Bible for us (for all believers), we should be able to understand it completely the first time we read it, since we have the Holy Spirit in us. Such a notion is simply incorrect. Parts of the Bible are obvious on the surface, but parts are not. In accordance with the fact that God's thoughts are profound compared with human thoughts (Ps. 92:5; Isa. 55:8), it should not be surprising that some parts of the Bible will require time and patient study to understand.

“The prophetic books require just such time and study. People often approach these books casually, as if a surface reading through the Prophets will yield a high level of understanding. This cannot be done with school textbooks, and it does not work with the Prophets either” (Fee and Stuart, *For All Its Worth*, 172).

4. That being said, I reject the notion that Scripture, once properly translated into a language the reader knows, can even then only be understood through the mediation of highly specialized scholars like priests of some mystical religion who have figured out seemingly secret insights, approaches, and methods of study from fields outside of simply knowing the Bible.

a. Dallas Willard tempers Fee and Stuart's statement, saying, “The Bible is, after all, God's gift to the world through his Church, not to the scholars. It comes through the life of his people and nourishes that life. Its purpose is practical, not academic. An intelligent, careful, intensive but straightforward reading—that is, one not governed by obscure and faddish theories or by a mindless orthodoxy—is what it requires to direct us into life in God's kingdom. Any other approach to the Bible, I believe, conflicts with the picture of the God that, all agree, emerges from Jesus and his tradition” (Willard, *Divine Conspiracy*, 5).

### III. THE ROLE AND WORK OF ZECHARIAH AS A PROPHET

A. “In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah...” (Zechariah 1:1).

1. Zechariah was a prophet. To understand his writing, we must understand his job.

B. Modern understanding of the nature and role of prophets has severely degenerated.

1. For many today, prophecy is little more than magic and the prophet a magician. I mean magic in the sense C.S. Lewis described it: “For the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality, and the solution had been knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. For magic...the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men” (Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 77).

2. For many, the prophet magically foretells the future, allowing those who listen to capitalize on insider information either for preservation from downfall or for propulsion to prosperity. Prophets peer into the future and predict coming events. If we can ferret out the secret interpretational code of their ravings and ramblings, we can treat the future as our servant, essentially conforming it to our wishes.

3. To this George Adam Smith replies: “In vulgar use the name ‘prophet’ has degenerated to the meaning of ‘one who foretells the future.’ Of this meaning it is, perhaps, the first duty of every student of prophecy earnestly and stubbornly to rid himself” (Smith, *Twelve Prophets*, 1.11).

C. Zechariah's First Job: Make the LORD Known

1. In the Old Testament, the epitome and touchstone of prophets is Moses, demonstrated by the LORD's rebuke of Aaron and Miriam: “Hear my words: If there is a prophet

among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD" (Numbers 12:6-8).

2. God made a distinction between how He revealed Himself to Moses and how He revealed Himself to other prophets. However, the unifying thought is God revealed Himself to prophets. "I the LORD make myself known to him..."
3. This reveals Zechariah's first, fundamental, and overarching job. *The job is not to make the future known to the people, but to make the LORD known to the people.*
  - a. Revisit the C.S. Lewis quote above (III.B.1). Zechariah's job was not to magically reveal the future, making it the servant of the hearers. His job was to faithfully reveal the LORD, making the hearers His servants.
  - b. Illustration: Consider Jonah's prophecy in Jonah 3:4: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"
    - 1) Did Jonah predict the future? No. Nineveh was not overthrown.
    - 2) Did the Ninevites treat Jonah's words as mere prediction? No. If they had, the proper response would have been to flee Nineveh.
    - 3) Jonah revealed God to them. In so many words, Jonah made known: "God has standards. You've violated them. He's coming to judge."
    - 4) The people, having come face to face with the reality of God, conformed their souls to Him through knowledge, self-discipline, and virtue. They repented. They changed themselves. They didn't use magical, insider knowledge of the future to preserve themselves or provide themselves prosperity. They used real knowledge of God to transform themselves.
4. With all this in mind, Philip Yancey describes his own experience reading the prophets and providing the reason to read them:
 

"As Abraham Heschel says, 'Impressive as is the thought that God is too sublime to be affected by events on this insignificant planet, it stems from a line of reasoning about God derived from abstraction' --and definitely not a line of reasoning derived from the prophets. As I studied them, and absorbed their passionate intensity, I came to realize how mistaken my early impressions had been. Those who have a fixation for prophecy-as-prediction, who read these seventeen books mainly to find out what will happen after A.D. 2000, may easily miss their greatest contribution. "Why read the prophets? There is one compelling reason: to get to know God. The prophets are the Bible's most forceful revelation of God's personality" (Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 180).

#### D. Zechariah's Second Job: Faithfully Make the LORD's Word and Will Known

1. "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen—just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And the LORD said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die'" (Deuteronomy 18:15-20).

2. This promise points to an ultimate prophet, The Prophet if you will (see John 1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40), fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah (see Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1-2; John 1:18, 14:8-9). However, between Moses and the New Moses, God raised up prophets to fill Moses's role of hearing from God on the people's behalf and speaking to the people on God's behalf.
3. Consider two aspects of this work.
  - a. Make Known the LORD's Word and Will
    - 1) God said of the prophets He would raise up: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."
    - 2) Again, the point was not to make the future known, but to make God's Word known. This often contained predictive elements because the way this was often done was to forecast coming blessings or curses depending on whether Israel would conform to God's Word and Will or not.
    - 3) Of course, after Moses, "make known" did not mean reveal new information about what God wants so much as it meant "call to mind what you should know because it's already in the Law and you already agreed to this covenant." In this way, the ongoing prophets were not so much covenant revealers, but covenant enforcers or reinforcers.
      - a) "The primary role of the prophets was to proclaim the word of God as 'covenant reinforcement mediators,' preaching to the people a message of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, reinforced through fresh and sometimes shocking rhetoric. Although the prophets refined and extended the details of covenant fulfillment, the basis of their message was nothing new, rooted as it was in the promises of the Mosaic covenant. Nevertheless, the way they framed the message was both new and innovative; their role was to get the attention of the people and to remind them of covenant obligations before the proverbial hammer dropped. In fulfilling this primary role, the prophets did fill a secondary role as foretellers of future things—but their prognostications were always set within the context of covenant obligation and fulfillment. They foretold the historical details of what would later take place as a result of Yahweh's covenant faithfulness and Israel's covenant unfaithfulness" (Fuhr and Yates, *Message of the Twelve*, 20; see also Fee and Stuart, *For All Its Worth*, 167-168; and Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 90).
  - b. FAITHFULLY Make Known the LORD's Word and Will
    - 1) This may seem like merely a repeat of the above point, but the need for the prophet's personal faithfulness, not only to heed the message but simply to faithfully proclaim it no matter what, needs to be separated out.
    - 2) God said of the prophets He would raise up: "And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die."
    - 3) Not to keep dividing into two points endlessly, but note two important points of faithfulness.
      - a) First, Zechariah was to be faithful to proclaim only the LORD's Word as the LORD's Word. He was not to speak in the name of other gods.

Further, he was to speak the words the LORD put in his mouth, Zechariah was not supposed to put his own words in the LORD's mouth.

- b) Second, Zechariah was to speak the Lord's Word even though some people wouldn't submit. In fact, while God's Word to Moses in Deuteronomy 18 simply allows for the fact some might reject it, most prophets preached knowing their hearers would reject it (see Isaiah 6:9-13; Jeremiah 7:27; Ezekiel 3:4-11).
1. Keep this in mind. It sets the stage for Zechariah 9-14. Haggai and Zechariah (in the first eight chapters) were exceptions to the prophetic rule. The people listened well to them when they encouraged them to rebuild the temple. But in Zechariah's two final oracles, he faced the rule. He had to faithfully preach even though the people would refuse to listen—and he knew from what was revealed they would refuse.
  2. As Barry Webb asserts, if by “success” we mean getting people to listen to and obey the prophet, we misunderstand the role and work of the prophet. “‘Success’, though, was never the measure of a true prophet, but faithfulness to God, and to the message that had been given him to speak” (Webb, *Zechariah*, 28-29).
  3. “Richard Foster repeats an old Jewish story about a little boy who went to a prophet and said, ‘Prophet, don’t you see? You have been prophesying now for fifteen years, and the things are still the same. Why do you keep on?’ And the prophet said, ‘Don’t you know, little boy, I’m not prophesying to change the world, but prevent the world from changing me’” (Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 193).

#### E. Zechariah's Third Job: Warn the People

1. Perhaps this is why prediction takes such prominence in people's perspective of prophets. Warning naturally looks to the future. God is coming. Will it be a curse of judgment on the people or will it be a blessing in triumph for the people?
2. We see this role spelled out most clearly in Ezekiel: “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, or from his wicked way, he shall die for his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. Again, if a righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits injustice, and I lay a stumbling block before him, he shall die. Because you have not warned him, he shall die for his sin, and his righteous deeds that he has done shall not be remembered, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the righteous person not to sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live, because he took warning, and you will have delivered your soul” (Ezekiel 3:17-21).
3. This third job is perhaps merely a restatement of the second. But we need to grasp its force and its burden and weight on Zechariah. The prophet's job is not, “If you speak, speak the LORD's Word.” The prophet's job is “You've been given the LORD's Word. Speak!” The prophet is not to use the communication from God as his own magic formula to see into the future to preserve himself from downfall or provide prosperity for himself. The prophet must tell others. He must speak.

4. As part of this job, we must keep Jeremiah 18:1-11 and the lesson of the spoiled clay in the potter's hand in mind.
    - a. "If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, and if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I intended to do to it. And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, and if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will relent of the good that I had intended to do to it" (Jeremiah 18:7-10).
    - b. This is an underlying, undergirding principle to be assumed with every promise and prophecy. When God promises blessing to a people even if He does not expressly state this caveat every time, if they turn to evil, He will relent from the blessing. At the same time, if God promises judgment and they repent, He will relent from the disaster He planned.
  5. We preachers should take this seriously. I imagine Paul had this warning in mind when he told Timothy to "keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Timothy 4:16).
- F. And so, George Adam Smith, whose frustration with modern misunderstandings about prophets we quoted earlier, provides a summation of the prophet's work and role, of Zechariah's work and role:
1. "He is a speaker for God. The sharer of God's counsels, as Amos calls him, he becomes the bearer and preacher of God's Word. Prediction of the future is only a part, and often a subordinate and accidental part, of an office whose full function is to declare the character and the will of God. But the prophet does this in no systematic or abstract form. He brings his revelation point by point, and in connection with some occasion in the history of his people, or some phase of their character. He is not a philosopher nor a theologian with a system of doctrine (at least before Ezekiel), but the messenger and herald of God at some crisis in the life or conduct of His people. His message is never out of touch with events. These form either the subject-matter or the proof or the execution of every oracle he utters. It is, therefore, God not merely as Truth, but far more as Providence, whom the prophet reveals. And although that Providence includes the full destiny of Israel and mankind, the prophet brings the news of it, for the most part, piece by piece, with reference to some present sin or duty, or some impending crisis or calamity. Yet he does all this, not merely because the word needed for the day has been committed to him by itself, and as if he were only its mechanical vehicle; but because he has come under the overwhelming conviction of God's presence and of His character, a conviction often so strong that God's word breaks through him and God speaks in the first person to the people" (Smith, *Twelve*, 1.12-13).

#### IV. THE MEANS AND METHODS OF ZECHARIAH AND THE PROPHETS

- A. "If you examine the Bible of even the most diligent students you may find a telltale band of white on the paper edges just over halfway through, a mark of cleanness indicating how seldom fingers touch the Old Testament prophets. Although those seventeen books fill about a fifth of the Bible's bulk, they tend to go unread. Why? I put that question to a Bible study class and a graduate student bluntly summed up the class's sentiments: 'The prophets are weird and confusing, and they all sound alike.' As I thought about his answers, I realized he had captured the very problems that kept me away from the prophets for many years" (Yancey, *Bible Jesus Read*, 171).
  1. This about sums it up, doesn't it? Let's face it. The reason we are studying Zechariah in our SITS conference this year is because it came up in last year's conversations

several times, and enough of us intimated we don't know much about it and haven't studied it, so Kevin decided to remedy that for us.

2. I admit, the reason I accepted this assignment is because I am weak in the prophets and the Book of the Twelve especially. Over the past few years, I've turned down multiple requests to present lessons in multi-speaker summer series on the Minor Prophets in the Tampa area because of that weakness. However, I realized if I never accept one of these assignments, I'm not likely to make the time to study them any better in my second 25 years of preaching than I have in my first 25. So here you go.
3. Why do we avoid them? They are "weird and confusing, and they all sound alike."

B. Therefore, before diving into Zechariah 9-11, let's have a crash course on some of the means and methods of the prophets and why the prophets used them.

(I highly recommend Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic by D. Brent Sandy. Usual caveats apply, of course. However, his book was enlightening to me and very helpful on the subject of Biblical prophecy in general. I want to reproduce the whole thing for you here, but this is a lesson about Zechariah 9-11, not prophecy in general. I will limit my section here to information about prophecy that will specifically help us as we approach our target text.)

C. Why so weird?

1. Zechariah 9-11 sounds much like all the prophetic books. It starts with imagery of kingdoms and nations being stripped bare and devoured by fire. But then moves to a command to Rejoice! And tells about a King riding on a donkey. Then the King who is supposed to be about peace goes about waging war. Just as it sounds like everything is going to be fruitful, God is angry and will punish some shepherds. (What? Where did that come from?) About the time we begin to think things are looking up for Israel, we learn Lebanon and Bashan have to open their doors for a consuming fire. Wait?! Isn't that where God just said He was gathering Israel? And there are those pesky shepherds again. This time they are wailing and their glory is ruined. Then Zechariah has to get a string of jobs as a shepherd. He "destroys" some shepherds? What is that about? He breaks some staffs. Then he wraps up with a woe on a worthless shepherd. But wait! The worthless shepherd is God's shepherd? That doesn't sound right.
2. Weird. Right? But why? Two main reasons.
  - a. Seeing from God's vantage point.
    - 1) "...the chief contribution of the prophets: they render God's point of view. God granted them (and, through them, us) the extraordinary vision to see past this world, dominated as it is by great powers and larger-than-life tyrants, to a different level of reality. We get a glimpse, a mere glimpse, of history from God's viewpoint. No wonder the prophets seem strange: we lack the capacity for seeing the world from the vantage point of timelessness" (Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 188).
    - 2) God reveals Himself to the prophet and the prophet reveals God to us. He reveals what God sees, how God sees. And here's the thing: God is not one of us. He sees differently. He experiences existence differently. He values differently. He thinks differently. We have trouble trying to understand things from our own spouse's perspective. How much more from God's?
    - 3) As God said through Isaiah, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

4) Let's face it, when this God strives to reveal Himself, His thinking, His perspective to us, it's going to get weird for us. And it will be confusing. But keep working at it, it will be worth it.

b. Shocking subjects call for shocking treatment.

- 1) "God's spokesmen will not give up. Their words crash against the stubbornness of the people again and again. It was as obvious then as now: ordinary and plain language simply was not enough for these prophetic sirens and flashing lights. Flashflood warning and summons to arms are not announced in unexpressive, humdrum diction. The words of the prophets were poignant and pregnant with meaning, because the subject matter called for the most vivid words possible" (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 23).
- 2) We're not talking about the Super Bowl here. We're talking about God breaking into the world for blessing and cursing, for reward and punishment, for life and death. We keep saying "weird," but maybe the better word is shocking. The prophets speak in ways that shock our system and our sensibilities. But they do so because their topics are shocking. They do not want us to miss them. They want to grab our attention and demand our thought.
- 3) Leland Ryken describes the literary genre of prophecy as "Visionary Literature." He then explains: "Visionary literature, with its arresting strangeness, breaks through our normal way of thinking and shocks us into seeing that things are not as they appear. Visionary writing attacks our ingrained patterns of deep-level thought in an effort to convince us of such things as that the world will not always continue as it now is, that there is something drastically wrong with the status quo, or that reality cannot be confined to the physical world that we perceive with our senses. Visionary literature is not cozy fireside reading. It gives us the shock treatment" (Ryken, *Bible as Literature*, 170).
- 4) Shocking things are coming. Better to be shocked into action now by reading about them than shocked when the judgment comes and it's too late.

D. Overwhelming the senses.

1. If the prophets are pulling back the veil of the heavens and giving us a different perspective, we should expect things to look different from the ordinary. "Visionary literature pictures settings, characters, and events that differ from ordinary reality. This is not to say that the things described in visionary literature did not happen in past history or will not happen in future history. But it does mean that the things as pictured by the writer at the time of writing exist in the imagination, not in empirical reality" (ibid. 165).
2. As mentioned in the Introduction.II.A.3.a, the prophetic books are themselves more like anthologies. They are collections of oracles, visions, revelations, sign-acts, parables, etc. The goal of the prophetic books is not so much to share a long, overarching narrative (though there usually is thematic cohesion across all the bits and pieces) as it is to overwhelm our senses with shocking flashes. They push us in one direction, then pull us in another. We are to learn something from the juxtapositions.
3. As such, Ryken goes on to tell us more about this visionary literature: "The element of the unexpected extends even to the structure of visionary literature. I will call it a kaleidoscopic structure. It consists of brief units, always shifting and never in focus for very long. Its effects are similar to those of some modern films. The individual units not only keep shifting, but they consist of a range of diverse material, including



visual descriptions, speeches that the visionary hears and records, dialogues, monologues, brief snatches of narrative, direct discourses by the writer to an audience, letters, prayers, hymns, parables. Visionary elements, moreover, may be mingled with realistic scenes and events" (Ibid. 170).

4. While the oracle of Zechariah 9-11 should be seen as one of the entries of Zechariah's prophetic anthology, the oracle contains its own set of shifting, "kaleidoscopic" scenes.
5. This is all designed to grab us, shake us, overwhelm us.

#### E. Prosecution and Persuasion over Prediction.

1. Do you know the feeling? You've spent hours, days crafting a message to present to the flock you serve. You know God calls us/them to action. You rally all your persuasive tools to rock the brothers and sisters off center to get out of the pews and get working in some aspect of discipleship. On the way out the door, some well-meaning brother or sister compliments you by saying, "Great sermon, preacher! That really gave me a lot to think about." Obviously, we want our brothers and sisters to think. But the purpose of the lesson was not to give the brothers and sisters something to think about, but something to do. (P.S. In the above situation, don't correct the brother or sister, just say, "Thank you.")
2. In like manner, as seen in the previous section on Zechariah's work as a Prophet, prediction is one of the tools prophets use, but prediction is not the main goal. The predictive elements of prophecy are submissive to and in service of the goals of prosecution and persuasion. Prophets are not trying to get people to know some things, but to change some things. Namely, to change their own behavior.
3. "Prophecy was also persuasion. Though the jury's verdict had already been announced, the judge offered the opportunity of repentance until the last moment, when the guillotine of his wrath would fall on the necks of the disobedient. If the prosecutors could persuade people to change their ways, there would be an outpouring of God's loving blessing instead. With God there are always two options: wrath and love" (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 131). Sandy is right, no doubt. However, at the same time, God was also making sure the people who would refuse to listen knew they were without excuse. Consider Isaiah 6 in this regard.
4. "The biblical prophets wrote about the times in which they lived, and prediction was less important than warning and exhortation. They believed themselves to be commissioned and inspired by Yahweh to speak his word to their contemporaries--to point them away from their foolish and corrupt ways and to show them true religion and morality" (Mellor, *Reading the Prophets Today*, 24).
5. In the previous section about Zechariah as a Prophet, we learned the first question we should be asking as we read any prophet: What do we learn about God? Now we learn the second: *What is the prophet trying to get his audience to do?* We should ask both these questions before asking, "What does the prophet tell me about the future?"
6. Admittedly, the prophet pursues the goal of prosecution and persuasion, striving to get his audience to repent, using really outlandish, shocking, over the top language, pictures, and proclamations. They are all so hard to process. How can we know what we are being asked to do? I like the way D. Brent Sandy illustrates this principle, showing we actually understand this concept in everyday experience. Take this illustration and apply it to reading the prophets. See if it doesn't help.
  - a. "Language may be informative as a channel for the exchange of data or ideas between people. But more often speakers intend their communication to have a particular impact on listeners. A wife telling her husband about a busy day caring

for three children may say something like this: 'Today I lost my sanity. Everything imaginable went wrong. I was so mad at the little dinosaurs I wanted to bite their heads off. I'm going shopping. And I may never return.' The vividness of her language, with its metaphors and hyperbole, reveals intense emotion beneath her words. Her communication is much more than informative. She is probably eliciting sympathy and prompting her husband to take action that would ease her stress. She is at least clearly stating that the children are his responsibility for the rest of the evening" (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 81).

- b. Let's be honest. The mother likely had her usual sanity all day long. She never intended or even literally thought about biting her kids' heads off. She had every intention of returning home at the end of her shopping trip. Was she lying? Of course not. Neither are the prophets lying when they say things but aren't speaking literally. Like this wife and mother, they are not so much striving to convey information, they are striving to elicit response and provoke or modify behavior. And despite the over-the-top language, we have little trouble figuring out what it is.
- c. Sandy returns to the above mother to make this point: "Communication often is performative. The intent is to produce some action in the hearer. On the surface the frustrated mother is not asking her husband to do anything, but in reality she is. By children and parents, teachers and preachers, words are used to produce change in hearers" (ibid.).
- d. Let me take another run at this, using illustrations from my own experience. My dad, bless his heart, said some graphic things to me as a child.
  - 1) "Boy, if you don't stop that, I'm going to rip your arms off and beat you with the bloody ends." "Son, if you do that again, I'm going to rip your head clean off and spit in it." "Edwin, you better straighten up or I'm going to knock you into the middle of next week." Or my all-time favorite, "You ever do that again and I'll put my foot so far up your rear you'll be shining my shoes when you brush your teeth."
  - 2) I never once felt threatened. I did not fear for my arms, my head, or my missing week. I admit, I sometimes feared for my rear, but I always knew if my dad did that thing with his foot, it would be almost as inconvenient for him as me. My dad never intended to do any of those things, and I never once feared he would. Was my dad lying? No. Were these empty threats? Like when the mother who can't get her six-year-old to head to the car threatens to leave him? No. Perhaps I can't say my Dad meant what he said, but he did mean what he meant, and I knew exactly what he meant. He meant for me to change my behavior or things would happen I didn't like.
  - 3) I can tell you what the literal events were those figurative threats represented. Sometimes they referred to spankings, sometimes grounding, sometimes loss of privileges, sometimes moving a pile of bricks, sometimes digging a hole to fill it back up and re-dig it, sometimes pulling nails from a pile of wood we had in the garage. Once it meant writing 10,000 sentences (I can tell you, during that one I almost asked him to just pull my arms off and beat me with the bloody ends).
  - 4) But when my dad said those things, was he hoping I would figure out what the literal punishments behind the graphic and extreme hyperboles would be? Of course not. He wasn't trying to inform me. He was trying to persuade me to change my behavior. Sometimes it did. Sometimes I found out what

ripping my head off and spitting in it meant “this time.” I assure you, it never involved saliva or tearing flesh.

- e. Be aware the struggle this produces for us in reading all prophecy and especially Zechariah 9-11. When we fixate on the prediction over the persuasion, we miss the point. Not only that, when we fixate on trying to figure out the literal events behind the figures, we may still be missing the point. That is not to say there are never literal events behind the figures. Sometimes there are. However, the person who repents and submits to the LORD because of Zechariah 11 but has no idea who are the three shepherds of vs. 8 is far better off than the scholar who correctly identifies those three people but rejects the Lord as shepherd.

#### F. Translucence vs. Transparency

1. Definitions:
  - a. Transparent: “a (1): having the property of transmitting light without appreciable scattering so that bodies lying beyond are seen clearly...b: fine or sheer enough to be seen through” (merriam-webster.com).
  - b. Translucent: “1: permitting the passage of light: a: transmitting and diffusing light so that objects beyond cannot be seen clearly” (merriam-webster.com).
2. One of the most helpful principles Sandy presents in *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* is the contrast between prophetic transparency and prophetic translucency. He explains prophecies always mean something and God always means what He means. God will always do what He promises. But some parts of prophecy are translucent rather than transparent. Sometimes they are not given to transparently tell us the literal events, but rather to give us enough of a picture to be persuaded, as the last point explained.
  - a. He applies this concept to
    - “Predictions of Judgment
    - “Transparent: The *fact* of God’s judgment on sinfulness is clear.
    - “Translucent: Details about *how* judgment will occur may be unclear” (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 139).
3. Consider an example of translucent prophecy, though this time about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit instead of judgment. Below is my explanation, but it is prompted by Sandy using it as one of his illustrations.
  - a. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls” (Joel 2:28-32).
    - 1) What is transparent? God plans to bless His people. When He does, it will be amazing.
    - 2) What is translucent? Just about everything else. Seriously, if you didn’t know anything else about this passage, what would you expect to happen in order to fulfill it? God had guided His people with columns of fire and smoke before. Do you expect that to happen again? God had literally turned

the Nile to blood, could He literally turn the moon to blood? Do you expect the moon to simply turn red? Would orange count? Do you expect it to become liquid and fall from the sky? God had made darkness occur over Egypt. Do you expect that again?

b. We are told by an apostle when this prophecy is fulfilled.

- 1) In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit descends upon the 12 apostles (some believe on the 120 disciples). This is manifest by tongues of fire descending on their heads and by them speaking in foreign languages they haven't studied. In Acts 2:13, some witnesses suggest the tongue-speakers must be drunk.
  - 2) Peter responds, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel..." (Acts 2:14-16). Then he proceeds to quote almost the entire prophetic passage listed above.
  - 3) If Peter hadn't told us the Spirit's work on the day of Pentecost fulfilled the Joel 2 promise, would you have read the events and said, "Oh man! Joel 2 is being fulfilled right in front of me"? Even with Peter saying it, most of us claim the fulfillment isn't just the day of Pentecost. After all, even if we believe it is the larger group of 120 disciples, it is hard to make that group into "your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." But Peter doesn't say, "This is the beginning of what was uttered by the prophet Joel." He just says, "This is that." While you may push back, I imagine if nothing else happened with the Holy Spirit after Acts 2, we'd all say, "But Peter said it was fulfilled."
  - 4) Even if Peter means the Joel prophecy is beginning to be fulfilled on Pentecost but encompasses the entire New Testament era, what is this "all flesh" business? Not even all Christians spoke in tongues or prophesied or dreamed dreams. Some suggest "all flesh" means merely on both Jews and Gentiles. Would one Jew and one Gentile fulfill this prophecy? How many of each before we would say, "Yeah, that's all flesh"? We may be right about the Jew/Gentile meaning, but the prophecy itself could just as easily mean "all flesh." Oh, and is that just human flesh. I'd imagine so. But then I remember Balaam's donkey. And what about the sun turned to darkness and moon to blood? That doesn't even sound like a blessing. While it is transparent that blessing is on its way. The actual means of blessing was translucent.
  - 5) What does this make "the Day of the Lord" in Joel's prophecy? Is that particular Pentecost the Day of the Lord? Joel seems to be suggesting when the outpouring happens, the Day of the Lord is near. Was it 40 years near? Or 2000 years near? The Day of the Lord was coming-Transparency. When?-Translucency.
4. Sandy provides some insight into Translucency in prophecy.
- a. "The pronouncements of judgment and their fulfillment in the former prophets provide key insight for interpreting prophecies yet to be fulfilled. The already fulfilled prophecies demonstrate a pattern of translucence rather than transparency. The intent was apparently not to give specific information about the future. Rather than predict with precision, the prophets sought to prosecute with power. But even then it had not been possible to know before fulfillment what would be fulfilled transparently" (Sandy, *Plowshares*, 146).

- b. Sandy gives seven ways or reasons which the written prophecies produce translucency instead of transparency. I will list them here and reiterate my recommendation to read the book for further explanation.
- “Statements in a prophecy that are qualified by subsequent statements create *a measure of uncertainty about fulfillment*.”
  - “Imagery and metaphor in prophecy are *inherently translucent*.”
  - “Prophecies may be translucent because of *incomplete or enigmatic information*.”
  - “Prophecy may employ *stereotypical language of judgment*, leaving the fulfillment uncertain.”
  - “Prophecies may conceal *long spans of time* implicit within them.”
  - “Prophecies may be translucent because they *appear to predict something that does not come about as expected*.”
  - “Prophecies that are given *in poetry* are likely to be translucent.” (Ibid. 147-150).
- c. “This... highlights an important characteristic of prophecy and apocalyptic: it is a stained-glass window, not a crystal ball. Under divine inspiration, the sanctified imagination of the biblical prophets communicated the themes of God’s future judgment and blessing with vivid images. Look at the image and admire it, but do not attempt to see through the stained glass to what is off in the distance. The function of the prophets’ language was to draw attention to basic ideas about the future, not to reveal precisely what will happen and when it will happen” (Ibid. 184).

#### G. Prophecy is for Today, not Tomorrow.

1. Neither Zechariah nor any other prophet was trying to tell their audiences to look for some day in the near or distant future when they would see a sign to signify the time to change their behavior. Prophecy was intended to change behavior immediately. The claim God would come as King and take residence some day in Judah did not mean, “Watch for the signs of His coming and start submitting to Him then.” It meant, “God is King! Submit to Him now.”
2. Even the Messianic prophecies were not intended to say, “Wait for the Messiah and when you start to see some of these predictions being fulfilled, start serving God. Rather, they were intended to say, “Start serving God now. When the Messiah comes, you’ll be ready.”
3. “Kathleen Norris, who lives in the farm country of South Dakota, speaks of ‘next-year-country,’ a landscape farmers know well: *next year the rains will come, next year hail won’t fall, next year winter will hold off a few weeks*. Yet, continues Norris, she doesn’t know a single farmer who uses the idea of ‘next year’ as an excuse not to get out and do the work needed now. She adds that maybe we ought to use prophetic literature in the same way: ‘not as an allowance to indulge in an otherworldly fixation but as an injunction to pay closer attention to the world around us’” (Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 187).
4. Yancey also quotes from Hans Küng’s *On Being Christian*, contrasting Jesus with what he called apocalypticists. Without getting distracted by the terminology, the contrast gives us great insight into how the original audience and we should relate to all prophecy, including apocalyptic prophecy: “The apocalypticists asked about the kingdom of God, the absolute future, in the light of the present situation of man and the world. That is why they were so concerned about the exact date of its arrival. Jesus takes the very opposite line: he asks about the present situation of man and the world

in the light of the imminent advent of God's future kingdom. That is why he is not concerned about the time or manner of the arrival of God's kingdom'" (Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 187-188).

- a. In other words, don't ask the question, "Considering how everyone is living, when will judgment occur?" Rather, ask the question, "Considering judgment is coming, how will I live today?"
5. As we read the prophets, whatever we discover about their literal, historical fulfillments, whether they are already fulfilled or we still await them, let us approach the prophecies the same way the original audiences were to approach them. How should we live now based on these prophecies? "The prophets were real people, living in real situations, and it helps to understand their message if we get to know them in their context. But paramount in reading their words is the need to be open to the relevance of their message to us and to our own times, and to apply it to our own lives" (Mellor, *Reading the Prophets Today*, 24).
6. Finally, Richard Patterson made a brief but all-encompassing statement: "Prophecy is designed to be relevant to everyday life" (Patterson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, 299).
  - a. Zechariah's prophecies were not intended to prompt his audience to postpone their response or to plan to live a certain way some day in the future. He intended to produce repentance and submission right then, when they heard the message. Reading prophecy should do the same for us now.

## V. WHY DID THE LORD CALL ZECHARIAH TO PROPHECY?

### A. Early Ministry of Zechariah

1. Ezra 5-6 spells out precisely why God called Zechariah to prophecy in his early days of ministry.
  - a. As the LORD had promised, His shepherd, Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), released the Israelites from captivity, allowing any who would to return to their homeland in about 537 BC (2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). Further, he commissioned the returning Israelites to rebuild the house of the LORD.
  - b. However, though the Israelites quickly laid the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3), the locals thwarted their attempts to keep building. The Israelites returned to their homes, towns, and villages. They got used to an incomplete temple. They went back to life as usual.
2. After about 20 years, the LORD sent His Word to Haggai and Zechariah to call the people to repentance. They had worked on their private dwellings enough. It was time to invite the LORD to dwell among them again by completing His house.
3. Shockingly, the people responded. They obeyed. They rebuilt the temple despite opposition. I say "shockingly," because as asserted earlier in this lesson, the Israelites almost never accepted the Word of the prophets. The ministry of Haggai and the early ministry of Zechariah were exceptional.
4. In the sixth year of Darius I Hystaspis, the temple was completed and the people celebrated with great joy (see Ezra 6:13-18).

### B. Latter Ministry of Zechariah

1. "In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev" (Zechariah 7:1). This is the last time stamp we have for Zechariah's prophecies. It was about the midway point of the temple

construction which lasted from the second year of Darius to the sixth (see Ezra 4:24; 6:15).

2. Zechariah 9:1 clearly starts a new section of the book. The phrase "The oracle of the word of the LORD..." is found only here, 12:1, and Malachi 1:1. Something is certainly new and different about this section of the book. In addition to the double use of this unique heading, the prophet is no longer named, time stamps are no longer used, other people are no longer named.
3. The mention of "my house" in Zechariah 9:8 and the reference to the drenched corners of the altars in 9:15, both suggest the temple has been completed and its sacrifices been restored. Of course, that could be prophetic certainty, naming a thing as if it has already happened when it hasn't yet. However, that the prophet was able to throw the thirty pieces of silver into the "house of the LORD" in 11:13 makes certain the temple has been completed.
4. The mission to have the temple rebuilt has been accomplished, Haggai is apparently allowed to retire, but Zechariah is "recalled."
5. Considering the state of Israel following the return and the rebuilding of the temple, I'm not surprised a prophet was needed.

### C. Former prophets

1. "The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us'" (Zechariah 1:2-6).
2. God had sent former prophets to Israel and Judah. The prophets warned of coming calamity and terrifying judgment if Israel and Judah would not repent (see Jeremiah 25:3-11, et al). But Israel and Judah ignored those prophets. The prophets did not live forever, but the Word God sent through them did. That Word overtook Israel and Judah. Israel was conquered and her inhabitants deported by Assyria. Judah was conquered and her inhabitants deported by Babylon.
3. However, the same prophets who had warned of complete calamity also promised resplendent restoration.
  - a. In Isaiah 54, the prophet proclaimed the children of the desolate one would end up being more than the married. The tent of the people would have to stretch out and expand because the people would be too many for the land. The city would be rebuilt with precious stones. They would be restored in righteousness, but more than that, they will be far from oppression. No weapon fashioned against restored Israel would succeed.
  - b. In Jeremiah 30-32, the prophet proclaimed though punishment and destruction lay before Judah, the days would come when the LORD would restore her fortunes. He would make a full end to the nations that scattered them. The city and the palace would be rebuilt. The children would be as of old. Even the prince would return. The people would be fruitful. The land would be fruitful.
  - c. In Ezekiel 10, the prophet saw a vision of the LORD's glory abandoning the temple, Jerusalem, and Judah. However, in Ezekiel 39:25ff, the LORD began to

restore Israel. From chapter 40 to the end of the book, Ezekiel sees a vision of a cosmically restored temple. In 43:1-5, the glory of the LORD returned to the temple. In Ezekiel 44, the LORD's entry gate was to remain shut, except for the prince. In chapter 47, a river of water, no doubt a river of life, flows from the temple. In the rest of the book the land is divided among the people in perfected portions.

4. The problem is the return and even the rebuilding of the temple did not look like these former prophets promised.

#### D. The Return

1. When Israel escaped Egypt, there were 603,550 men twenty years and up (Numbers 1:45-46). With wives, widows, and children we're looking in the millions of people. After God had killed an entire generation in the wilderness and then asked for a recount, the same demographic measured 601,730 (Numbers 26:51).
2. When Zerubbabel and Joshua brought the remnant out of Babylon, they numbered 42,360 (Ezra 2:64) plus slaves. If that registers the same demographic as the Numbers censuses that's about 7% of the size of the Exodus and conquest.
3. However, Ezra 2:2 claims to count the "number of the men of the people of Israel." Adding together the numbers listed from 2:2-63 gets about 27,000. Of course, there are a significant number of "sons" named but not numbered (2:43-57). Perhaps that makes up the difference. Or perhaps when it says "whole assembly" in Ezra 2:64, it really means the whole assembly, men, wives, children. Add in the slaves and the number comes to 50,597. Taking a conservative 2 million for the total of the final census in Numbers (that's essentially claiming only 80% of the men were married, each couple had two children, and there were no widows), this return from Babylon was only 2.5% of the size of the nation that conquered the Promised Land in Joshua's day. Granted, the Judah conquered by Babylon was a much-diminished nation even at that point. The Northern kingdom had siphoned off the great majority of the original population, and then had been conquered and deported themselves.
4. The refugees returned to their homeland and established the community known in the Persian period as Yehud (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 15-16). "The Yehud that Zechariah knew was a far cry indeed from the Judah of the past. It was a small province, roughly 55 kilometres from north to south, and 65 east to west, with a population of (at most) about 50,000—less than half that of Judah before the disaster of 587 BC. Jerusalem itself, where the destruction had been worst, was still sparsely inhabited. It was a relatively small community, with a lot of problems" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 24).
5. "Archaeological data for the era are sparse as well, but one thing seems fairly certain: the land belonging to the postexilic community consisted of the ruined city of Jerusalem to Beth-zur in the south was less than twenty-five miles. According to an estimate by M. Broshi, the population of Jerusalem was likely no more than 4,500 as late as the time of Nehemiah. W.F. Albright put the population of Judah as a whole at less than 50,000" (Redditt, *Date of Zechariah 9-14*, 670).
6. "All indications are, therefore, that life in Yehud was difficult. Its people lived daily with the painful contrast between the glories of the past and the humiliations of the present. Very little of what the returnees had eagerly expected had been realized" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 26).
7. I've tended to romanticize the whole notion of return. Who wouldn't want to get back to their homeland? However, recall the advice given to the exiles in Jeremiah's letter recorded in Jeremiah 29:4-7.



- a. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find welfare."
- b. I realize, of course, when they initially received this letter, they did not accept it. But when the defeat was final, the temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem was in ruins, what choice did they have? The families lived in captivity for 70 years. The 10-year-olds taken into captivity were 80 when the release occurred. Some that age did return because some who saw the foundation of the temple knew it didn't measure up to the original.
- c. But for the majority who returned, Judah was homeland only by reputation. It was homeland only because parents and grandparents repeatedly passed on the notion it was. For most of these, homeland was where they had been in captivity. And a "return" to Judah wasn't going home, it was a renewed displacement.
- d. With that in mind, Victor Matthews gives us a reasonable assessment of the kind of people who made the return: "Despite Second Isaiah's rallying cry for the exiles to return to Zion, the question that stuck in the minds of most of them was, why should we leave all that we have created here and go back to Judah? During the seventy years of the exile, they had followed Jeremiah's advice (Jer. 29:5-6) by starting businesses, purchasing land, and establishing their families in a new country. If they chose to return to their homeland now, they could expect to start over in a place where large sections of land had lain uncultivated for generations. It would have taken hardy persons with a strong vested interest or those of real religious conviction or adventure to make the decision to go back. As it was, the majority chose not to leave. But in a series of waves starting about 535 (Ezra 1) and over a period of nearly one hundred years, perhaps 15 percent of the exiled community returned to Judah" (Matthews, *Social World*, 182).

#### E. Jerusalem

1. An attempt to assess Zechariah's age.
  - a. Zechariah is not named in the lists of refugees who returned with Zerubbabel in either Ezra 2 or Nehemiah 12. However, according to Nehemiah 12:4, one of the priests and Levites who returned with Jeshua (Joshua in Zechariah) was Iddo. In Nehemiah 12:16, when Jeshua's son Joiakim is priest, one of Iddo's descendants has become head of his father's house. His name is Zechariah. Keep in mind in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, the prophet is simply called "Zechariah the son of Iddo." We learn, of course, in Zechariah 1:1 there was at least a generation between the two men, Berechiah is listed as Zechariah's father.
    - 1) Do not let this seeming discrepancy bother you. As Webb explains, "Zechariah 1:1 and 1:7 give both the father and grandfather, whereas Ezra mentions only the better-known grandfather. A parallel occurs in the case of Jehu, who is called 'son of Nimshi' in 1 Kings 19:16 and 2 Kings 9:20, but 'son of Jehoshaphat son of Nimshi' in 2 Kings 9:2, 14. Zechariah 1:1 gives the fuller version of Zechariah's genealogy, as would be expected in a book that bears his name" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 28).
    - 2) If the Iddo and descendant Zechariah in Nehemiah 12:4, 16 are the same as the two mentioned in Ezra 5:1; 6:15; Zechariah 1:1, 7, Berechiah likely died

early so Zechariah became the head of his father's house when Joiakim was high priest.

- 3) If it is mere coincidence that the two in Nehemiah 12:4, 16 have the same names as the men in Ezra 5:1; 6:15, using the ones from Nehemiah to help consider the prophet's age still works. The two men mentioned in Nehemiah would be about the same age as the ones in Ezra 5:1; 6:15.
  - b. By the time Nehemiah travels to build Jerusalem's walls around 444 BC, Jeshua's grandson Eliashib is high priest (Nehemiah 3:1). If Jeshua's grandson was alive when Nehemiah built the wall, Iddo's could be as well.
  - c. That being said, Zechariah being old enough to be recognized and heeded as a prophet when the temple was being built would surely put him at least in his latter teen years (though to me, over 20 seems more likely). If we take the young age of 15 (a highly unlikely age in my opinion) when he started prophesying in the second year of Darius (ca. 520 BC), he would have been 91 years old when Nehemiah came to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2:1; ca. 444 BC). Certainly possible, anything is possible for God, but not likely.
  - d. I took us down this rabbit trail because I wanted to highlight unless Zechariah started shockingly young as a prophet or lived surprisingly long, his latter ministry almost certainly occurred before the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt.
2. The state of Jerusalem during Zechariah's later years.
  - a. Surely, the time following the building of the temple was a heady time for the remnant. The prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah being so quickly fulfilled had to be a sign the restoration prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were under way, right?
  - b. Yet, as one year came and went, not only was the city not built and founded on precious stones (Isaiah 54:11-12), it wasn't built at all. In fact, if I understand Ezra 4:12-13 correctly, there was even one failed attempt to rebuild it. But unlike the temple, it had yet to be restarted.
  - c. For all of Zechariah's life the city lay in ruins. The emotional, mental, psychological, and spiritual implications of this become clear in Nehemiah 1 when the king's cupbearer asks his brother Hanani about the remnant and the city. This is seventy-two years after the temple has been built and Hanani responds, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire" (Nehemiah 1:3).
  - d. Nehemiah's weeping, mourning, fasting, and praying for days gives us insight to the Jewish mindset surrounding the continued ruin of Jerusalem. Recognize Nehemiah's prayer attributes the continued ruin of the city to the sins of himself, his father's house, and the people of Israel (Nehemiah 1:6-7).
  - e. Additionally, do not miss that Nehemiah doesn't consider his dwelling in Susa as an indication the people are still scattered, but the fact that the walls of Jerusalem have not been rebuilt means they are still scattered (Nehemiah 1:8-9).
  - f. When will the words of the former prophets about restoration be finally fulfilled?

## F. The Temple

1. Of course, I have affirmed based on Zechariah 11:13, the temple has been rebuilt by the time this latter ministry occurs. These oracles did not come in the two final years of the temple building project.
2. However, for all the celebrating, something was patently wrong with Second Temple.
  - a. “When rebuilding finally got underway, the prophet Haggai tells us what people were saying. Compared to Solomon’s temple in all its glory, this temple was nothing (Hag 2:3). *Nothing!* Who could blame them? The second temple did not have Solomon’s silver and gold or the ark of the covenant. Its altar (Ezra 3:2-3) was made of stone, not bronze (1 Ki 8:64; 2 Chr 4:1), and it had one, just one, lampstand (Zech 4:2, 11) versus the ten in the first temple (1 Ki 7:49; 2 Chr 4:7). When compared to Solomon’s architectural wonder, this one looked second-class—to say the least. Zechariah lived among people who despised ‘a day of small things’ (Zech 4:10)” (Lessing, *Zechariah*, xiii).
3. The issue, however, was not with the architecture or furnishings. Something else was missing.
  - a. When Moses and the Israelites finished the tabernacle before Mt. Sinai, he recorded: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:34-35).
  - b. When Solomon finished the temple and the priests brought the Ark of the Covenant inside, we are told: “a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (1 Kings 8:10-11). And again: “the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God” (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).
  - c. But when the Second Temple was completed by Zerubbabel and Joshua, we read: “and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses” (Ezra 6:15-18).
  - d. The celebration for the Second Temple was grand. The dedication magnificent. The sacrifices intense. However, did you notice what was missing? Ezra tells us about the ministering of the priests at the dedication of the temple as if to draw our attention to the fact. That’s not how it is supposed to work. They aren’t supposed to be able to minister in the temple. Yes, they set up their divisions as written in the Book of Moses, but they shouldn’t have been able to do that right away. Why not? Because the Second Temple should have been filled with the glory of the LORD, the cloud of His presence. But it wasn’t!
  - e. Hadn’t Ezekiel foreseen the return of the LORD’s glory to the temple? Yes, Zechariah had prophetically presided over the rebuilding of the temple, but the temple was not really complete. God wasn’t present in it.

#### G. The State of Zechariah’s Audience

1. Zechariah 9 does not give us any of the history or social circumstances surrounding the oracle. However, I think I can hazard a decent, scripturally based guess. Israel has a pretty strong track record.
2. Perhaps the great victory we read about in Esther, occurring in about 473 BC, prompted a spiritual renewal across the empire. A spiritual renewal with renewed expectations might be a seed bed for prophetic work. However, I admit, when the story of Esther doesn't even mention God's name, I find it hard to expect a significant spiritual renewal across the empire to come out of it.
3. Zechariah oversaw the completion of the temple in about 516 BC at the end of Ezra 6. The text skips about 58 years and then Ezra brings a remnant with him in the seventh year of Artaxerxes in about 458 BC.
  - a. If Zechariah was 15 when he prophesied at the building of the temple, he would have been 77 at this time. More likely than the 91 at the rebuilding of the wall, but still not very likely. Zechariah's latter ministry probably occurred before this. Therefore, I do not intend to suggest Zechariah's ministry occurred alongside Ezra's work, but rather to establish a continued pattern for the people of Israel that will allow us to make a scripturally educated guess about the state of the Israelites when Zechariah came on the scene the second time.
4. What did Ezra find when he got there? The people had so intermarried with foreigners it took three months to straighten it all out (see Ezra 9:1-2; 10:16-17). Even some of Jeshua (Joshua in Zechariah) the high priest's sons had married foreigners (Ezra 10:1).
5. When Nehemiah arrived in about 444 BC, he quickly started working on the walls. But what did he discover in Nehemiah 5? The people were enslaving each other. Recall in Jeremiah 34:8-22, this was a really big deal.
6. In Nehemiah 13, in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah returned to the king who was in Babylon at the time. When he returned, possibly around 430 BC, he discovered Eliashib the high priest, grandson of Jeshua/Joshua, had re-established a marital tie with Tobiah the Ammonite and had even set up an apartment for him in the courts of the temple. The Levites had not been given their tithes, so they had left the service of the temple to go work their fields. People were consistently working on the Sabbath. And the intermarriage with foreigners had again reached such a height some of the children couldn't even speak the language of Judah.
7. Then we have Malachi. His book begins with the same phrase as Zechariah's two latter oracles, "The oracle of the word of the LORD..." (Malachi 1:1). In that book, the people were offering polluted sacrifices, they had profaned the covenant, they were robbing God. God had to rebuke the priests again. He promises coming judgment.
8. My point in bringing up this litany of spiritual reversals is to highlight that, alongside the fact they had yet to be able to rebuild the city walls, the state of Zechariah's audience is likely spiritually poor. They never maintained a spiritual high or dedication to the LORD for very long.

#### H. Summation

1. "In this period Prophecy does not maintain that lofty position which it has hitherto held in the life of Israel, and the reasons for its decline are obvious. To begin with, the national life, from which it springs, is of a far poorer quality. Israel is no longer a kingdom, but a colony. The state is not independent: there is virtually no state. The community is poor and feeble, cut off from all the habit and prestige of their past, and beginning the rudiments of life again in hard struggle with nature and hostile tribes. To this level Prophecy has to descend, and occupy itself with these rudiments. We miss the civic atmosphere, the great spaces of public life, the large ethical issues.

Instead we have tearful questions, raised by a grudging soil and bad seasons, with all the petty selfishness of hunger-bitten peasants” (Smith, *Book of the Twelve*, 2.188-189).

2. “When Judah is restored after the Persian takeover in 538 B.C., the situation is to all intents and purposes set for the great day of salvation predicted by the prophets. In fact such fulfillment of prophecy as does take place is only a pale shadow of the expectation. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, along with Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi give quite a clear picture of the reconstruction. All the ingredients of the Kingdom promises are there but, far from exceeding the former glory, they do not come anywhere near to even matching it. Hence the need for the post-exilic prophets to explain why this is not the hoped-for day, and to project hope into the future yet again. This hope is often to flicker like a candle in the wind as year after year sees change but never true release from the oppressive domination of foreigners” (Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, 102).
3. In short, God recalled Zechariah because the people needed hope, direction, restoration, and very likely correction. What kind of messages do you preach to people whose hopes and expectations have not come to fruition? The oracles of Zechariah 9-14.
4. With these thoughts in mind, let us take Barry Webb’s observation to heart about Zechariah’s audience: “Our first impression, as we begin to read the book of Zechariah, may be of remoteness—of distance from us. However, we need to bear in mind two things. First, . . . we ought not to view Zerubbabel and his contemporaries as representatives of an alien race, but as our spiritual ancestors, who knew and served the same God we do” (Webb, *Zechariah*, 47).

#### VI. BUT WAIT! NO TRUE SCOTSMAN BELIEVES ZECHARIAH WROTE 9-14!

- A. Did I say “no true Scotsman”?<sup>3</sup> I’m sorry, I meant, “No true scholar believes Zechariah wrote Zechariah 9-14.” I’ll let the cat out of the bag, I’m from Ireland.
- B. I confess, if a true scholar were able to prove incontrovertibly someone other than Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo is the source of Zechariah 9-14 or if they proved it is the compilation of disparate sources by some late editor or redactor, my faith would not be shattered. Nor would I question whether the book is inspired by God. As I said in the section II about “Assumptions in this Lesson,” my take on inspiration means God got in there what He wants in there and He got it organized the way He wants it organized. If he wanted to use a redactor to compile connected prophecies, who am I to question Him? However, I remain unconvinced of the need to posit such a theory, and I believe the pursuit of it has done more harm than good.
- C. The question of authorship and date for Zechariah 9-14, now commonly known as Second Zechariah.
  1. Of course, to be fair, even Matthew attributes Zechariah 11 to Jeremiah in Matthew 27:9-10 (maybe!) However, the modern struggle began in the late 1700s.
  2. Meyers and Meyers give an overview: “A major step in Second Zechariah scholarship occurred in 1785, when William Newcome proposed that chapters 9-11 were written before 722 B.C.E and that chapters 12-14 were written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 587-86 B.C.E. (apud R.L. Smith 1984; 243; P.D. Hanson 1975; 288). In addition, Newcome convincingly argued that chapters 1-8 differed so significantly in form and content from 9-14 that they had to emanate from another hand. By the end of the eighteenth century, therefore, the view that there were multiple authors of the canonical Book of Zechariah took hold. Save for the computer study of Radday and Wickman (1975), . . . there have been only a few scholars since that time who have

argued for the unity of authorship of all fourteen chapters” (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 53). Okay, maybe a few true scholars believe Zechariah wrote it.

3. The question of authorship is integrally connected with dating the material found in Zechariah 9-14. After all, if parts or all of it were written before the exile or after Alexander the Great, Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo could not have possibly written it. Meyers and Meyers explain again: “A rather complex reconstruction of the various literary units of chapters 9-14 was proposed at the beginning of the nineteenth century by L. Bertholdt in 1814 and B. Flugge slightly earlier (so P.D. Hanson 1975; 288 and R.L. Smith 1984: 243). Not only did these interpretations posit different authors for various parts of Second Zechariah, but also they proposed any number of historical settings for them. Those settings ranged from the eighth century, the time of Amos and Isaiah, to about 520 B.C.E, the time of First Zechariah. The first major change away from such approaches came in 1824, when J.G. Eichhorn argued for a postexilic date for all of chapters 9-14, which he argued should be dated to slightly later than Alexander the Great’s conquest of the Levant (i.e., the late fourth century B.C.E.), with Zech 13:7-14:21 dating to Maccabean times (Eichhorn 1824: 455ff.). The results of his suggestions have been far-reaching, and similar views are held by many scholars to this day. The suggested dates for Second Zechariah, in short, range from about 750 to 150 B.C.E.” (Ibid.).
4. I’ll allow another rather lengthy quote from Meyers and Meyers explain just how widespread and deep this question and struggle is: “The history of research on chapters 9-14 of the Book of Zechariah reflects deep scholarly dissension about the character of this work. Much of the disagreement concerns the relationship between chapters 1-8, so-called First or Proto-Zechariah, and chapters 9-14, so-called Second or Deutero-Zechariah. More specifically, the issues that have aroused scholarly discussion and debate include the problem of the unity of the canonical book (chapters 1-14), the question of unity in chapters 9-14, the dating of all or portions of chapters 9-14, and the nature and circumstances of the supposed editorial and redactional activity that was brought to bear on chapters 9-14 both before and after the appearance of all fourteen chapters as a single work. “It is standard practice in presenting a *Forschungsbericht*, or summary of previous research, to attempt to identify what might qualify as a consensus view. The overwhelmingly various and wildly contradictory views concerning the date and nature of the material in Second Zechariah make such a goal difficult, if not impossible, to attain” (Ibid. 52).
5. Please, grasp what Meyers and Meyers said there. Questioning the authorship of Zechariah 9-14 has not made the section easier to understand but has produced wildly contradictory views about the section of Scripture. Remember our look at Paul’s warnings to Timothy and Titus? Recall 1 Timothy 1:3-5?
6. Meyers and Meyers draw the following conclusion about authorship: “Chapter 9-14 probably do not represent the sayings of a single prophet in response to a specific event or series of historical events. Rather, they represent the collected sayings of one or more individuals, who spoke within the framework of earlier prophecy as it had been transmitted at the time. More specifically, the author or authors of Second Zechariah were undoubtedly individuals who emerged in the shadow of Zechariah, the prophet of the restoration, inasmuch as the language and the themes of First Zechariah played a definitive role in shaping chapters 9-14. Some might characterize the author(s) of these chapters as belonging to a circle of prophets among whom the words of the earlier prophets were preserved and expanded upon, but among whom the words of Zechariah ben-Berechiah ben-Iddo (Zech 1:1) were especially revered. It was within such a group that ‘canonical intentionality’ was achieved, whereby

chapters 9-14 were attached to chapters 1-8 of Zechariah, which had already been attached to and circulated with the Book of Haggai" (Ibid., 27-28).

- a. Are you hearing in that statement what I'm hearing? The two sections are so different, they have to be written by different authors. However, they are so similar the authors of the Second Zechariah must be a school in the shadow of Zechariah, especially revering his words. Oh yeah, and chapters 1-8 played a defining role in shaping chapter 9-14. How different must they be to make the first claim? How similar must they be to make the second? And how can it be both at the same time?
  - b. What if the same God were working through the same man but at significantly different ages, in significantly different social contexts, and pursuing significantly different goals? Could that make it different enough and yet similar enough?
7. To be fair, even Brevard Childs who probably did more to initiate a resurgence of reading the two sections of Zechariah as a single book and a unified whole than anyone I've read in my studies (limited as they are), believes Zechariah 9-14 was written by a different author than Zechariah 1-8.
- a. "...it should be carefully noted that there is a surprising compatibility between the two books of material. This situation arises from similar religious traditions being reflected upon by the Jewish community during both periods. Indeed, the same blocks of authoritative scripture—notably Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel—probably already in some written form were exercising an effect on the composition of both sections of Zechariah. Therefore, although the juxtaposition did not derive from the intention of an original author, it did not result in a completely arbitrary linkage of two totally disparate collections of prophetic material" (Childs, *Intro to the OT*, 482).

#### D. Literary Criticism and the Debacle of Dating and Authorship of Zechariah 9-14.

1. Nogalski defines the two overarching schools of thought regarding how to approach the Biblical text in its present form: "Synchronic and Diachronic: In Biblical studies these two terms now largely refer to various methodologies and their approach to the question of how a text came into its present form. Synchronic methods do not concern themselves with a text's history or prehistory. They look only at the final form of the text. Diachronic methods, by contrast, evaluate texts, in part, by asking questions designed to determine a text's history" (Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve*, 497).
2. The Diachronic approach gets into Literary Criticism of the ancient texts. John Barton defines "Literary Criticism" in biblical studies: "'Literary' criticism for the biblical scholar is a method used in handling texts that have been produced by amalgamating other, older texts. A good many biblical books, it is thought, were produced in this way; and 'literary' criticism is the attempt to divide them up into their component parts, and then to assess the relative ages of these parts, rather as archaeologists date the various strata of a site" (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 20).
  - a. Note, "'literary' criticism is the attempt to divide them into their component parts." Why is such an attempt necessary? Because we have no record, no manuscript, no textual evidence of these component parts.
3. No doubt, if you've heard of this approach to biblical study, it has been in reference to the Documentary Hypothesis claiming multiple sources for the Pentateuch: Yahwist, Elohist, Priestly, Deuteronomist (JEPD). This theory comes into play in discussing Zechariah as well. In Raymond Person's book Second Zechariah and the Deuteronomist

School, he claims, ‘The contention of this work is that the Deuteronomic school was responsible for the canonical form of Zech with the addition of II Zech (chs. 9-14) to I Zech (chs. 1-8)’ (Person, *Deuteronomic School*, 13).

- a. “In this work, the Deuteronomic school is understood to be a scribal guild which was active in the exilic and post-exilic periods (and possibly the pre-exilic period) and which reinterpreted earlier material (e.g. proto-Deut, Jeremianic poetry) within their particular theological and literary tradition” (Ibid., fn1).
4. Though I remain unconvinced of this hypothesis or even the need to pursue it, I admit there is a certain restorationist flare to it. With that in mind, I can understand why some are pulled to it when explained the way Barton explains it.
    - a. “Traditional biblical criticism, like traditional literary criticism, is anti-canonical in approach: it asks what a given work means when restored to its original setting, when the preconceptions we have of it, as a result of the tradition in which it has come down to us, have been stripped away. In the historical-critical study of the Bible the canon is a hindrance to be removed, not an interpretive framework to be welcomed, for it obscures the true meaning of each individual text, which is the meaning it was intended to convey by its original author or authors. In the desire to get back to the words of the original Isaiah, and to be able to hear him speaking without the thick wrappings of the intervening ‘Isaiah tradition’ that had muffled his voice until the rise of source criticism, we surely have a close analogue to the desire of nineteenth-century literary critics to hear the poet and enter into his experience, unclouded by the mists that roll between him and us. Indeed, the idea of the Israelite prophet as a lone genius, speaking out of a direct experience of God and seeking to share his insights with others, arguably owes as much to Romantic models of criticism and poetry as to the Old Testament text” (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 156).
      - 1) Be aware: “the tradition in which it has come down to us” refers to our Bibles as we have them now which are based on the earliest and best manuscripts we have.
    - b. I am lured by this restorationist idea. Who doesn't want to restore the original? Surely wanting to get to the “original Isaiah,” or Zechariah for that matter, ought to matter. But how do they restore this original? Not by finding older manuscripts or even manuscripts which contain the sources separately written. In the end, there is no restoration at all. There is nothing to restore. These critics do not know what they are aiming for. They have no map, no model, no Rosetta Stone. They have merely their opinions about what was original, perhaps highly educated opinions, but opinion nonetheless. Literary Criticism and Source Criticism are not Textual Criticism. They are not looking at various manuscripts of different sources and then comparing them to see how they meshed together into the final form. They have manuscripts of the final form, that is, the manuscripts used to produce our Bibles today, and they have theories and educated (maybe) guesses about which bits came from different sources and which bits were the work of redactors piecing them together. (For a humorous roast of the Documentary Hypothesis see Appendix A, “New Direction in Pooh Studies.)
  5. This literary criticism and its effects on the study of Zechariah claim to be a historical-contextual approach to studying Zechariah. The idea is we need to divide up Zechariah 9-14 into its historical sources in order to know the historical context and understand what the real meaning of each part is. If the sign-acts of Zechariah 11 were originally written before the exile, they will surely mean something different than if they were written during the period of the Maccabees.



6. This approach pushes the limits of what we often call simply the “grammatical-historical hermeneutic.” In a couple of similar articles comparing this method with what might be styled a kind of Midrashic approach, Marty Pickup explains the grammatical-historical approach along with its strengths and limitations.
- a. “If one reads the Old Testament from a grammatical-historical point of view, he will interpret the words of a given passage according to their plain, grammatical sense within the context of the particular biblical book where they are found. Such a reader seeks to answer this question: what was the Old Testament author of the passage trying to say to his original audience? When looking at a particular psalm of David, for example, one would ask what meaning was in David’s mind when he wrote the words of the psalm? Or, to take matters a bit further, what idea did the psalm convey to the Israelites of that day as they sang it in their worship? Such is the grammatical-historical approach, and it is used today by all readers of the Bible, both conservatives and liberals alike” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, pp. 249-250; see also *JETS*, pp. 358-359).
  - b. The above certainly makes sense. It is the natural approach to take. And I believe we should take it. However, can you see how it can lead to the historical jigsaw puzzle modern scholars are making of Zechariah? Pickup’s statement assumes the historical context of a book is the same across the whole book. But the Literary Critics do not think so. Bits and pieces may originally come from different points in history. We need, they tell us, to figure out those different historical contexts so we are able to actually maintain a grammatical-historical point of view of each piece.
  - c. However, Pickup explains a surprising limitation of this approach. This limitation will modify the normal grammatical-historical approach, but I think it utterly defeats the Literary and Source Critic’s notions: “It should be noted, however, that the grammatical-historical approach does not require a belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture, for it is the same hermeneutic one would use to interpret any human document” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament,” *JETS*, p. 359; see also *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 250).
  - d. To be sure, the grammatical-historical approach does not deny divine inspiration. It simply ignores it. It doesn’t take it into account.
  - e. But what if we do recognize inspiration of Scripture? That will open the way for more than merely a grammatical-historical approach. Pickup explains:
    - 1) “This is exactly how the Jews approached their Scriptures. They read the Old Testament not merely as a collection of different books written by different human authors on different occasions, but as if it were all one book. This one book was the product of the mind of one Author who had declared to Israel in historical time the fundamental components of His eternal purpose” (Pickup, “The New Testament’s Exegesis of Old Testament Passages,” *Studies in the Psalms*, p. 251; see also *Jets*, p. 360).
    - 2) “But what if one regards the Old Testament books as the ancient Jews did—as the verbally inspired word of almighty God? How might this affect the way one reads an Old Testament verse? If every word of the Old Testament was actually the utterance of God, then a given statement in one Old Testament book would need to be considered not only within its own documentary context, but also in light of the broader contexts of the canon as a whole. The reason is because the Old Testament canon is recognized as more than just an anthology of documents. The Old Testament is understood to be the work of one Author—God himself—who foreordained in eternity a

plan for the world that he revealed in piecemeal fashion over time, using human spokesmen throughout Israel's history. With such a presumption, a diligent reader of an Old Testament passage would need to take note of any potential verbal and thematic parallels, analogies, or other correspondences with other statements in the rest of the Old Testament corpus wherever they might be found and whenever they might be written. The presence of such interconnections would have to be viewed as the deliberate intention of God, the omniscient Author of the Old Testament" (Ibid. pp. 250-251; see also *JETS*, p. 359).

- f. Though Pickup is proposing we consider adding in a kind of Midrashic approach to Bible study, making stronger connections between verbal and thematic parallels, analogies, and correspondences in different books because God is actually the author of the two different books, I believe his assertions lead us in a second direction as we consider them in context of our present discussion.
  - 1) When I make connections between two different books, say Ezekiel and Zechariah, I can see both informing the other because I believe God is the ultimate author of both and in His eternal omniscience He not only knew what was written in Ezekiel when He inspired Zechariah, but when He inspired Ezekiel, He knew what He was going to have written in Zechariah. That being said, when I look at those books separately, I recognize different historical contexts not because I've ferreted out some secret understanding but because God has obviously placed each in separate books claiming distinct historical contexts.
  - 2) If I believe Zechariah is inspired, I believe it has One Ultimate Author. The slice and dice approach of the Literary Critics and Documentary Hypothesizers only consider the possibility of human authors. But accepting Zechariah as inspired by God, I believe even if God used more than one author to write Zechariah, He got what He wanted in there in the order He wanted it. Zechariah 9-14 wasn't appended because a school that revered Zechariah decided to append it, but because ultimately God put them together. God put them in the historical context of the lifetime of Zechariah. I don't need to spend my time figuring out by hunting down subtle clues which bits were written before the exile and which came after the Greeks and which were actually written by Zechariah. I can take them together as their unified whole because God in His infinite, inspiring wisdom put them together in that unified whole. God knows how to separate things in multiple books. After all, we have 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings and we also have 1 & 2 Chronicles. These are two different rehearsals of the same history, but because of different times of writing and different goals, we see differences. God wanted us to see both. If He had only wanted one unified review of that history, He could have brought them together. If I needed to know the different historical contexts of each verse, God would have told me what they were. Instead, He put all the parts of Zechariah together as they are so I can read them in the context of Zechariah's lifetime.
7. However, Literary Criticism is a bit more devious than simple grammatical-historical hermeneutic. And this is why I push back.
  - a. Allow me to illustrate with a parallel I see with Naturalism, the General Theory of Evolution, and Theistic Evolution.
    - 1) I am not a Christian because of the Creation account in Genesis. I am a Christian because I am convinced of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I have said for a few years now that if someone were to absolutely, incontrovertibly prove the means by which the universe got here is the Big Bang and the

means by which the diversity of life got here is macro-evolution, I would not lose my faith in Jesus. I would simply assume I had misunderstood what God meant in Genesis and start trying to figure it out.

- 2) However, I do not subscribe to Theistic Evolution. I don't promote it. In fact, I argue against it. Here's why. Many scientific theories and laws were discovered as scientists peered into the natural world wanting to discover how God did things. That is not how the Theory of Evolution was formulated. I realize Charles Darwin's own religious perspective is debatable and up for grabs. I don't know what he was individually looking for. However, the "scientific" community did not settle on the Theory of Evolution because it was trying to figure out how God brought about the teeming multitude and diversity of life on earth. Not at all. Rather, naturalists and materialists had been searching for a godless mechanism by which they could explain the diversity of life without God. When Darwin proposed his Theory of Evolution, the naturalist and materialist community latched on.
- 3) For the life of me, I cannot understand why Bible believing theists would ever assert, "You know that godless system? God used that one to bring about the diversity of life." Yes, if someone actually fully proved it, I'd say that's the way God did it and figure out how Genesis fits. But apart from that, I refuse to claim God used a godless method to do His creative work.

b. I view Literary and Source Criticism of the Bible in much the same light.

- 1) I am not a Christian because I believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch or Zechariah wrote the whole book named for him. I'm a Christian because I believe in the resurrection of Jesus. If someone incontrovertibly proved four schools of Jewish theological thought wrote different parts of Genesis and a talented (or maybe not so) redactor combined the sources into one corpus, I wouldn't lose my faith. I'd just assume I had misunderstood what Jesus meant when He said Moses wrote it and proceed to figure that out. If someone incontrovertibly proved Zechariah 9-14 is a collection of bits and bobs from various points in history redacted together by a particular ancient school of Jewish theological thought, I wouldn't lose my faith. I'd just assume I misunderstood the authorship of Zechariah and try to figure it out.
- 2) However, I consider what Barton writes about the development of the Documentary Hypothesis and its children (or maybe parents), Literary and Source Criticism, and I balk.
  - a) "But in the case of the Bible the conscious asking of the sorts of questions that eventually led to the four-document hypothesis associated with the names of Graf and Wellhausen had been for long inhibited by a prior conviction on the part of readers of the Bible that they *already knew* how biblical texts should be classified: namely, as some form (no doubt a very sophisticated form) of divine speech to men. *The European Enlightenment made it possible to see the biblical books as primarily just 'texts from the past,' leaving on the one side the question of inspiration.* And then, as part of the attempt to read these texts intelligently, people were bound to ask what kind of texts they were. Before long it was clear that the Pentateuch in particular, considered as a single text or even as a corpus of five books, simply defied classification. No thinkable type of writing could possibly contain the inconsistencies, doublings back, apparently aimless changes of style, or titles for God, of narrative tone, that these books

encompass. For one man to write such a text, he would have to be mentally incoherent or disturbed, or—and here source criticism really begins—he would need to be using a lot of already existing material which, for whatever reason, he was unable to change, and setting it down in all its inconsistency” (Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 24; emphasis of “already knew” in original, further emphasis mine ELC).

- b) God may have used four different sources and a redactor in His inspiration of the Pentateuch. God may have used numerous sources from different points in history and had a redactor bring them together in Zechariah 9-14. But please note Barton's admission. This theory didn't begin because Bible students were trying to figure out how God produced Scriptures. Nobody said, “You know, I'm reading this God-inspired text and I just can't believe God used only one man to write it. Let me dig in and see if God did something else.” Rather, having received the permission of the European enlightenment to set God's involvement aside, they tried to figure out how these “scriptures” could come to be with only human involvement. They came up with the Documentary Hypothesis. They pursued Literary and Source Criticism.
- c) Sadly, because of the onslaught of *ad hominem* as seen in the above statement (“For one man to write such a text, he would have to be mentally incoherent or disturbed” subtly accuses anyone who believes one man wrote the text is mentally incoherent or disturbed, further it comes dangerously close to making a dreadful accusation against God for one who believes He was the mastermind of the Scripture) many sincere disciples have decided, “You know that godless way of getting Scripture? That's how God did it.” I speak slightly tongue-in-cheek. No one would make that claim in that way. But the godless approach has gotten shoe-horned in under the guise of the consensus of the scholars. And now sincere students of the text have accepted that the godless means of coming up with Scripture is the way God did it. I remain unconvinced.
- d) By the way, before we leave this, I don't want to just slide past those three words tucked neatly into Barton's final sentence: “he would need to be using a lot of already existing material which, *for whatever reason*, he was unable to change, and setting it down in all its inconsistency” (emphasis mine, ELC). “For whatever reason”? What kind of subterfuge is that? In these three words, Barton has given away the candy store. These three words demonstrate Barton knows if a text recorded the way it is by one author means that author is “mentally incoherent or disturbed,” it would mean the same text recorded the same way by a later editor would mean that editor is “mentally incoherent or disturbed.” A mentally coherent and mentally sound editor would surely see the inconsistencies, doubling backs, repetitions, and alter them. After all, he is altering it just by meshing more than one source together. For whatever reason, Barton posits, he must not be able to change the sources and so he set it down in all its inconsistency. Can we take a stab at a good one? Nope. It's just “for whatever reason,” as if there might be a good reason out there somewhere but we don't actually need to define what the reason is. And I guess, “for whatever reason,” the redactor felt the need to mesh together the inconsistent sources to begin with. Obviously, mentally coherent, and mentally stable redactors often see inconsistent records and sources and say,

“You know what, for whatever reason, these four things just have to be meshed together. I know the end result is going to be an inconsistent mess when I'm done, but for whatever reason, I just can't help myself. It's too bad I can't alter these sources a bit to make it not appear an inconsistent nightmare, but for whatever reason I can't change these sources.” To be clear, I don't believe the Pentateuch is a confused mess. I think there are just a lot of confused people unwilling to try to understand the Bible God gave them and so they are trying to make it into the Bible they think God should have given them.

8. And apparently, Literary Criticism hasn't helped us understand Zechariah at all.
  - a. Granted the following statements are from critics of the approach, but 1) they actually aren't opposed to viewing the book as written by more than one author and 2) it doesn't take much study to discover they are correct in these assertions.
  - b. “The inability to reach a consensus on the dating of the book has left unresolved the historical context for interpretation. As a result, few Old Testament books reflect such a chaos of conflicting interpretations. If further evidence for the breakdown of method within the discipline is needed, the reader is challenged to compare the recent proposals made by Lamarche, Otzen, Hanson and Seybold” (Childs, *Intro to the OT*, 476).
    - 1) Remember, with Zechariah, dating is integrally linked to authorship.
  - c. “The referential reading of Zechariah which assumes that its text can only be illuminated when it is properly correlated with the historical moment from which it emerged has been an utter disaster for exegesis. Because the text has not lent itself to this requirement of historical scholarship, the result has been that the interpretation of Zechariah has been dominated by historical speculation and theological fragmentation. Repeatedly, commentators conclude that a passage is meaningless because its original reference is no longer available” (ibid. 486).
    - 1) By “not lent itself to this requirement,” Childs means the text did not reveal what point in history each of the distinct bits were written in.
  - d. “Such a bewildering variety of views on both date and unity leaves the reader at a loss to know what to believe. The very fact that there is such diversity undermines the confidence in the methodology used. As P.R. Ackroyd observes, ‘It may be wondered whether the attempt to date is the most useful approach to the material.’ Historical allusions are vague and defy attempts to refer them to specific people or events. Moreover, the author makes free use of his sources, so that, whatever may have been their origin, they become a vehicle through which to convey persisting truths. If it were necessary to know the historical setting in order to understand their message, these chapters would have to be put aside as an unsolved enigma, but it is hoped to show that the meaning can be known, and that the historical allusions can be interpreted even if the precise event that prompted them cannot be known” (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 68).
9. Finally, remember what evidence the multi-author, multi-date, source, and literary critics do not have for Zechariah.
  - a. “...it is not possible to prove conclusively who wrote chapters 9-14, but when every argument has been considered the fact remains that all fourteen chapters have been handed down to us as one book in every manuscript so far discovered. Even the tiny fragment of the Greek manuscript found at Qumran, which includes the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9, shows no gap or

spacing whatsoever to suggest a break between the two parts" (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 69-70).

- 1) Remember the earlier claim by Meyers and Meyers in VI.C.6 in which they claimed Zechariah 1-8 was originally attached to Haggai and distributed with it? Baldwin's statement means they have absolutely no textual or manuscriptal evidence for the claim. They assume it and promote it only because of the similar mission in those sections.
- b. Source and Literary Criticism is not Textual Criticism. Its purveyors are not comparing competing manuscripts with huge swaths of Zechariah missing because it is a different source. These critics who just can't see the two sections as coming from the same hand do not have even one manuscript with only one or the other part of Zechariah. They do not have any manuscripts of the second part of Zechariah in a different order or with huge swaths missing because it is a source document for one part of the section. When you read in a commentary that clearly Zechariah 13:7-9 originally came at the end of Zechariah 11, it is not because some manuscript somewhere has it like that. It's because the commentator can't figure out why the bits about shepherds are not all together. Because the commentator can't figure it out, he or she assumes only someone mentally incoherent or disturbed would write it like that so it must be some later redactor who for whatever reason couldn't change the source material and for whatever reason didn't have the good sense to keep those shepherd portions together like they were in the original. What does it say about a person who believes because something doesn't make sense to them only a mentally incoherent or disturbed person would do it that way?
- c. I want to restore the original message of Zechariah as much as anyone. I want to get rid of any "Zechariah tradition" that is muffling the original messages in the text. But I want to do it based on actual, textual evidence not based on personal misunderstandings about why some ancient author would never write his book differently than I think he should.

#### 10. An Admission

- a. I recall a friend of mine once railing against space exploration. Yes, space exploration.
  - 1) He found it a waste of time and money. Like me, he doesn't believe there is life on other planets. Why waste money looking for it? Like me, he doesn't believe we'll ever terraform a moon or another planet and we'll never transport human civilization anywhere. Why waste money considering it? On and on his arguments stacked up against it.
  - 2) BUT...he said, because of space exploration we now have cell phones and laptop computers and technology making life easier and better for many people. Perhaps space exploration is not a complete evil.
- b. Perhaps we can say something similar regarding Literary Criticism, etc.
  - 1) As frustrated and even angry as some of what I see among those pursuing Literary Criticism, Source Criticism, Documentary Hypotheses makes me, the depths to which folks study to make their connections has brought great insight on multiple levels.
  - 2) For instance, though I think Person's attempt to prove Zechariah 9-14 is the product of the Deuteronomistic school is misguided, his scholarly dig into the connections between Zechariah, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and passages he sees as Deuteronomistic was very helpful to me. He did draw out great

connections and hyperlinks between Biblical texts. Of course, I don't see that as the work of the Deuteronomic editors, but of God's hand.

- 3) Brevard Child makes the following even-handed statement which I will use to close out my harangue against the Literary, Source, Historical Criticisms that have too often ripped Zechariah apart.
  - a) "The real point of controversy is how one evaluates this history. "The most common opinion is to view this history in terms of scholarly progress and substantial gain. In a burst of enthusiasm some nineteenth-century scholars portrayed the history as a journey from ignorance and error in which ecclesiastical dogma stifled free research into a era [sic] of freedom measured only by critical standards of objective truth. Conversely, some conservative Christians have described this history as a growth in unbelief in which the truth of the Bible has been sacrificed on the altar of human wisdom and pride. "In my judgment, both of these evaluations have missed the mark. On the one hand, it seems to me impossible to deny the enormous gains which have been achieved in many areas of the study of the Old Testament. To compare the church fathers, or the Reformers for that matter, with modern scholarship in terms of philology, textual and literary criticism, or of historical knowledge and exegetical precision should convince any reasonable person of the undeniable achievements of historical critical scholarship in respect to the Old Testament. "On the other hand, there have been serious losses reflected in the victory of the critical Introduction. By this evaluation I do not include the psychological impact of the new knowledge on traditional Jewish and Christian beliefs, which is a subject lying outside the scope of this discussion. Rather in terms of the subject matter, serious reservations can be held regarding the form of the critical Introduction as an adequate approach to the literature it seeks to illuminate" (Childs, *Intro to the OT*, 39-40).

#### E. A Better Approach

1. Are there differences between Zechariah 1-8 and Zechariah 9-14? Of course.
  - a. Lessing provides a summary: "There can be no doubt, however, that chapters 1-8 differ significantly from chapters 9-14. The temple's construction is a major goal in Zechariah 1-8, while it is standing in 9:8; 11:13; 14:21. Zechariah 1-8 cites the names of people like Zerubbabel (e.g., 4:6), Joshua (e.g., 3:1), Helem, Tobiah, and Jedaiah (6:14); Zechariah 9-14 lists no personal names. Unlike the dates in 1:1, 7: 7:1, chapters 9-14 do not list regnal months and years. Whereas Zechariah 1-8 exhibits a number of questions, there is only one (13:6) in chapters 9-14. in the first section, Zechariah refers to himself when he writes that he hears, sees, and speaks, but he does not mention himself in the book's last six chapters. While the focus in Zechariah 1-8 is mostly on events in the here and now, the last six are much more eschatological. Moreover, the days of political peace in Zechariah 1-8 give way to times of turbulence and upheaval in Zechariah 9-14" (Lessing, *Zechariah*, 333).
  - b. Perhaps I'm wrong, but I believe even a casual reader would pick up on differences between the two sections. Something has shifted between them.
2. But the connections are astounding.
  - a. Wayne Welsh allowed me to see some of his personal study notes including a collection of overlapping ideas, thoughts, themes between the two sections:

- 1) People once scattered will be saved (1:21ff) / (10:9)
  - 2) God will protect the New Jerusalem (2:5) / (9:8; 14:11)
  - 3) God is a wall of fire around Jerusalem (2:5) / everyone who surrounds Jerusalem will be burned (12:6)
  - 4) Call for dear Zion to rejoice (2:10) / (9:9)
  - 5) Gentiles joining themselves to the Lord (2:11; 8:20-23) / (9:7, 10; 14:16-19)
  - 6) Cleansing of defilements (3:1-9; 5:1-11) / (13:1-2; 14:20-21)
  - 7) Messianic King (3:8-9; 4:6; 6:9-15) / (9:9-10)
  - 8) Giving of God's Spirit (4:6) / (12:10)
  - 9) Calling and answering (7:13) is answered by (13:9)
  - 10) No more "passing over" (7:14) / (9:8)
  - 11) Regathering of the exiles (2:6; 8:7) / (10:9-10)
  - 12) They will be my people / I will be their God (8:8) / (13:9)
  - 13) God's provision of rain / dew (8:12) / (10:1; 14:8)
  - 14) Redemption of Israel and Judah (8:13) / (10:6-10) (Welsh, *Unpublished Notes*)
- b. Granted, he also has pages of notes showing connections between Zechariah and other prophetic books. The connections themselves do not prove authorship.
  - c. However, the connections should prompt us to realize, however God got Zechariah on the scroll, He does intend us to read it as one book, as a unified message.
3. The burden of proof.
    - a. The book of Zechariah is presented to us as a unit. As we learned from Baldwin above (VI.D.9.a), every manuscript we have places these two sides of Zechariah together. The natural starting point, until proven otherwise, is to take the sections as from the same author and part of a unified whole.
    - b. Difficulties and differences do not prove distinct authorship, but rather should motivate us to study and understand why the author wrote it that way.
    - c. Certainly, multiple authors are a possibility, but the burden of proof is not on those who claim single authorship but the other way around.
  4. Do the differences prove different authors?
    - a. "Do these variations make chapters 1-8 incompatible with Zechariah 9-14? Did they originate from different authors living at different times?  
 "Those who answer 'yes' to these questions embrace the assumption that a writer has only one style, one vocabulary, and one perspective. Every textual difference, therefore, signals a different author. Who is to say, though, that writers are unable to employ diverse linguistic and literary features as their audiences, situations, and times change? Rigid expectations about how a text should proceed--in a logical coherent progression--drive scholars to posit a lack of authorial unity in the book of Zechariah" (Lessing, *Zechariah*, 12-13).
    - b. Lessing goes on to posit: "Those who interpret Zechariah by attributing different perspectives to different authors writing in different eras embrace a circular argument--they base their conclusions upon their hypothesis. The hypothesis is



that perceived inconsistencies are a sign of multiple authors. The reconstructed history leads, in turn, to locate additional diverse texts" (Ibid.).

- c. Additionally, Lessing relates study done by Curtis (which at this time I have not been able to get hold of myself and check), providing a single author perspective on the claimed verbal differences between the two sections:
    - 1) "Curtis examines the arguments that chapters 9-14 present a vocabulary radically different from the book's first eight chapters. Key to his discussion is that Zechariah 9-14 consists of two oracles, each labeled a  $\text{מָשָׁל}$ ,  $\text{מָשָׁל}$  (9:1; 12:1). By comparing these chapters with the eighteen other oracles in the OT labeled a  $\text{מָשָׁל}$ , Curtis shows why the prophet's word choices are different from those in chapters 1-8: simply put, Zechariah 9-14 is a different genre. There are, therefore, no compelling historical or linguistic reasons to doubt that Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, composed the entire book that bears his name (1:1), including chapters 9-14" (Ibid., 333).
    - 2) The humor of "New Direction in Pooh Studies" aside (see Appendix A), on a more serious note, consider the works of C.S. Lewis. Consider the difference in style, approach, vocabulary we find in "Mere Christianity" versus "The Screwtape Letters" versus "The Great Divorce" versus "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" versus "That Hideous Strength." Different genres of writing by the same author produce significantly different styles and even vocabularies.
  - d. Keep the book Zechariah in context of the life of the prophet Zechariah.
    - 1) Prophets didn't hole themselves up in offices, write books, then publish them for all Israel to see.
    - 2) Prophets received messages from the Lord, then proclaimed them. They preached sermons, spoke parables, performed sign acts.
    - 3) They did this over years of service (see Jeremiah 25:3).
    - 4) Then either the prophet himself or a colleague recorded, collected, and compiled the material into the books we have.
    - 5) Obviously, editing happened. Obviously, decisions would be made about inclusion, order, organization. It may even be someone other than Zechariah had a hand in the process. That's actually likely. After all, Jeremiah had Baruch (see Jeremiah 36:4, 32; 45:1).
    - 6) Would a twenty-year old prophet preaching to encourage his high priest and governor to finish the temple speak in different ways from a fifty-year old prophet calling his fellows to look to the future and maintain faith that the King is coming? But would there also be similarities? In fact, would there be enough differences you think it could be someone else, but enough similarities that whoever that someone is must be really close to him or really revere him? Remember the assertion by Meyers and Meyers in VI.C.6.?
5. Canonical Reading
- a. I see no reason to jump on the different historical epochs, different authors bandwagon. That being said, even if someone proved the two sections of Zechariah were written by two different authors, even if they proved Zechariah 9-14 is a compilation of different authors from different time periods itself, does that mean we should move heaven and earth to try to trace the historical

development of the text, pull it apart into its supposedly original pieces, figure out what they meant by themselves, and then try to piece it back together?

- 1) In case you're wondering what my answer to that rhetorical question is: NO!
- b. Brevard Childs, who does believe Zechariah is written by different authors, proposes what he calls reading canonically. Simply put, perhaps overly simply put, there is a reason Zechariah, any OT book for that matter, ended up in the form it did. While Childs does concede we shouldn't simply claim, "Inspiration!" or "Providence!" and ignore all historical and critical issues, he concludes we have the Scriptures in the form we need, and our first responsibility is to read and understand them in that form. Contra Barton, to Child the canon is a framework in which to understand Scripture's meaning (see Childs, *Intro to the OT*, 58).
- c. I admit, I'm perfectly willing to simply claim, "Inspiration!" or "Providence!" and move on. However, I'll share some of Childs's argumentation.
- 1) "The usual critical method of biblical exegesis is, first, to seek to restore an original historical setting by stripping away those very elements which constitute the canonical shape. Little wonder that once the biblical text has been securely anchored in the historical past by 'decanonizing' it, the interpreter has difficulty applying it to the modern religious context" (Childs, *Intro to the OT*, 79).
  - 2) "Within the Old Testament neither the process of the formation of the literature nor the history of its canonization is assigned an independent integrity. This dimension has often been lost or purposely blurred and is therefore dependent on scholarly reconstruction. The fixing of a canon of scripture implies that the witness to Israel's experience with God lies not in recovering such historical processes, but is testified to in effect on the biblical text itself" (Ibid., 76).
  - 3) "But basic to the canonical process is that those responsible for the actual editing of the text did their best to obscure their own identity. Thus the actual process by which the text was reworked lies in almost total obscurity. Its presence is detected by the effect on the text. Moreover, increasingly the original sociological and historical differences within the nation of Israel—Northern and Southern Kingdom, pro- and anti-monarchical parties, apocalyptic versus theocratic circles—were lost, and a religious community emerged which found its identity in terms of sacred scripture. Israel defined itself in terms of a book! The canon formed the decisive *Sitz im Leben* for the Jewish community's life, thus blurring the sociological evidence most sought after by the modern historian. When critical exegesis is made to rest on the recovery of these very sociological distinctions which have been obscured, it runs directly in the face of the canon's intention" (Ibid. 78).
  - 4) "The motivations behind the canonical process were diverse and seldom discussed in the biblical text itself. However, the one concern which is expressly mentioned is that a tradition from the past be transmitted in such a way that its authoritative claims be laid upon all successive generations of Israel" (Ibid.).
  - 5) "Scripture bears witness to God's activity in history on Israel's behalf, but history *per se* is not a medium of revelation which is commensurate with a canon. It is only in the final form of the biblical text in which the normative history has reached an end that the full effect of this revelator history can be perceived" (Ibid., 76).

- 6) "The reason for insisting on the final form of scripture lies in the peculiar relationship between text and people of God which is constitutive of the canon. The shape of the biblical text reflects a history of encounter between God and Israel. The canon serves to describe this peculiar relationship and to define the scope of this history by establishing a beginning and end to the process. It assigns a special quality to this particular segment of human history which became normative for all successive generations of this community of faith. The significance of the final form of the Bible is that it alone bears witness to the full history of revelation" (Ibid., 75-76).
- d. Finally, Webb gives a great summation of the matter: "...the task we have set ourselves is to understand the message of the book of Zechariah as part of the Bible (i.e. as Scripture), and those who have transmitted it to us as Scripture quite clearly intended us to read it as a unity. They have not placed it in the canon of Scripture as two separate books, but as one, and introduced it as 'the word of the LORD [that] came to the prophet Zechariah' (1:1). This means that we shall be able to understand its rich, multifaceted message only when we read it as one, interconnected whole" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 46).
- F. "It is better, therefore, to focus upon the final form of Zechariah instead of invented prehistories of layer and stages. House writes, 'Every creative work is a whole made up of parts, but that wholeness must be kept primary lest the overarching beauty of a text disappear.' Textual tensions need not signal multiple authors. Rather, they facilitate interpretation and a proper understanding of the book" (Lessing, *Zechariah*, 17). I conclude the proclaimer of the visions and prophecies in Zechariah 1-8 is the same person who proclaimed the oracles of Zechariah 9-14. There is significant unity between the two portions of the book. The differences are not a product of different authorship but different time of life, different goals, and different genre within prophetic work. That being said, if someone proved the authors were different, the best way to read this book is as presented to us, a unified, interconnected whole.

## VII. ZECHARIAH 1-8

- A. I have no doubt, as I write this ahead of time, our good brothers have covered Zechariah 1-8 with excellence. I do not wish to rehash their outstanding work. However, having asserted (1) we should read Zechariah canonically, which means reading it as a unified interconnected whole, and (2) the prophet's goal with the extreme, flowery, weird language and sense-overwhelming flood of pictures is to modify behavior, there are two things from Zechariah 1-8 I believe we need to have in mind when we read Zechariah 9-11.
- B. In an amazing feat of literary dexterity, Zechariah bookends the entire length of Zechariah 1-8 with a point we need to remember and also bookends the smaller section of Zechariah 7-8 with another point we need to remember.
1. Zechariah 1-8 inclusio
    - a. "The LORD was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. Do not be like your fathers to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us'" (Zechariah 1:2-6).

- b. "But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts... As I purposed to bring disaster to you when your fathers provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, so again have I purposed in these days to bring good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; fear not" (Zechariah 7:11-12; 8:14-15).
  - c. God called out to the fathers through the former prophets, but the fathers didn't listen to the former prophets. The prophets died, but the Word did not. In Zechariah 9-11, he is going to call to mind a great deal of the former prophets for blessing and for cursing of Israel. Zechariah is telling them not to be stubborn like their fathers. "LISTEN!!!" he cries out. "REPENT!!," he says. "OBEY!!" Otherwise his hearers will receive none of the blessings in the coming oracles and only the curses.
2. Zechariah 7-8 inclusio.
    - a. Admittedly, this one may actually not be a bookending inclusio. It may be level "C" of a chiasmic structure since we find entreating the LORD bookending this section. Then one level in we find a question about fasting and an answer at both ends of this section. Then we find the passages I reference at a third level. However, this parallel drives home the behavior Zechariah wants to see among the people and undergirds the persuasion of the oracles to follow.
    - b. "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your hearts" (Zechariah 7:9-10).
    - c. "These are the things that you shall do; Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD" (Zechariah 8:16-17).
    - d. If everything in Zechariah 9-11 is intended to provoke or change behavior, this is the behavior Zechariah is striving to produce.

## VIII. IF THE LORD'S NOT OUR SHEPHERD WE'RE IN BIG, BIG TROUBLE! ZECHARIAH 9-11

- A. "...these chapters do not offer a linear progression of God's plan for the world. The prophet introduces themes and motifs, drops them, and then takes them up again. Zechariah presents a collage rather than a circumscribed progression of events. These chapters do not unfold chronologically, but present the inbreaking of God's kingdom through ecstatic victories and crushing defeats. We see Christ's humiliation as well as his glory, his suffering as well as his greatness. Jesus is accepted yet rejected, conqueror yet conquered. Zechariah presents these ideas with increasing intensity until the end, when Yahweh reigns over the earth (14:9, 16, 17)" (Lessing, *Zechariah*, 331).
  1. Recall Ryken's metaphor in IV.D.3. The prophets, writing Visionary Literature, provide kaleidoscopic pictures and shifting images. Lessing's description above, therefore, should not be surprising to us.
- B. The overarching structure of Zechariah 9-11
  1. Everyone has their breakdown of the organization and structure of these chapters. As is often the case, one structure seems to be about as good as another. Mine may be no

better and may be worse. It is certainly simpler than most. Many try to find chiasms (maybe there is one). Others find some overarching connection with the shepherd/sheep scenes sprinkled through. I imagine each stab at trying to find the structure reveals something insightful about the text worth hearing and seeing.

2. At present I break the oracle into four scenes centered around the LORD speaking and then His commands to the readers to speak.

If the Lord's Not Our Shepherd, We're in Big Trouble (Zechariah 9:1-11:17)

Sect. 1: The LORD Speaks an Oracle (9:1-8)

Sect. 2: Rejoice! (9:9-17)

Sect 3: Ask! (10:1-12)

Sect 4: Wail! (11:1-17)

### C. The LORD speaks an Oracle (9:1-8)

1. "The oracle of the word of the LORD..." (Zechariah 9:1).
  - a. This wording is, as already stated, used only three times in Scripture. The other two places are Zechariah 12:1 and Malachi 1:1.
    - 1) I do not propose that makes the later ministry of Zechariah and the ministry of Malachi contemporary, though I don't dismiss that possibility either. However, as the LORD gave them the same kind of message, it demonstrates they were likely speaking into a similar cultural milieu.
    - 2) It also indicates the entire scroll of The Twelve is to be taken as a whole itself. These final three oracles forming an extended conclusion to the entire span of prophetic work begun by Hosea.
  - b. "A detailed study of the word *maśśā'* has been made by P.A.H. de Boer, who examines its sixty-odd occurrences in the Old Testament, consults the ancient versions to see how early translators understood it, and finally after considering examples of modern exegesis, he reaches his conclusions. In spite of the fact that lexicographers and translators have distinguished two words, one meaning 'load' and the other 'oracle,' de Boer fails to find any evidence for such a distinction. He finds that its etymology and use in the Old Testament, as well as its rendering in the ancient versions, indicate a single meaning. *Maśśā'* is a burden, 'imposed by a master, a despot or a deity on their subjects, beasts, men or things'. It can apply to leadership of God's people, to a cultic duty and to a judgment of God. As used in prophecy it acquires an ominous sense linked up with the catastrophic nature of so many prophecies. In the headings of prophetic oracles *maśśā'* means 'burden imposed on...'. As a technical term it introduces the theme of the following passage, indicating the character of the prophecy. "Though the word 'oracle' persists for want of a more accurate term, if de Boer's thesis is accepted there is more to this heading than that word would suggest. It lays stress on the prophet's sense of constraint in giving the message that follows. He would not have chosen to give it but he finds he has no option (cf. Je. 20:9; Lk. 12:49, 50). It has been placed on him, and like the loadbearer, he has to accept it and discharge his duty. Like an ambassador he is given his message and however unacceptable it may be he cannot alter it; hence the burdensome aspect of his calling. "To the rather neutral term 'oracle', therefore, must be added the idea of compulsion, urgency, dread; the prophet would escape if he could from what may understandably be called his 'burden'" (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 162-163).

- 1) Recall the scene about the prophet's job (especially III.E.3 and III.D.3.b.). He is to FAITHFULLY make known the Word of the Lord. More than that, when he has received the Lord's Word, he must speak it. It is a "burden." He must bear it.
2. Dating Zechariah 9-14 from the "events" in Zechariah 9:1-8.
    - a. In the dating and authorship debacle that Literary Criticism can sometimes be, this is one of the passages used to try to determine a date for the supposed Second Zechariah. Some examine the city names in this Oracle Against the Nations and try to pinpoint an actual conquest in world history matching these cities and this progression.
    - b. The student might think folks taking this approach would all be able to pinpoint precisely the same moment in history. The student would be quite wrong. Reddit gives a sampling of guesses made:
 

"F. Horst thinks the mention of Hadrach points to a date before 738, when that city lost its independent status. A. Malamat dates the verses in 720, in connection with the defeat of Gaza by Sargon II, while B. Otzen thinks the verses fit the Assyrian period after 660 (see 10:10) and nominates the time of Josiah... W. Rudolph adopts a date in the Ptolemaic period...they read the verse as an allusion to a successor under whose hands Palestine did suffer, the earliest choices being Ptolemy I, who invaded Jerusalem in 301 (so van der Woude), or Ptolemy III (so Mitchell), and they apply the name to the armies of the Ptolemies...Scholars not convinced by arguments for dating Zechariah 9-14 in the Ptolemaic period sometimes point to the Maccabean period as its time of origin..." (Redditt, *Date of Zechariah*, 666-667).
    - c. He concludes: "Such widely divergent dates based on the attempt to identify historical allusions in Zech 9:1-8 suggest that the attempt is flawed. The truth is that while a few features of 9:1-8 may fit one military invasion or another, the verses taken as a whole fit no particular campaign" (Ibid., 667).
  3. The Battle Belongs to the LORD.
    - a. "For over a century biblical scholars have persisted in dating and interpreting Zechariah 9 on the basis of alleged historical allusions, especially the military campaign of vs. 1-7 and reference to the sons of Yawan in vs. 13. For hundreds of pages arguments have been advanced, with equal persuasiveness for an historical setting during the reign of Hezekiah, Josiah, Tiglath-pileser, Sargon, Alexander, or the Macabees. The flaw in this line of interpretation is methodological: the genre of the composition has been perceived incorrectly, and thus an inappropriate method of interpretation has been applied; in short, a Divine Warrior Hymn has been mistaken for a poetic report of an historical event, that is to say, cosmic war has become confused with mundane war" (Hanson, *Ancient Ritual Pattern*, 37-38).
      - 1) I'm not ready to agree with Hanson that this poem is a Divine Warrior Hymn patterned after ANE mythological Divine Warrior Hymns (though I'm not completely opposed to the idea).
      - 2) I completely agree with him, however, that the reason trying to date the writing of Zechariah or even the "foretold events" of this poem by looking at the list of place names is off base. This is not a mundane war; it is a cosmic war.
    - b. Zechariah, as Daniel did in Daniel 10:13, is pulling back the curtain. He is showing the war the LORD is waging and winning, not foretelling a series of

military campaigns we need to see in history to know when God is going to do something special.

- c. Zechariah is not making known the future, he is making known the LORD. The LORD is the conquering hero. No one can stand before Him. He defeats all enemies. He conquers all foes.

#### 4. Oracles Against the Nations (OAN)

- a. In Zechariah 1:14-15, the LORD of hosts said, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it."

- 1) Zechariah's first oracle begins with God meting out that judgment in cosmic battle. This is not to say the cosmic battle did not have temporal, earthly aspects. Each of the cities did face God's temporal judgment at one time or another. But this passage is not pointing us to a period in earthly, temporal sequence in which a particular army or even a heavenly army defeated these cities in precisely this order one after another.

- b. Repeatedly, God lifts up His word against the nations in OAN.

- 1) Isaiah 14:3-19:15: God rails against Babylon, then Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush, and finally Egypt.
- 2) Jeremiah 25:15-26: In a vision, God has Jeremiah give nations a drink from His cup of wrath. Egypt, Uz, Philistines (mentioning specifically Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod), Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Sidon, Dedan, Tema, Buz, Arabia, Zimri, Elam, Media, Babylon.
- 3) Ezekiel 25-32: God has Ezekiel prophesy against Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt.

- c. Even in the Book of the Twelve, God brings a word against the nations.

- 1) Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa in the days of Uzziah in Judah and Jeroboam in Israel, begins his book with an OAN.
- 2) He speaks against Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab.
- 3) Though not in the same order, the first three nations of Amos's OAN match the OAN in Zechariah 9:1-8: Damascus, Tyre, Philistia.
  - a) What draws our attention to Amos's OAN, is the oracle against Philistia mirrors the one in Zechariah.
  - b) Philistia had five major cities: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, Ekron (see Joshua 13:3).
  - c) Both OANs mention the same four, dropping Gaza from the mix.

- d. While God through Zechariah takes up an OAN, He modifies the purpose, changing the agenda.

- 1) "Comparing the OAN [oracles against the nations] in Amos and this passage, however, demonstrates a different agenda for the Zechariah passage. In Amos, the OAN leads to judgment against Judah and Israel. In Zechariah 9:1-8, the surrounding nations are judged, but the ultimate goal of the judgment is to prepare peace for Jerusalem" (Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve*, 905).

#### 5. Clearing a Path to the LORD's House

- a. The LORD's Word is against the land of Hadrach. "This geographical term, found only here in the Hebrew Bible, refers to a district in Syria. Known as *Hatarikka* or *Hatari(k)ka* in Assyrian sources, it was apparently created following Tiglath-Pileser III's advance toward Damascus, Samaria, and other Syro-Palestinian territories in 738 B.C.E." (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 91).
- b. From the far north, a city that was never in Israel's territory to Damascus and Hamath, to Tyre and Sidon, to the cities of the Philistines, God makes His way in victory and conquest toward Jerusalem.
- c. On the way, He brings judgment against the materialism, covetousness, greed of Tyre. He strips her of possessions. Though she heaped up silver like dust and gold like mud from the street, her wealth and prosperity did her no good when God brought judgment. In so doing, He demonstrates we can only have one master. If the master is money, we will be judged along with our "god."
- d. The Philistines who, according to the poem, put their trust in Tyre, writhe in anguish as the LORD defeats her. Then God brings judgment on those cities. Their king is defeated. Their land uninhabited. But most especially their pagan sacrifices are removed. No longer will they drink the blood of their sacrifices nor eat the abominations they sacrifice.
- e. Then in a stunning turn, a remnant is left to these cities inside the Promised Land proper. Though God defeated them, He left them a remnant who would take part in the blessings of His land just as the Jebusites did when David captured Jerusalem but didn't drive them out entirely. What a surprise this must have been for the Jews to hear as God wages His cosmic war against the nations. There would actually be a place for them in His kingdom.
  - 1) Or maybe it wasn't that surprising. In Zechariah 2:10-11, when God said He was coming to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, He also said, "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people."
- f. But the entire poem leads to verse 8. The LORD is coming to His house.
  - 1) "The reference to YHWH's house (9:8) does double duty. On the one hand, it evokes the image of the temple in Jerusalem. on the other hand, one must also keep the entire passage in view poetically, so that 'house' here also refers to the entire territory of Judah. YHWH has cleared the borders of the land from north to south in 9:1-7. YHWH will now guard the territory, keeping out the invading armies who fought for control over the eastern Mediterranean coastlands for much of the Persian and Hellenistic periods" (Nogalski, *Book of the Twelve*, 906).
  - 2) Nogalski may be right. Perhaps "house" does double duty here.
    - a) However, Zechariah begins in 1:16 with the LORD announcing, "I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem."
    - b) The entire book thus far has been concerned with the rebuilding of God's house, His temple in Jerusalem. Now that it is built, why would He shift the meaning to refer to the Land? Of course, when the LORD guards His house, He also guards His city, His people, and His land.



- 3) This is the repetition of Ezekiel 43:1-4. The LORD and His glory had left the temple in Ezekiel 10, but He had promised a return. That promise is adopted in Zechariah 9.
- a) Remember the previous discussion about why God recalled Zechariah to prophesy. In part, it was the state of the LORD's house (V.F.). It had been completed, but at the completion, the LORD's glory did not return.
  - b) Surely the people noticed. The temple was built, but the LORD had not returned to it. For anyone who knew the accounts of the completions of the tabernacle and the first temple, the events and celebration of Ezra 6 had to be a bit anti-climactic as they praised and celebrated, shouted and sang, but the cloud of the LORD's glory never appeared.
  - c) What did people living with this disappointment need to hear? The LORD is coming. He is coming on His timetable, but He is coming. Zechariah promises the victorious, conquering LORD is coming to His house. He would clear a path, take up residence, then set up a guard to protect it.
- 4) He will encamp at His house.
- a) In Genesis 32:1-2, between Jacob being protected from Laban by God's intervention and Jacob being protected from Esau (surely, also by God's intervention) "the angels of God met him." Jacob's response? "This is God's camp!" In Zechariah 9:8, Jerusalem becomes God's camp, the place He protects His people.
6. The Eyes of the LORD
- a. The poem begins and ends with the eyes of the LORD.
    - 1) "For the LORD has an eye on mankind" (vs. 1).
    - 2) "For now I see with my own eyes" (vs. 8).
  - b. In Zechariah 3:9, God introduced the single stone with seven eyes. In 4:10, "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth."
    - 1) In 2 Chronicles 16:9, Hanani told Asa king of Judah who had relied on Syria instead of on the LORD that God would judge him. Hanani's argument that Asa could have relied on the Lord was, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro through the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him."
    - 2) Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."
    - 3) The fact that God has his eye on mankind and the fact that now He sees His house with His own eye means God is there to support those whose heart is blameless toward Him. He keeps watch over the evil and the good. He sees them. He knows the difference.
  - c. A subtle persuasive touch. The LORD is watching. "If you are blameless (read again Zechariah 7:9-10; 8:16-17)," Zechariah says, "the LORD will support you from His house. If not, you'll be part of His clearing destruction and judgment on the way there."

7. Responding to the prophet.
  - a. Remember the two questions we should ask before we ever ask what this passage may say about the future.
    - 1) What do we learn about God from this poem?
    - 2) What should we do because of this poem?

D. Rejoice! (9:9-17)

1. The oracle of the word of the LORD has traveled from north to south, conquering the nations in its wake, blazing a trail to Jerusalem, to the House of the LORD allowing the LORD to come and encamp. What is the appropriate response? REJOICE!!! SHOUT ALOUD!!!
2. The King has come! Long live the King!
  - a. Please, do not too quickly jump to Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.
    - 1) Certainly, the apostles saw Jesus the Messiah in this passage. We will too. However, we must not put the cart before the horse. Because we too tend to see prophecy as mainly predictive, we make the wrong connection between the words of the apostles and their reference to the prophet here.
    - 2) This prophecy is not giving a predictive sign. Zechariah was not saying, "Alright, Israel, keep your eyes peeled. One day, a guy is going to ride a donkey into Jerusalem. That's how you'll know your King."
  - b. Who is the King?
    - 1) The Son of David?
      - a) Certainly, Israel rightly had a Messianic expectation. They were looking for the Son of David to fulfill the covenant God made with David in 2 Samuel 7. Psalm 110 told of a coming King who would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek and execute judgment on the nations.
      - b) Additionally, Jeremiah had promised God would "raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land" (Jeremiah 23:5; see also 33:15).
      - c) Zechariah takes up this former prophet and refocuses attention on that Branch. In Zechariah 5:9-14, the word of the LORD prompts Zechariah to have some envoys from Babylon make a crown for Joshua the high priest. Then Zechariah is instructed to call him Branch. He will build the temple, shall sit and rule on his throne, and shall be a priest on his throne. He will be a priest and king (though the word "king" is not used in this sign). No doubt, this is using Joshua as a symbol for the coming priest/king.
    - 2) However, trace "king" in the Book of the Twelve in general and in Zechariah in particular; a "different" King rises to the surface.
      - a) The Book of Twelve
        1. Throughout the minor prophets, kings of Israel, Judah, and foreign nations are referenced. But there is clearly an issue the LORD has with the kings and a deeper point about who is actually King.

2. As the Twelve teach Israel and Judah about their King, they actually take up the ancient struggle begun in the days of the Judges and the prophet/judge Samuel.
  - a. Four times in Judges (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25), we are told there was no king in Israel. Twice is added “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (17:6; 21:25).
    1. On the surface, this may sound like something written once the monarchy had been established as a defense of it. As if to say, “This is why we needed a king. Back then we were wicked, now that we have a king everyone does what is right.” If you’ve read the history of Israel, you know that is foolish.
    2. Rather, this harkens back first to Deuteronomy 12:8, where God told them when they got to the land they wouldn’t each one do what was right in their own eyes, but would bring their sacrifices to the place God established.
    3. And second to Exodus 15:26, which tells Israel they are supposed to “diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes.”
    4. The point in Judges is not Saul or David hadn’t been crowned yet, so everything was a moral shambles. The point is the people were not letting the LORD be their King as they were supposed to. This did not change when Saul or even David ascended the throne.
  - b. In 1 Samuel 8:5, the elders of Israel came to Samuel and demanded, “Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations.” When Samuel was displeased and prayed, God told Samuel to do what the people asked and then said, “for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them” (1 Samuel 8:7). Though God had plans to raise a king (see Genesis 49:10; Deuteronomy 17:14-17), the way he was appointed was an indication not of submitting to God, but rejecting God.
  - c. In the first of the Book of the Twelve, in Hosea 13:10-11, God in His rebuke brings that early rejection to Israel’s mind. Israel is being destroyed. Their kings are ruined and taken captive and killed. And God says, “Where now is your king, to save you in all your cities? Where are all your rulers—those of whom you said, ‘Give me a king and princes’? I gave you a king in my anger, and I took him away in my wrath.”
  - d. All this time and God drives home that the main lesson has been Israel didn’t need a king, they needed the LORD. He gives kings and He takes away kings. He is the real King.
3. In Amos 5:25-26, God takes up a taunt with a twist on this king theme. This time it isn’t that they pursued an earthly king and rejected God as their King. This time He rebukes them for idolatry in the wilderness. “Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? You

shall take up Sikkuth your king, and Kiyunn your star-god..." At some point, in one of their forays into idolatry they claimed Sikkuth king instead of the LORD.

4. In Micah 4:9, God taunts Jerusalem, "Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in you? Has your counselor perished, that pain seized you like a woman in labor?" Micah, of course, prophesied while kings did reign. But ultimately, those kings proved useless in the fight against Babylon. God taunts them saying, "Why are you calling on Me? What about that king you begged for? Can't he do anything for you?" Judah would be conquered because the kings they asked for were useless and their true King had given them up.
5. But even more than God's taunt about their useless kings, God makes two bold declarations. In Micah 2:13, "Their king passes on before them, the LORD at their head." In Micah 4:6-7, "In that day, declares the LORD...the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion from this time forth and forevermore."
6. But the coup de gras is found in Zephaniah 3:14-15 when the LORD proclaims through Zephaniah, "Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again feel fear." The declaration in Zechariah sounds almost exactly like this one. Yet, this one tells us who is the King—YHWH, the LORD.
7. And as if that wasn't enough, in the final book of the Twelve the LORD declares, "I am a great King, says the LORD of hosts, and my name will be feared among the nations" (Malachi 1:14).

#### b) The King in Zechariah

1. Zechariah could be an exception in the Twelve. But it isn't.
2. In Zechariah 2:10, the LORD says, "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst." Granted, the word for "rejoice" is different in Hebrew. But early in the book rejoicing and singing because someone was going to come dwell in Zion was taught. That someone is not David or the Son of David. That someone is the LORD.
3. But especially notice how Zechariah ends. If we are confused about who the King of Israel is in Zechariah 9:9, by the time we get to the end of Zechariah's second oracle, we should have no doubts.
  - a. "And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one" (Zechariah 14:9).
  - b. "Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths" (Zechariah 14:16).
  - c. "And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them" (Zechariah 14:17).

- 3) The King of Israel is the LORD, the very one who cleared a path in vs. 1-8 and plans to encamp at His house is King. And therefore, Israel needs to rejoice because the King, the LORD of hosts has come.
- 4) Now that we've seen the horse, let's examine the cart. When Jesus entered Jerusalem in what we often call His triumphal entry, He manufactured a "fulfillment" of Zechariah 9:9.
  - a) Both Matthew and John call direct attention to it (Matthew 21:1-7; John 12:14-15). Mark and Luke both record the entry and the riding of a colt, but neither mention the passage in Zechariah. This is one of the events all four gospels record.
  - b) But let's face it. Jesus manufactured this. How many times did He go into Jerusalem and not ride the colt of a donkey? He could have done the same this time, but He purposefully changed. We should be able to admit this is not the same as Matthew 2:5 and the fulfillment of Micah 5:2. This is not Jesus just going along and the promised thing happens outside of Jesus's control adding evidence to His case for Messiah.
  - c) Jesus wasn't walking along to Jerusalem and some traveler, wishing to honor or serve or minister to Him, surprisingly or out of the blue offered Him a donkey to ride on. Jesus paused on His trip to Jerusalem and sent disciples to get the donkey. He manufactured the fulfillment.
  - d) Neither was there some special need on this trip into Jerusalem demanding Jesus ride an animal and the available one happened to be a donkey. And then afterwards He realized, "Oh my goodness, did you see what just happened? I just fulfilled Zechariah 9:9. I wasn't even thinking about that." No. Jesus chose to get the colt, the foal of a donkey and ride it. He manufactured the fulfillment.
  - e) What is going on here? Again, Zechariah 9:9 was not a predictive statement giving Israel a sign to watch out for. Think about it for a minute. If that was what was intended, anyone could manufacture it. If I wanted to, I could book a flight to Israel, hire a colt the foal of a donkey, and ride into Jerusalem. Would that mean I was fulfilling one of the predictions of the Messiah? Of course not.
  - f) Jesus on a day when He realized the Messianic expectations were high and the people were looking to worship, revere, and even make Him king, purposefully, not accidentally or incidentally, chose to ride into town on a colt the foal of a donkey.
  - g) Jesus was not just acting normally and coincidentally prophecy was fulfilled. Jesus was signaling fulfillment. He was proclaiming fulfillment.
  - h) Like He did in Nazareth in Luke 4:16-21, Jesus displayed a prophecy to the people and said, "That's Me!" He did it more creatively this time, but that is precisely what He did. Knowing the words of Zechariah, Jesus purposefully manufactured the scenario in order to say, "Behold, daughter of Zion, your King is coming to you!" And the people responded appropriately, shouting back to Him from Psalm 118:25-26: "Hosanna!" "Save us, we pray!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" They knew what Jesus was claiming. And on that day, many of them agreed.

- i) Except, maybe they didn't pick up on all Jesus was saying. And maybe we don't always pick up on it either. He was claiming to be the King, no doubt. And in that way, He was claiming to be the anointed, the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David. But go back to what we learned in Zechariah and the Book of the Twelve. Jesus was not simply claiming, "I'm the Messiah, the son of David." He was claiming, "I'm your King, the LORD of hosts!"
1. When He instructed His disciples what to say to the owner of the donkey, He said, "You shall say, 'The Lord needs them.'"
  2. Recall that the Branch (Zechariah 5:12; Jeremiah 23:5-6) who would be King would actually be called, "The LORD is our righteousness."
  3. Recognize the conundrum Jesus tossed into the laps of the Pharisees in Matthew 22:41-46. In the Messianic Psalm 110, David calls his son, "Lord," "If David calls him Lord, how is he his son?"
  4. Jesus is not simply claiming to be the one anointed by the LORD. He is claiming to be the LORD.
- j) Our Muslim, Jewish, and otherwise skeptical friends often assert Jesus never claimed to be God. Not true! When He rode into Jerusalem on that donkey, as the people placed their palm leaves and shouted "Hosanna!" He claimed to be the King as loudly as He possibly could. And either He was a blasphemer of the highest magnitude, or He was precisely what He claimed.
3. Why "on a colt, the foal of a donkey"?
- a. Remember Sandy's talk of translucence? (IV.F) To hear any given commentator refer to the point behind riding the donkey, you'd think this was a transparent symbol. But then why can't they agree?
    - 1) "He is *lowly*, like the Servant of Jehovah; and comes riding not the horse, an animal for war, because the next verse says that horses and chariots are to be removed from Israel, but the ass, the animal not of lowliness, as some have interpreted, but of peace. To this day in the East asses are used, as they are represented in the Song of Deborah, by great officials, but only when they are upon civil, and not upon military, duty" (Smith, *Book of the Twelve*, 2.466-467).
    - 2) "The King is further described as 'lowly,' whose lowliness is emphasized by His entering the city riding on an unbroken colt of an ass. This does not indicate the peaceful nature of His reign, but the lowliness of it in opposition to the pride and pomp of worldly kings. Since the days of Solomon, royal persons had ridden upon horses; but the character of the Messiah's kingship would be completely different. This difference in character would be demonstrated by His humble entrance upon His rule" (Hailey, *Minor Prophets*, 371).
  - b. So, which is it? Does the donkey indicate peace instead of war because it's a donkey and not a war horse? Does it indicate humility? Is it both? What if it's actually neither?
    - 1) The King is humble (perhaps afflicted), and we know it not because He rode a donkey, but because vs. 9 says He is.
    - 2) The King will bring peace and we know it not because He rode on a donkey, but because vs. 10 says He will.

- 3) As shocking as it may seem to us, being “mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey,” is probably just window dressing for a prophetic picture of royalty riding into town.
- 4) The description of this animal makes two claims making this animal the appropriate one for royalty to ride.
- a) The animal is purebred: “The expression ‘ass’s colt’ is attested at Mari, where its significance is ‘purebred’, that is, an adult ass, born, not of a mule, but of a female ass. It thus qualified as a royal mount” (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 166).
  - b) The animal has never been ridden: “According to Mk, the donkey on which Jesus rode had never been sat upon (Mk 11:2). This has been regarded as legendary accretion based upon the sacredness of an unused animal; but it is just as likely that Jesus deliberately chose an unused donkey for the sacred occasion” (Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 197). Marking the animal as the “foal of a donkey” intimates its lack of use.
  - c) Goswell asserts, “The motif of a figure ‘riding on a he-ass, on a donkey the offspring of she-asses’ ...does not need to indicate humility or a rejection of militarism (in implied contrast to arriving on horse or in a chariot). According to Frans Laubscher, it can be viewed as an appropriate royal mount, being the traditional riding animal prior to the importation of horses. As clarified by Kenneth Way, the point of the involved description of the animal is the purity of the royal mount (‘a purebred jackass’). Due to its rarity and expense, it is a prestigious animal appropriate for use by a king, and so is an image that may be used in application of the royal metaphor to YHWH” (Goswell, *A Theocratic Reading*, 16).
4. Peace or War?
- a. Zechariah 9:10 says the King will “speak peace to the nations.” That seems to be supported by the claim that He will “cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem.” And “the battle bow will be cut off.” But only three verses later He says He will make Judah his bow and Ephraim His arrow and attack Greece (vs. 13). In vs. 14-15, the LORD wages war. Is it peace or is it war? Is it attaining peace through war? What is going on here?
  - b. This is likely God following His own instruction to us found in Romans 12:18: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” The King speaks peace to the nations. He intends peace. He wants peace. He offers peace. However, if the nations refuse peace, He will not sit idly by and watch them march to and fro across His land and over the backs of His people. Sadly, for the nations, Zechariah 9:12-15 indicate the nations will reject the King’s peace talks.
  - c. That being said, I wonder if the concern about peace vs. war causes us to miss a main point in 9:10.
    - 1) Clearly the King will speak peace to the nations. I don’t deny that.
    - 2) But is the claim to cut off horse, chariot, and bow a declaration that the King will stop war? Perhaps not.
    - 3) Earlier in the Book of the Twelve, God had made a similar claim. “And in that day, declares the LORD, I will cut off your horses from among you and will destroy your chariots; and I will cut off the cities of your land and throw down all your strongholds; and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and

you shall have no more tellers of fortunes; and I will cut off your carved images and your pillars from among you, and you shall bow down no more to the work of your hands; and I will root out your Asherah images from among you and destroy your cities. And in anger and wrath I will execute vengeance on the nations that did not obey" (Micah 5:10-15).

- a) In this proclamation, cutting off chariots and war horses is not a declaration that peace is coming.
  - b) Rather, it ties the horses, chariots, cities, and strongholds to idolatry. That may seem odd to us until we recall some of the LORD's earlier statements about horses and chariots and other battle implements.
    1. In the law of the kings in Deuteronomy 17:16, "Only he must not acquire many horses for himself..."
    2. "When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 20:1).
    3. "And I gave them into your hand. And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out before you, the two kings of the Amorites; it was not by your sword or by your bow" (Joshua 24:11b-12).
    4. "Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright" (Psalm 20:6-8).
    5. "Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity. The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together" (Isaiah 31:1-3).
  - 4) In other words, the promise about chariots, war horses, and bows in Zechariah 9:10 is not saying there will be no war. It is saying when the LORD the King takes residence in His house, His people will abandon their idolatrous reliance on fleshly strength and armies. Instead, they will rely on the LORD.
  - 5) As stated above, the LORD will pursue peace and offer peace to the nations. But if they will not have peace, He will bring judgment. His people will not have to turn to horses, chariots, and personal strength. The LORD is on their side. They will win any battles the enemy brings their way, not because of superior weapons, strength of arms, or force of numbers but because of the LORD.
5. He shall rule from sea to sea.
    - a. The prophet adopts a strand of promise and prophecy from God to His people.



- 1) In Genesis 15:18, when the Lord covenanted with Abraham, the promise was, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates."
  - 2) As God informed Moses of His plans for the conquest of the land, He said, "And I will set your border from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the Euphrates..." (Exodus 23:31).
  - 3) In the highly Messianic Psalm 72, the prayer (and prediction) is, "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!" (vs. 8). Zechariah's statement exactly matches this prayer.
  - 4) Once the LORD the King of Israel, the land promise would be truly fulfilled. His kingdom would actually extend to the entire earth. See Zechariah 14:9.
6. The blood of my covenant
- a. Zechariah harkens back to Exodus 24:8 (the only other OT passage using this phrase): "And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.'"
    - 1) Why will the LORD return to His house? Why will He take residence in Jerusalem? Why will He conquer nations and protect His people? Because of a ritual He participated in at the foot of Mt. Sinai.
    - 2) The LORD bound Himself by covenant to this people. He made promises. And though the people are faithless, He will remain faithful. He cannot deny Himself.  - b. New Testament authors adopted and adapted this phrase.
    - 1) In Hebrews 9:11-28, the author there makes a case that just as the Mosaic covenant was ratified with blood from calves and goats, our covenant was ratified with blood. In fact, "under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (vs 22). However, rather than ratifying the covenant with the blood of calves and goats, this blood of the covenant is the blood of Jesus shed at the cross.
    - 2) In Hebrews 13:20-21, Jesus became the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the covenant. That is, by His sacrifice on the cross and the shedding of His own blood He was raised from the dead to be the Shepherd of the Sheep. His blood is the blood of the covenant.
    - 3) But as we read our New Testaments, though the above is the foundation of the blood of the covenant under the New Covenant, we first read about the blood of the covenant when Jesus established His memorial supper. According to Matthew 26:28 and Mark 14:24, the fruit of the vine is the blood of the covenant. Paul reminds us of this in 1 Corinthians 11:25.
    - 4) Let us be amazed. In Zechariah 9:11, God declares that because of a covenant ritual centuries earlier conducted by the hearers ancestors, He was going to make good on His promises. The LORD God keeps covenants. If the LORD God will hold so firmly to a covenant ratified through the blood of bulls and goats, how much more will He keep His covenant ratified by the blood of His One and Only Son? And to assure us of that, He provided a memorial in which we partake of the blood of the covenant every first day of the week.
7. Setting prisoners free from the waterless pits.

- a. Though the return to the Promised Land had begun, many were still behind in foreign lands. God takes up the promise to restore all His people.
- b. No doubt, this picture of captives in waterless pits reminds us of Jeremiah in Jeremiah 38:6.
  - 1) Zedekiah allowed the officials of Jerusalem take Jeremiah captive. They put him in a waterless pit and he sank in the mud. They did not do this to hold him captive. They did it to kill him tortuously and slowly (see Jeremiah 38:4).
  - 2) Jeremiah was saved before he died in Jeremiah 38:7-13 by Ebed-melech an Ethiopian eunuch in the king's house.
  - 3) Israel was a remnant when Zechariah preached to them. They were still oppressed by the nations. Even when they built the temple, though it was the LORD's work and accomplishment, in the earthly sphere it only happened because their oppressors granted them permission. The same will be true when they build the walls of Jerusalem. They frankly seemed to be on the verge of destruction and death at all times. The events recorded in Esther happening near the time of Zechariah's later prophesying prove this.
  - 4) God would not allow His people to die. Though they, like Jeremiah were tossed into a waterless pit, He would save them.
- c. But even more, this image reminds us of the patriarch of Israel, Joseph.
  - 1) In Genesis 37:18-24, Joseph's brothers saw him and decided to kill him and throw him in a pit. Reuben stopped them from killing him. But they still stripped him and "threw him into a pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it."
  - 2) You know the story. No need for me to repeat it here. Joseph wasn't simply rescued from the pit. He ultimately became the one to whom his captors bowed themselves in submission.
  - 3) Though Israel was taken captive. They would not be simply set free. They would be exalted over all their enemies.
  - 4) Though we be prisoners of the LORD and for the LORD, like Peter in Acts 12 or like Paul and Silas in Acts 16, we are not enemies who need to despair. Rather we can sleep in peace like Peter, or sing in praise like Paul and Silas, because we are prisoners of hope. Not prisoners who wishfully think of escape and restoration. Prisoners promised by our King to set us free and exalt us.
- d. At the same time, recognize the subtle juxtaposition between who held Israelites captive at the time of Zechariah versus who put the antitypes of them in their waterless pits.
  - 1) Joseph was not put in the waterless pit by foreigners, but by his brothers. Jeremiah was not put in the waterless pit by foreigners, but by fellow Israelites.
  - 2) Two things to recall:
    - a) Israel wasn't actually captive because Assyria or Babylon decided to attack and deport them. They were captive because Israelites rejected the Lord's chosen messengers. Israel wasn't captive because of foreigners, but because of one another.

- b) The foreigners are not our worst enemies. That would be us.
- 3) Underlying this promise of freedom to captives is a reminder freedom comes when you listen to God's representatives, God's prophets, God's proclaimers, God's messengers, God's preachers. When we reject the word of God, we have no hope of freedom.
8. "O Greece"
- a. For those of us who believe Zechariah is inspired Scripture, the mention of Greece in Zechariah 9:13 doesn't give us a bit of trouble. For Literary Critics (whether they believe in inspiration or not), this passage provides a field from which they make much hay trying to figure out the layers of history underlying the sources compiled to make "Second Zechariah."
  - b. The struggle, we learn, is Greece was a nobody in the days of Zechariah. Why would he include them here? Either the entire document was written after Alexander the Great rose to power and started conquering or this scene was written by someone at that time or later and redacted in as a secondary bit of writing.
  - c. Again, firm believers in inspiration know God can call the names of individuals and nations long before they become somebody in the process of earth time. But even without that, the mention of Greece doesn't provide information about dates the Literary Critics want and even among them they can't decide what the date actually is based on it anyway.
  - d. Baldwin explains: "*Over your sons, O Greece*. These words, omitted from the text in NEB, and bracketed as a gloss in JB, are said to overload the metre, because the first two lines form a couplet, which should be balanced by a couplet and not by three lines. It is usually assumed that the 'sons of Greece' are enemies to be overcome, and that the gloss was inserted in Maccabean times to give the prophecy contemporary relevance. But the term *Javan* is applied in Genesis 10:2, 4 and in Isaiah 66:19 to distant, unknown peoples on the edge of civilization, and it is probably used in the same sense in this eschatological context. The fact that the Greek includes the words is proof that they were part of the text when that version was made. RSV represents the meaning of the Hebrews text. God's people are to share exultantly in the world-wide victory of the Lord" (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 168-169).
  - e. Zechariah may be using "Javan/Greece" as symbolic for any foreign enemies. Or he may be picking up the prophecies of Isaiah 66:19, Ezekiel 27:13, and Daniel 8:21; 10:20; 11:2.
  - f. Whether he was specifically foretelling the coming war with Greece under the Maccabees or not, it would certainly have been a passage they would use to find hope in God for victory.
9. Then the LORD will appear over them.
- a. Zechariah 9:14-15 provides intensifying language and pictures to assert victory for the LORD's people with whatever enemies they face.
10. The Flock of his people
- a. The soon to be repeated theme of Shepherd and Sheep begins.
  - b. Though Zechariah slips in this statement nonchalantly, it calls to mind a great Old Testament theme of the LORD's shepherding work.

- 1) In Genesis 48:15-16, when Israel the man was blessing Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, he said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys..."
  - 2) In Genesis 49:23-24, Israel the man blessed his twelve sons and said the following of Joseph: "The archers bitterly attacked him, shot at him, and harassed him severely, yet his bow remained unmoved; his arms were made agile by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (from there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel)..."
  - 3) In Psalm 80:1, the psalmist appeals to God, saying, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock."
  - 4) And, of course, the most famous Psalm 23: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want."
  - 5) The former prophets make a big deal out of sheep and shepherds. We'll look more into them in Zechariah 11. For now, notice the kickoff of the theme.
11. Abundance and prosperity: "Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the young women" (Zechariah 9:17).
- a. From the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 27-28, grain and wine were used to indicate either poverty from curse or prosperity from God's blessing.
    - 1) Blessing: "And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow" (Deuteronomy 7:11-12).
      - a) He doesn't get as specific as mentioning grain and wine in the blessing. However, when we read the curses, we backfill what it means to be blessed in the "fruit of the ground."
    - 2) Curse: "The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away...It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil..." (Deuteronomy 28:49-51).
  - b. The Book of the Twelve adopts this contrast using grain, wine, and oil as indications of poverty due to being cursed for disobedience or prosperity due to being blessed for obedience. Specifically note examples of the declaration of victory, blessing, and abundance.
    - 1) "And in that day I will answer, declares the LORD, I will answer the heavens, and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine, and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel, and I will sow her for myself in the land" (Hosea 2:21-23a).
    - 2) "Then the LORD became jealous for his land and had pity on his people. The LORD answered and said to his people, 'Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied; and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations'" (Joel 2:18-19).
    - 3) "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the

mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it. I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel..." (Amos 9:13-14a).

- c. When the LORD is King, the kingdom will be filled with abundance and prosperity. Of course, the not-so-subtle reminder is this prosperity and abundance only comes when the people actually submit to the King.

12. Responding to the prophet.

- a. Remember the two questions we should ask before we ever ask what this passage may say about the future.
  - 1) What do we learn about God from this poem?
  - 2) What should we do because of this poem?

E. Ask! (10:1-12)

1. Ask rain from the LORD.

- a. The previous scene ended with promises of agricultural prosperity. As Zechariah moves into the third scene of this oracle, he picks up that theme with another command for his hearers to speak. This time the command is to pray or to Ask. Specifically, if they want agricultural prosperity, they need to ask the LORD their King and Shepherd for rain.
- b. Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God explained to them in Deuteronomy 11:8-17 that the land He was giving them was not like Egypt.
  - 1) In Egypt, the crops depended on the annual flooding of the Nile. Palestine is "a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."
  - 2) God told Israel "to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for you land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil."
  - 3) But if they disobeyed, "the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you."
  - 4) The agricultural prosperity of Israel relies on God's blessing. Therefore, if this Kingdom of the LORD wants rain for agricultural abundance, they need to ask. Yet, that asking and praying needs to be grounded in faithfulness and submission. If they go after other gods to worship and serve them, they can ask all day long and God will say No.
- c. God allowed a fantastic demonstration of this through Elijah the prophet in 1 Kings 17-18. Elijah asked for the rains to stop in response to God's promise in Deuteronomy 11:8-17. Then when God was ready to give rain again, he commanded Elijah to pray for it to rain. It did. (see also James 5:17-18)
- d. This also flows from the discussion of the abundance that will come from the LORD being King in the previous scenes of Zechariah's oracle.
  - 1) Zechariah has already quoted Psalm 72:8: "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth!" (Zechariah 9:10).
  - 2) Notice the prayer for the king in Psalm 72:6: "May he be like rain that falls on mown grass, like showers that water the earth!" God's King is a blessing

on His land and on His kingdom. His mere presence is like rain feeding the earth. How much more when the King is God Himself?

- 3) However, even that request or promise in Psalm 72:6 is based on the oracle (not the same word as Zechariah 1:1) of David recorded as his last written psalm in 2 Samuel 23:
  - a) "When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth" (2 Samuel 23:3b-4).
  - b) How much more when the ruler over men is God Himself?
2. For the household gods utter nonsense.
  - a. Wait! What?
  - b. In this verse we get the clearest picture of the state of Zechariah's audience. In our section on why God called Zechariah to prophesy (V.G.), we took an educated guess from everything else we know about Israel outside of Zechariah. I wanted to wait until we got here in the text to show our guess was accurate.
  - c. Despite the victory of building the temple, the house of prayer to the LORD, Israel is no longer listening to God.
  - d. This had been a perennial problem for Israel.
    - 1) In Deuteronomy 18:9-14, God commanded Israel, saying, "...you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you... anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD."
    - 2) The author of 2 Kings explains why God allowed Israel to be conquered and many of her inhabitants taken captive in chapter 17: "And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger" (vs. 17).
    - 3) When Jeremiah prophesied to the people about judgment coming from Babylon and the need to submit to it, the diviners and dreamers challenged: "For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 29:8-9).
    - 4) When Ezekiel was prophesying, the same problem was at hand: "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Because you have uttered falsehood and seen lying visions, therefore behold, I am against you, declares the Lord GOD. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and who give lying divinations'" (Ezekiel 13:8-9a).
  - e. Part of the reason the fathers had ignored the former prophets is they listened to the household gods, the diviners, the dreamers of false dreams. They gave empty consolation. Zechariah warns the people around him to avoid their fathers' failures. They will fall into the same traps if they listen to the same counselors.
3. Sheep without a shepherd.

- a. In Zechariah 9:16, the prophet began the recurring theme of Shepherd/Sheep. There the point had been the LORD is the Shepherd.
  - b. The theme recurs now. In the previous scene of this kaleidoscopic oracle, we saw what could and would be for the people who follow the LORD as Shepherd. With almost whiplash effect, in this next scene we discover a big, big problem. These people actually don't have a shepherd. That means the LORD is not their Shepherd. They don't lie down in green pastures. They aren't led by still waters. They aren't in paths of righteousness. In the dark valley, they are merely blind. They ignore the rod and staff of the LORD.
  - c. This metaphor is not new.
    - 1) When the LORD refused to allow Moses to shepherd Israel into the Promised Land proper, Moses pleaded for God to grant a successor to him "that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17). The LORD appointed Joshua.
    - 2) In 1 Kings 22:17 and 2 Chronicles 18:16, when Micaiah foretold the death of Ahab in battle, his metaphor was, "I saw Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd."
    - 3) When God rebuked the wicked shepherds in Ezekiel 34:5-6, He said, "So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts."
  - d. Catch the subtle statement about reality in this picture. When the people allow teraphim/household gods, diviners, dreamers shepherd them, they actually have no shepherd at all because there is no reality behind those falsehoods.
  - e. Jesus picks up this metaphor and applies it to his time.
    - 1) In Matthew 9:35-38, Jesus traveled throughout the cities and villages. He taught in synagogues. He healed disease and every affliction. Matthew records, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Mark records similarly in Mark 6:34.
    - 2) Zechariah is not predicting Jesus's day. Rather, Jesus is seeing His day is just like Zechariah's day. In fact, in every day and age when people are like this, they are what Zechariah is writing about. And in every day and age there are people just like this. The problem is not they are sheep. The problem is they have no shepherd.
    - 3) We are surrounded by people who have no shepherd. What did Jesus instruct us about this: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest'" (Matthew 9:37-39).
    - 4) How did this scene of Zechariah begin? ASK! Ask for rain. If we want folks to learn about the true Shepherd we need to ASK! Ask the LORD to send out workers. And be willing to be part of His answer.
4. My anger is hot against the shepherds.
    - a. Wait! I thought they didn't have shepherds. The kaleidoscope turns again.
    - b. They didn't have real shepherds, true shepherds, good shepherds. They had men who took the position of shepherd, but not the responsibility of shepherd.

- c. Once again, Zechariah adopts the message of the former prophets for his own time. The more things change, the more they stay the same.
- 1) “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: ‘You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD’ (Jeremiah 23:1-2).
  - 2) “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep?...So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts...Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, declares the Lord GOD, surely because my sheep have become a prey, and my sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched for my sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep, therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep. No longer shall the shepherds feed themselves” (Ezekiel 34:1b-2, 5, 7-10a).
- d. Recall what we discovered when we attempted to ascertain Zechariah's age (V.E.1). The high priest at the time of Ezra's return, Joiakim, was a contemporary with Zechariah. Yet, according to Ezra 10:18, some of his brothers were leading the way in the foreign intermarriage. Then Joiakim's son, Eliashib, who overlapped with Zechariah and surely heard Zechariah's oracles, was the one who because of family intermarriage made an apartment for Tobiah the Ammonite in the court of the LORD's temple (Nehemiah 13:7).
- e. The temple had been built, but in short order the people had turned from the LORD. This happened in part because their shepherds, their priests and leaders, had turned from the LORD.
- f. Zechariah's generation was doing precisely what had prompted their fathers to be conquered by Assyria and Babylon. And God says He'll punish this set of shepherds just as he did the last ones.
5. From Judah shall come the cornerstone.
- a. The LORD will not only punish the shepherds, He will raise up a cornerstone, a tent peg, a battle bow, and every ruler. He will do this because He cares for His flock and plans to make them like his majestic steed in battle.
  - b. Again, Zechariah adopts the message of the former prophets for his audience.
    - 1) Right after rebuking the wicked shepherds in Jeremiah 23:2, the LORD says, “Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:3-4).



- 2) But even more than that, in Jeremiah 23:5-6, we find the Branch of David prophecy. "I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely."
  - 3) After rebuking the wicked shepherds in Ezekiel 34, the LORD says, "Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so I will seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered..." (Ezekiel 34:11-12) Remember who the King is that is the Shepherd of Israel. It is the LORD. He will remove the wicked shepherds and He will be the Shepherd.
  - 4) But God goes on to say, "I will rescue my flock; they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken" (Ezekiel 34:22-24).
- c. In Zechariah 10:3-5, Zechariah doesn't use the term "Shepherd" as he speaks of replacing the wicked shepherds. But his message is the same. From Judah God will set up a cornerstone, a tent peg, a battle bow, and every ruler. That's the new Shepherd. And taken in the context of the ongoing prophetic theme, he is the new David, the son of David, of the tribe of Judah.

1) Cornerstone

- a) "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (Psalm 118:22).
- b) "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, 'Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: "Whoever believes will not be in haste." And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter'" (Isaiah 28:16-17).
- c) Peter cites both of these passages in 1 Peter 2:6-7, referring to Jesus.

2) Tent peg:

- a) Zechariah may have Isaiah 22:15-25 in mind, in which the LORD replaces Shebna the steward with Eliakim. He says Eliakim will "shoulder the key of the house of David" (a phrase used by Jesus in Revelation 3:7 to describe Himself). God says He will fasten Eliakim "like a peg in a secure place." However, the day was coming when that secure peg would give way. The likely point of this is while Eliakim is a type of the Messiah, he is not the Messiah. He will do good work, but he will give way.
- b) In Ezra 9:8, when Ezra prays in response to discovering Israel's sin of intermarriage with the foreigners, he bemoans Israel sinning again at just the moment when the LORD had shown them favor and given them a "secure hold within his holy place, that our God may brighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our slavery." "Secure hold" is the same word as "tent peg" in Zechariah 10:4.
- c) This "tent peg," of course, would be used for any tent. In fact, it is the same kind of peg Jael took from her own tent and used to kill Sisera

(Judges 4:21-22). So, perhaps it is only coincidental that this word is used for the pegs used in the LORD's tabernacle: Exodus 27:19; 35:18; 38:20, 31; 39:40; Numbers 3:37; 4:32.

- d) In Isaiah 33:17-22, between telling Jerusalem their "eyes will behold the king in his beauty" and declaring, "For the LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us," all of this as an expression of God judging the nations and delivering Israel, He describes Zion/Jerusalem as "an untroubled habitation, an immovable tent, whose *stakes* will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken" (emphasis mine, *ELC*).
- e) This is who will come from Judah. A sturdy, stable, peg that will fasten and hold securely God's house, God's city, God's mountain so they will be immovable.

### 3) Battle bow:

- a) When he says the battle bow will come from Judah, Zechariah is likely building upon his previous statement that "I have bent Judah as my bow" (Zechariah 9:13). The bow which initially was Judah will be compressed into one man from Judah.
- b) The battle bow does not need a list of passages to explain. To my knowledge there are no other battle bow passages particularly connected to the Messiah. But the point is made nonetheless. This cornerstone that lays the foundation for God's kingdom, this tent peg that keeps the tent and city immovable, is also the battle bow that protects from the enemies.

### 4) Every ruler:

- a) This one is admittedly odd. For two reasons.
1. He shifts from one cornerstone, one tent peg, one battle bow, to "every ruler—all of them together." While the word for "ruler" seems to be singular, the concept is plural.
  2. Of the 23 times this word is found in the OT, this is the only place it is remotely positive. Every other use is negative: taskmasters (Exodus 3:7; 5:6, et al); oppress (Isaiah 3:5; 58:3, et al), oppressors (Isaiah 3:12; 9:4, et al); exact(ed) (Deuteronomy 15:2, 3; 2 Kings 23:35); hard pressed (1 Samuel 13:5; 14:24); driver (Job 39:7); exactor (Daniel 11:20). Oh yeah, and this word is found in Zechariah 9:8 where it is translated "oppressor." There, Zechariah says God won't let any more of them into Jerusalem.
- b) I think what has happened here is Zechariah was speaking of Judah as a tribe and starts to speak of them collectively as if a single man.
1. In vs 3, he said, "...and will make them like his majestic steed in battle." That is, He will make all of the tribe of Judah as if like a single steed in battle. He will ride them into battle as He does the actual fighting from the steed's back.
  2. In compressing Judah down to single person, he mentions the cornerstone, tent peg, battle bow. Remember, prophecy presents odd pictures with kaleidoscopic effect. Just imagine seeing a troop of men in a mental image compressed into one who becomes the epitome, the true representative. We see the picture in one man

representing what all of them were meant to be, but only one of them truly is. That presents the picture of the Messiah for us who will come from Judah (Genesis 49:8-12). He will be the cornerstone, the tent peg, the battle bow.

3. But with “ruler” the image starts to spread back out to the entire tribe. And this prepares the way for what is coming next. Where Zechariah describes the strength of the entire tribe in battle.
  - a. “They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses” (Zechariah 10:5).
4. With that in mind, Zechariah gives a reverse image of 9:8. The LORD will no longer allow oppressors, taskmasters, drivers to hold sway over Judah. Rather, anyone who attacks Judah will find Judah as the taskmasters. This is reminiscent of Israel over the Gibeonites in Joshua 9, allowed to live but made servants.
6. I will strengthen the house of Judah and Joseph
  - a. In Psalm 78, the Asaphite psalmist demands the people listen as he teaches them.
    - 1) He recounts Israel’s repeated failures and falls. By the time the Asaphite psalmist is done with this second longest psalm, he essentially claims the preceding history explains something very important: “[God] rejected the tent of Joseph; he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves” (Psalm 78:67-68).
    - 2) This is, no doubt, the dominant view the southern kingdom developed in the nearly century and a half between the fall of Israel and their own Babylonian captivity. God chose Judah. God chose the southern kingdom. God rejected the northern kingdom. God rejected Joseph. God rejected Ephraim.
  - b. But in Zechariah 10:6, God makes it clear, the restoration is not just about Judah. God will not only strengthen the house of Judah, He will also save the house of Joseph. Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior also (Zechariah 10:7).
  - c. According to Psalm 78:67, God rejected Joseph and Ephraim. In Zechariah 10:6, “they shall be as though I had not rejected them.” Different words for “reject” but synonymous ideas.
  - d. The Kingdom for God is for all God’s people. Praise the LORD!
7. I will whistle for them and gather them in.
  - a. Again, Zechariah adopts the promises of the former prophets.
    - 1) “He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah and Judah shall not harass Ephraim” (Isaiah 11:12-13).
    - 2) “Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply” (Jeremiah 23:3).
    - 3) “And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land” (Ezekiel 34:13).

- b. At the same time, Zechariah provides a reversal of the former prophets.
    - 1) In Isaiah 5:26ff, God whistles. However, that time, he was raising a signal for nations far away to come in judgment on Israel.
    - 2) He takes this a step further in Isaiah 7:18. God said, "In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures."
    - 3) See the reversal in Zechariah 10:10, 11. In Isaiah 7:18, he whistled for judgment to come against Israel from Egypt and Assyria. In Zechariah 10:10, 11, God whistles, but this time He gathers His people from Egypt and Assyria.
  - c. And having brought Egypt into the picture, Zechariah demonstrates this will be as a second Exodus in Zechariah 10:11. "He shall pass through the sea of troubles and strike down the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up."
  - d. Surely, however, when the prophet declares this will be a second Exodus, we can't help but remember some of the dreadful things Israel did during the first one. Surely, we can't help but recognize if the people will not listen to the LORD and His prophets they might be doomed to wander in the wilderness and die off.
8. I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon.
- a. Gilead
    - 1) Gilead was the region on the east of the Jordan. It was part of the land Israel conquered when they defeated Sihon and Og and fought the Amorites.
    - 2) Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to dwell in that land. Moses allowed it, but only after they helped their brethren conquer the Promised Land proper (Numbers 32). In Joshua 22, they were allowed to settle in Gilead and the surrounding regions after the conquest.
    - 3) What an amazing thing. Israel was so large, two and a half of the tribes had to settle across the Jordan.
    - 4) In the time of Zechariah, to my knowledge, none of the Jews lived in Gilead.
  - b. Lebanon
    - 1) A range of mountains along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea north of Israel.
    - 2) In Joshua 1:4, God had said the Israelites would be given this land. However, in Joshua 13:5 "all Lebanon, toward the sunrise" remained settled.
    - 3) While it appears Solomon had some dominion in Lebanon (1 Kings 9:19; 2 Chronicles 8:6), he had to get permission from Hiram king of Tyre to use wood from Lebanon's mountains for the temple (1 Kings 5:1-12).
    - 4) Lebanon then stands as a testimony that when God promises a blessing, if the people will not obey, if they turn to other gods, if they dismiss His prophets, He will relent from the blessing.
    - 5) Yet, now that God is gathering His remnant back from Egypt and Assyria, from the four corners of the earth, they will overflow to and fill Lebanon.

c. The point of this seems clear. In this regathered, restored Israel, where Judah and Israel will be joined together again and strengthened, the remnant will be so many the land in which they are now dwelling will not be enough. They will have to spread across into Gilead and up through Lebanon.

d. Praise the LORD!!!

9. Responding to the prophet.

a. Remember the two questions we should ask before we ever ask what this passage may say about the future.

1) What do we learn about God from this poem?

2) What should we do because of this poem?

F. Wail! (11:1-17)

1. THE ORACLE OF THE WORD OF THE LORD was spoken and it blazed a trail for Him to come to Jerusalem. The only fitting response for the people of God was to REJOICE as their King came into His rightful dwelling. Now that He is dwelling in His house of prayer, the only right response for the people of God is to ASK for His blessing. However, we discovered a fly in the ointment. The people were already drifting, listening to household gods, diviners, dreamers of false dreams. Their shepherds were leading them astray, so God would provide judgment against those shepherds. The LORD promises restoration, but every step of the way reminders have been offered that this can only happen if the people will actually let the LORD shepherd them. What will they do? Sadly, Zechariah 11's opening poem lets the cat out of the bag before we see the actuality play out. WAIL!!! God commands. That cannot be good.

2. Wail! Wail! Wail!

a. The cypress trees of Lebanon must wail, the oaks of Bashan must wail, the shepherds will wail. Three wails because the glorious trees are ruined, the shepherds' glory is ruined, the thicket of the Jordan is ruined.

b. Bashan is closely linked to Gilead mentioned in Zechariah 10:10.

1) Bashan was also on the east of the Jordan and part of the tribal allotments to Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh.

2) In Deuteronomy 3:10, 13, when recounting the land on the east of the Jordan conquered by Israel, Bashan and Gilead are mentioned together.

3) According to Joshua 17:1, 5, Gilead and Bashan were both part of Manasseh's eastern allotment of land. That connection is important since in Zechariah 10:10, the point was about Joseph being strengthened and restored. Manasseh was one of Joseph's sons.

4) In Jeremiah 50:19, in speaking of the restoration of Israel, God said "I will restore Israel to his pasture, and he shall feed on Carmel and in Bashan, and his desire shall be satisfied on the hills of Ephraim and in Gilead."

5) In Micah 7:11-17, Micah tells of refugees from out of Egypt and Assyria (recall Zechariah 10:10, 11) being restored. He calls on God to "Shepherd your people with your staff, the flock of your inheritance, who dwell alone in a forest in the midst of a garden land; let them graze in Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old" (vs. 14).

6) In other words, Gilead and Lebanon of Zechariah 10:10 and Lebanon and Bashan of Zechariah 11:1-3 are, for all intents and purposes, the same place.

- 7) Thus, the very locations the returning exiles in the second Exodus were supposed to go in Zechariah 10:8-12 is now on fire. The trees, shepherds, and lions in those places are wailing and roaring.
- c. Meyers and Meyers would have us believe this is a positive development for Israel.
- 1) "The very mention of 'Lebanon' echoes the presence of that toponym in 10:10, where Lebanon along with Gilead signify the relatively uninhabited territory that will be filled to overflowing in the great return of the exiles that chapters 9 and 10 anticipate. The low population of Lebanon is integrally related to its ecological characteristics--mountainous and densely wooded. Viewing Lebanon as, one day, being densely populated against great environmental odds thus serves well the eschatological thrust of the prophetic view. It also provides the imagery that opens chapter 11. Although the demographic surge is a concomitant of restoration, it will mean the end of the great forests of those areas. Consequently, it is those forests that are called upon to mourn" (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 294).
  - 2) Because the returning refugees will number so many, they have to spill over to Lebanon and Gilead (Zechariah 10:10). However, because of the geographic features, namely the dense forestation, the only way for the refugees to live there is to chop and burn down the forests.
  - 3) So, wail forests, but rejoice Israel.
- d. As pleasant as the positive take is, I simply can't see it.
- 1) Though I am willing to be corrected because I may have missed something, of the 30 times wailing is commanded or mentioned, all of them have to do with judgment. Only one other has those being judged while the delivered sing and rejoice.
    - a) "Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of hearts, but you shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit...'" (Isaiah 65:13-14).
    - b) The "you" in the above passage refers to "you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain" (Isaiah 65:11).
    - c) But this passage is a contrast not a correlation. The LORD's servants do not rejoice because the forsakers are judged. Neither are the LORD's servants the cause of the forsakers' wailing. This is merely a separation. Those who forsake God will be judged and wail. Those who serve God will be blessed and rejoice.
  - 2) In other passages, Lebanon, Bashan, Gilead are paralleled with God's people and destroying them equals judgment.
    - a) In Isaiah 2:12-13, cutting down the trees of Lebanon and Bashan is a sign of extreme judgment. "For the LORD of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan."
    - b) When God spoke against the king of Judah in Jeremiah 22:1-7, He said, "You are like Gilead to me, like the summit of Lebanon, yet surely I

will make you a desert, an uninhabited city. I will prepare destroyers against you, each with his weapons, and they shall cut down your choicest cedars and cast them into the fire” (vss. 6-7).

1. This is particularly poignant because of the parallel of being uninhabited with having the trees cut down. That is, having the trees cut down in Lebanon and Gilead does not equate to having a people-inhabited city. It is parallel to becoming uninhabited.
- c) Later in the same chapter of Jeremiah, God rebukes Jehoiakim, saying, “Go up to Lebanon, and cry out, and lift up your voice in Bashan; cry out from Abarim, for all your lovers are destroyed. I spoke to you in your prosperity, but you said, ‘I will not listen.’ This has been your way from your youth, that you have not obeyed my voice. The wind shall shepherd all your shepherds, and your lovers shall go into captivity; then you will be ashamed and confounded because of all your evil. O inhabitant of Lebanon, nested among the cedars, how you will be pitied when pangs come upon you, pain as of a woman in labor!” (Jeremiah 22:20-23).
1. Inhabiting Lebanon does not mean deforesting Lebanon, it means being nested in cedars. Further, Lebanon's and Bashan's fortunes are tied with Judah's.
- d) The passage quoted in the above section showing the connection between Bashan and Gilead from Jeremiah 50:19 also shows the connection between the fortunes of Israel and Judah and Bashan and Gilead. Being able to dwell there is a punishment on Babylon and Assyria and a blessing for Israel and Judah.
- e) And Micah 7:14, also quoted in the above section, has Israel grazing in Bashan and Gilead living in the forest and describe it as pasturing in a garden land. The forests do not need to be fired and felled so Israel can dwell there. Being in those lands is a sign of restoration for Israel. If those lands and their trees were mourning and wailing, that would be a sad sign for Israel.
- f) There is one exception to the above. In Isaiah 10:24-34, God tells the inhabitants of Zion not to fear Assyria. Though Assyria will travel all the way to Jerusalem, it will be stopped. Then God describes the judgment as, “Behold, the Lord GOD of hosts will lop the boughs with terrifying power; the great in height will be hewn down, and the lofty will be brought low. He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe, and Lebanon will fall by the Majestic One.”
1. However, this is when Assyria has traveled down through Lebanon and are the inhabitants there on their way to Jerusalem. In that case, felling the trees of Lebanon is a judgment on Assyria. Only then is it a joy to Judah and Jerusalem.
  2. In Zechariah, Israel and Judah have taken up residence in Lebanon, Bashan, Gilead. Firing and felling their forests would not be good for Israel and Judah.
- 3) The cedars of Lebanon in a book about the building of the LORD's house.
- a) I'm already convinced the burning of Lebanon's forest along with Bashan's is not a good thing for Israel. In the immediate context it is bad because Lebanon and Bashan are where the overflowing numbers

- of remnant refugees have taken up habitation. But in a book that has been mostly about the building of the house of the LORD, we should recognize another point.
- b) According to 1 Kings 5 and 2 Chronicles 2, the temple was built from the cedars of Lebanon. Those cedars were, of course, cut down and burned when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the first temple.
  - c) When Zerubbabel and Joshua led the people to rebuild the temple, guess where they got the lumber from? That's right, they followed the example of Solomon and got cedars from Lebanon according to Ezra 3:7.
  - d) In a book about the building of the house of God, the felling and burning of the cedars of Lebanon especially with that phrase "Open your doors," would strike the Jews' hearts with fear that Zechariah is talking about the cedars in the temple. (And, he was.)
- e. Add to that the shepherds' wail.
- 1) Zechariah is adopting a lament from Jeremiah 25:34-38:
    - a) "Wail, you shepherds, and cry out, and roll in ashes, you lords of the flock, for the days of your slaughter and dispersion have come, and you shall fall like a choice vessel. No refuge will remain for the shepherds, nor escape for the lords of the flock. A voice—the cry of the shepherds, and the wail of the lords of the flock! For the LORD is laying waste their pasture, and the peaceful folds are devastated because of the fierce anger of the LORD. Like a lion he has left his lair, for their land has become waste because of the sword of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger."
    - b) Jeremiah's prophecy is judgment on Israel and Judah. The destruction of the forests of Lebanon and Bashan doesn't mean room to dwell for the overflowing refugees, but loss of refuge and shelter for these shepherds. The shepherds are being judged, so they wail.
- f. Zechariah 11:1-3 is heartbreaking and prepares the reader for the great heartbreak of the final scene of Zechariah's oracle.
- 1) When God commissioned Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, He told them they would prophesy and preach to people who would not listen (Isaiah 6:9-13; Jeremiah 7:27; Ezekiel 3:4-11). We get to read that. So, when they don't listen, we aren't surprised.
  - 2) We don't read God telling Zechariah his audience won't listen. In fact, we are predisposed to assume they will because they did in 1-8. Therefore, we are taken aback when the people don't listen in Zechariah 11. But this is no different from any of the prophets.
  - 3) In Zechariah's oracle, God spoke, bringing judgment on Israel and Judah's enemies and then taking residence in Zion. His residence gave them reason to rejoice. Then He called them to repent from listening to teraphim and diviners and instead rely on Him and ask Him. If they would, great blessing and restoration would occur.
  - 4) The blessings described in the scene of Zechariah 10 are so overwhelming and amazing, we, the modern readers, see it as a foregone conclusion that of



course they will listen, rely, and ask the LORD. However, the final scene shows how they actually respond.

- 5) Have you ever watched a TV show that started with a shocking scene in which it looked like the main character was captured or killed. You are completely thrown off guard. You don't understand what is going on, until the next scene comes up and across the bottom it says, "Three Days Earlier." Then you get it. "Oh, they showed me a climax and now they are going to back up and show me what happened to lead to that shocking scene." That is Zechariah 11:1-3. This scene begins and ends with poems that describe the lament of shepherds. They are actually the same scene with the explanation of them in between.

### 3. Shepherd the Flock Doomed to be Slaughtered

#### a. A sign-act:

- 1) As part of his oracle, Zechariah includes the record of a sign-act God had him perform to convey a message to his audience. Some suggest this is a parable, others an allegory, some a merely rhetorical written device, and still others a vision. Perhaps. However, it seems to me God tells Zechariah to do something, and he does it. Zechariah provides some explanation, but we are left to figure out most of it for ourselves.
- 2) When God had Isaiah loose the sackcloth from his waste and walk without sandals for three years in Isaiah 20, that was a sign-act.
- 3) When God had Jeremiah buy an earthenware flask and take some elders out to the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, proclaim some teaching, and then break the flask in Jeremiah 19, that was a sign-act.
- 4) When God had Ezekiel shave his head and beard with a sword, weigh it out, burn a third, strike a third with a sword, then toss a third into the wind in Ezekiel 5, that was a sign-act.
- 5) When God asked Zechariah to become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter, that was a sign-act.

#### b. The Flock of Slaughter

- 1) In Jeremiah 12:1-4, the prophet complains God is allowing the wicked to prosper alongside the righteous. He asks God, "Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of the slaughter." God brings this same image to mind in Zechariah's sign-act.
- 2) Here is an entire flock destined for slaughter. The shepherds of this flock have purchased their sheep for the purpose of slaughtering them and the sellers knew the buyers' goal. The shepherds aren't punished for it. They are making a living raising sheep to be either sacrificed or simply eaten. These shepherds see their sheep as a means of personal profit only. And they think the LORD is blessing them because they make one.
- 3) This sign-act is an adaptation of the shepherd teaching in Ezekiel 34.
  - a) Those were shepherds of a flock of sheep. They were awful shepherds. They didn't care for their sheep. They didn't feed the sheep. They didn't strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the straying, or seek the lost. They ruled with force and harshness. So, their sheep were scattered. Everyone saw this was a tragedy. The sheep were to be pitied, the shepherds to be despised.

- b) In Zechariah, everyone knows these sheep are purchased for slaughter. No one cares how the shepherds treat them.
- c) And Zechariah has been told to get a job shepherding that flock.

c. But why?

- 1) God explains in vs. 6. Sadly, because God no longer has pity for Israel. Israel has become a flock doomed for slaughter. In this sign-act, Zechariah will represent God, the flock doomed to slaughter his audience.
- 2) In Ezekiel 34, when God saw the dominant sheep harming the others, He decided to intervene. When He saw the shepherds mistreating the sheep, He decided to show compassion. When He saw the sheep harassed and helpless, injured and broken, He had pity. He punished the shepherds and took over the flock. But now, He will have no pity.
- 3) He will allow neighbor to attack neighbor. He will allow kings to dominate and ruin the people and crush the land. He will not deliver the flock.
- 4) Recognize that neighbor attacking neighbor is a demonstration the issue is not simply with the shepherds (the kings). The issue is with the sheep. Further, the sheep are not allowed to blame or excuse their behavior because of their shepherds. The sheep are wicked and selfish and destructive. As Paul says to Christians in Galatians 5:15, "But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another." If sheep attack each other, they will destroy each other. On the day of slaughter, they will not be able to excuse themselves with, "But our shepherds..."

d. Pause to reorient

- 1) If you're like me, this sounds just awful. It doesn't sound like God at all. Where is the everlasting mercy? Where is the faithfulness to the blood of the covenant? Maybe the Jews who first heard this didn't know about Jesus, but I do. How can this fit?
- 2) Remember the means and methods of the prophets (IV). Remember prophecy is about Prosecution and Persuasion Over Prediction (IV.E). Do you remember my illustration of my dad who would say stuff like, "Boy, you do that again and I'll rip your arms off and beat you with the bloody ends"? [IV.E.6.d.1)]. The purpose of the extreme language that didn't sound like anything my dad would ever actually do was to prosecute me for the wrong I was doing and persuade me to repent and straighten up.
- 3) Certainly, God gives no empty threats. He always means what He means. But remember the reason Zechariah is giving Israel this sign-act is to prosecute them for their sin (recall Zechariah 10:2) and persuade them to repent. God doesn't want to slaughter them. Even when He has doomed a people to "slaughter" or judgment in whatever form, if they repent, He will relent (Jeremiah 18:1-11).

e. The Three Shepherds

- 1) Who on earth are the three shepherds Zechariah destroyed? That is the question everyone is asking. And no one knows.

2) “*In one month I destroyed the three shepherds*. These words are probably the most enigmatic in the whole Old Testament” (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 181).

3) Wayne Welsh shared with me a list of suggestions he has compiled from his study and reading. I have copied his notes without editing:

- Miriam, Aaron, and Moses? (Talmud)
- Saul, David, and Solomon?
- David, Adonijah, and Joab? (died in the same month)
- Zechariah, Shallum, and Menahem? (or some other unnamed usurper?)
- Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah? (Abendana)
- Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians?
- Babylonians, Medo-Persians, and Macedonians?
- Persians, Greeks, and Romans?
- Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi? (Aben Ezra)
- Judas, Jonathan, and Simon Maccabeus? (Abarbinel)
- Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus Eupator, and Demetrius I?
- Simon, Lysimachus, and Menelaus, (the sons of Tobias)?
- Jason, Menelaus, and Lysimachus (three high priests?)
- The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians?
- The Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes?
- The three Sanhedrim?
- The Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers?
- The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders?
- Priests, false prophets, and kings of the Jews? (Jerome) (cf. **Jer 2:8, 26; 18:18**) (Theodoret)
- The priests, the judges, and the interpreters of Scripture (i.e. lawyers) (Cyril)
- Three Roman emperors (Galba, Otho, and Vitellus) who died in the same year?
- The three anointed leader groups: kings, prophets, and priests?
- The three classes in **11:5**: buyers, sellers, and pitiless shepherds?
- The three “uprooted horns” of **Dan 7:8, 20, 24**? (equally cryptic!) (Welsh, *Unpublished Notes*)

4) After months of study, dozens of commentaries, scads of scholarly journal articles (trying to figure this out is what made my outline so late),<sup>4</sup> I have finally decided I know who the three shepherds are:

- a) The three shepherds are the three guys who owned the flock to be slaughtered that let Zechariah partner with them.
- b) In the allegory of the sign-act, they are wicked shepherds and represent who the wicked shepherds in prophecies about Israel always represented: kings, governors, priests, false prophets, bad parents, anyone who should be leading people in the right direction but aren't.
- c) They do not represent any particular people in history that we should be hunting down to know when this allegory was written or about when it would be fulfilled. We do not have to discover three individuals or three groups they specifically represent.
- d) “As speedily as possible he removes the three faithless shepherds. It is unnecessary to attach a precise meaning to the three shepherds, and interpret them to mean the three leading classes of kings, prophets, and priests; or the three world-kingdoms; or some three particular

oppressors of Israel, such as Antiochus Epiphanes, Antiochus Eupator, and Demetrius. They are part of the furniture of the allegory, and their removal by the prophet within a month is intended to signify God's intention to deal promptly and effectually with the oppressors of His people, whoever they may be" (Kirkpatrick, *Doctrine of the Prophets*, 467).

5) He destroyed the three shepherds?

- a) Kirkpatrick says Zechariah "removes" the three shepherds. The ESV says he "destroyed" them. Baldwin says, "I *destroyed* may be a little strong for a verb which can mean 'deposed'" (Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 181). It is the same word used in the next verse when Zechariah says of the sheep he is abandoning, "Whatever is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed."
- b) Nineteen of the thirty-two uses of this word in the Old Testament have to do with hiding or hidden (see Genesis 47:18; Joshua 7:19; et al). One time it is translated "denied" (Job 6:10). But the rest are all pretty strong indications of destruction, death, and wiping people out.
- c) I admit, I find it hard to believe God asked Zechariah to murder the three shepherds. I think it must be a wordplay with what he says about the sheep in the next verse. Whatever Zechariah did, took the three shepherds out of the picture and removed them from the flock.
- d) The point being Zechariah did not partner with these wicked shepherds, he replaced them. His intentions were not to join the selfish shepherds in their pursuit of personal profit, but to shepherd the flock in a different way. His goal, no doubt, was to take this flock of slaughter and lead it into something else.

f. The Abandoning Flock

- 1) "But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me" (Zechariah 11:8b).
  - a) Zechariah 11:8b is only half of a verse. It is slipped in quietly. It is said with no fanfare. It can be easily missed. However, it contains the key to this sign-act.
- 2) Because this impatience and detesting leads to Zechariah telling the sheep he would no longer be their shepherd, we ascertain "they" in 8b is the sheep themselves, not the destroyed/deposed/removed shepherds.
- 3) Zechariah had removed the awful shepherds who are satisfied with buying sheep just to kill them. He removed the shepherds that mistreat the sheep and use them only for their own personal gain. You would think the sheep would be appreciative. You'd think they would want to follow Zechariah. He is saving their lives.
- 4) But no. He became impatient with the flock because the flock detested him. Brown-Driver-Briggs says the word translated "detest" in this form means to "feel loathing."
- 5) Being detested by sheep would mean the sheep refused to listen to Zechariah, refused to follow him, refused to heed his voice. No wonder he became impatient. This good shepherd would spend his days and nights trying to protect the sheep from predators, trying to prepare good places for them to eat, preserve good sources for them to drink from, protect them from each other, protect them from wandering off, seek them when they did.

But they detested him. They would not accept his helping guidance. They ignored his two staffs of Favor and Union.

- 6) He did what would be quite natural. The flock was already doomed to slaughter. He had tried to rescue them from their wicked shepherds, but since the sheep wouldn't respond to his shepherding, he turned them over to their doom.
    - a) "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another."
    - b) This is reminiscent of God's impatience with the people when He was speaking to them through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 15:1-2: "Then the LORD said to me, 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my heart would not turn toward this people. Send them out of my sight, and let them go! And when they ask you, "Where shall we go?" you shall say to them, "Thus says the LORD: 'Those who are for pestilence, to pestilence, and those who are for the sword, to the sword; those who are for famine, to famine, and those who are for captivity, to captivity.''"
  - 7) Zechariah 11:9 is chilling. I can hardly read it without having to pause and let it settle. Just reading through it and going on seems impossible. "I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another."
    - a) This is all the more chilling when we remember in the allegory of this sign-act, Zechariah represents God.
  - 8) We must recognize this very aspect of God we so often ignore. God reaches out to us. He reaches down to us. He sent His Son to die for us. He will do anything for us. But if we keep pushing Him away, He will eventually give us over to our desires. If we despise the truth, He will send us delusions and lies (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). If we turn away from God to follow men, birds, animals, and creeping things, He will give us up (Romans 1:23). If we worship the creature rather than the Creator, He will give us up (Romans 1:25-26).
  - 9) Any sheep, of course, that loved the shepherding of Zechariah could have stayed with him. But they detested him. When he ceased to actively pursue them and left them to themselves, they no doubt destroyed themselves.
  - 10) And this is the key we must recognize. For Israel, when God's wrath was exercised against them, it most often looked like Him simply removing the protection they detested and leaving them to themselves. The outcome was more awful than they could bear. The same is true for us. God's wrath is actually not Him losing control of His emotions because we won't do what He wants. His wrath is Him exercising healthy boundaries. If we don't want His shepherding and guidance, He will remove His protective hand and give us up to our desires. But know this, the outcome will be more awful than we can bear. It is so bad, some call it Hell.
- g. The Two Staffs: Union and Favor
- 1) In this sign act, Zechariah adapts the actions of Ezekiel 37:15-28 by reversing them. Where Ezekiel took two sticks representing Judah and Joseph/Ephraim (recall Zechariah 10:6) and united them into one demonstrating he would gather the two flocks into one fold with one

shepherd, Zechariah takes two sticks and breaks them both demonstrating separation between the tribes and breaking of the covenant with God.

- 2) Zechariah's picture is one of the saddest in the entire Bible.
- 3) Kyle C. Dunham, in his article *Zechariah 11 and the Eschatological Shepherds* included a chart (22) comparing and contrasting the two sign-acts. I have modified it to match the ESV and added some comparisons I saw.

Ezekiel 37:15-28	Zechariah 11:7-16
Ezekiel takes two sticks	Zechariah takes two staffs
Stick 1 is named "For Judah"	Staff 1 is named "Favor"
Stick 2 is named "For Joseph"	Staff 2 is named "Union"
Ezekiel joins the two sticks	Zechariah breaks the two sticks
Covenant renewed	Covenant broken
A new David shepherd-king is appointed over them	An illusory shepherd-king is appointed over them
God dwells with them	God lets them abandon Him

4) Breaking Favor:

- a) The question is, of course, does "Favor" represent Zechariah's feelings toward the flock or the flock's feelings toward him. Either way, favor was lost. He became impatient because the sheep detested him. So, Zechariah breaks "Favor."
- b) He claims by breaking the staff he was "annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples."
- c) Because of the word "covenant," we may thoughtlessly read this as if God is saying "I broke the covenant." But God is not the one speaking. Zechariah is speaking.
- d) As part of the sign-act Zechariah had made an agreement with the people. Clearly, taking over the flock doomed for slaughter was not simply a business venture with the three shepherds, but an agreement or covenant with the community. He broke/annulled that covenant. This is further testified by the fact that he asks the people watching him to give him wages if they thought he was worthy of them. If Zechariah had simply partnered with the three owners of the flock, his time shepherding would not deserve wages from the community. Shepherding this flock was a commitment to the community.
- e) Certainly, understanding Zechariah is the one breaking a covenant doesn't completely let "God off the hook." Zechariah represents God in this allegory. God has decided not to have pity on the remnant. Their sins have become odious to Him. He is leaving them up to their own devices. Zechariah's breaking Favor with the people represents something on God's end.

1. But God has said He will never break His covenant with Israel. In Leviticus 26, after describing all the punishments God will bring on Israel for violating His laws, He says, "Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sake remember the covenant with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 26:44-45).
- f) I admit there are some aspects of this I don't understand, but I remember our "pause to reorient" above. The purpose of this sign-act is not to predict the future. We're not trying to find some point in history or looking forward to some point in history in which God breaks a covenant with His people. God is calling His people to repent and obey the covenant. He is trying to persuade them to accept His shepherding. He is trying to remind them how awful it is under bad shepherds who are leading them to destruction, but He wants to lead them to life. They aren't listening.
- g) Is God going back on His Word? Is He breaking the covenant with Israel?
1. In Deuteronomy 27-28, God promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. In Deuteronomy 30:11-20, God explains the choices He is setting before Israel. Twice He says, "I have set before you today life and death." Life comes from obedience, death from disobedience. A disobeying flock is one doomed to be slaughtered. He encourages them to, "Choose life." God has done everything He can to prompt and provoke the people to choose life. But if they choose death, they will be slaughtered. When they die, God hasn't technically broken His covenant. His covenant provided a response to their disobedience. When He gives that response, He actually keeps the covenant.
  2. Let's illustrate it this way. I've already told you about my dad and his flowery sayings. For a moment, pretend my dad's will was written in such a way that if I worked in his heating and air company until retirement, I would receive all his millions of dollars (every bit of this is made up, by the way). But if I quit the company, I got nothing.
  3. Then the day comes when I tell my dad, "Dad, I hate the heating and air business. I'm sick of crawling under houses and dehydrating in attics. I want to be in a rock and roll band." My dad might say, "Son, if you do that, I'm going to write you out of my will." Though that may cause me to stick with the hvac business for a time, I eventually quit. My dad warns me again, "I'll write you out of my will." But I quit anyway. Does my dad call his lawyer and write me out of his will? No. The will was already written in such a way that I'll get nothing. I made my choice. I got what I chose. We can call it "Dad wrote me out of the will," but Dad didn't actually write me out of the will. I simply didn't abide by the will as it was written.
  4. This is Israel's situation. The covenant is written such that when they behave as they are in Zechariah's time, they lose the covenant

blessings, protections, benefits. God is no longer their God and they are no longer God's people. But that isn't because God did anything at this point. That is because they left. We can call it God writing them out of the will, but it's really about them.

h) However, recall what we read in Leviticus 26:44-45. As we kept seeing the subtle, underlying reminders in chapters 9 and 10 that with all the promised blessings, if Israel turned to evil, they would lose the blessings, now we have reminders that for all the curse and punishment God promises, if Israel will relent and repent, God will relent from the disaster He is promising. There were two sides to that potter passage in Jeremiah 18.

5) Breaking "Union":

- a) At the end of this sign act, Zechariah breaks "Union," explaining that was annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.
- b) This one is a bit easier than the previous. This is specifically calling to mind the Ezekiel sign-act with the staffs. Zechariah is showing the people if they will not surrender to God's shepherding, His promises to gather them together as one nation and one flock will not happen. They will be scattered. This sign-act reverses the Ezekiel sign-act.

h. Thirty pieces of silver

1) When Zechariah breaks his agreement with the people, he asks them to pay what they think his work was worth. They weigh out thirty pieces of silver. The LORD tells him to throw the silver to the potter, which Zechariah does.

2) The value of thirty pieces of silver:

a) Most commentators agree with Fuhr and Yates on this matter:

- 1. "As the ultimate expression of their disrespect, the people respond to the prophet's request for payment for his services as their shepherd by giving him thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave at an earlier time in Israel's history (Exod 21:32). Thus, the fee represented 'an insultingly low wage'" (Fuhr and Yates, *Message of the Twelve*, 290-291).
- 2. Don't let the internal quotes fool you. Fuhr and Yates are not quoting something from scripture, but another commentary.

b) Webb disagrees with most commentators:

- 1. "The thirty pieces of silver is hardly a contemptible price; it is a considerable sum of money. Nehemiah later speaks of the forty shekels tax (presumably annual) as a 'heavy burden' imposed on the people by his predecessors. Thirty shekels is the amount stipulated in the Law of Moses as compensation for the death of a slave, but this should probably be taken as an indication of the high value placed on human life rather than of the paltry nature of the sum itself. As payment for the services of a shepherd, it might well be considered a handsome price (13). If that expression is ironical here, it is not because the sum itself is trivial, but because the shepherd regards any amount offered to him by people who actually detest him (8b) as unacceptable. If they had really valued him as their shepherd they would have accepted his care and heeded his warnings" (Webb, *Message of Zechariah*, 151).



- c) This disagreement calls something to mind. We don't use a precious metal standard for money today. Therefore, we simply have no concept of whether thirty pieces of silver was an insultingly low wage or truly lordly price.
- d) Even the people who say, "But look, it was the value of a gored slave. That meant it was insultingly low." Are you sure? Perhaps a slave was highly valuable, and 30 shekels of silver was a high price. The fact is, we cannot determine if this was a high wage or a low wage by connecting it to Exodus 21:32. That whole argument is circular no matter which side we take on it.
- e) But there are other problems with relating Zechariah's thirty pieces of silver to the thirty shekels of silver in Exodus 21:32 and then saying they paid Zechariah the value of an injured slave.
1. Exodus 21:32 says "thirty shekels of silver." Zechariah says simply thirty pieces of silver. Granted, the verb "weighed" in Zechariah 11:12 is a verb form of the noun "shekel." Some therefore assume the mere statement of weighing out the pieces with that word means they weighed out thirty shekels. You might read it, "They shekeled out thirty silvers." Perhaps. However, in Ezra 8:25, Ezra weighed/shekeled (same word as Zechariah 11:12) 650 *talents* of silver. In Numbers 7:61, we read of a silver cup weighing 130 shekels and a silver bowl weighing 70 shekels. Would either of those count as a silver piece? (Granted "pieces" is supplied because no denomination of money is used.)
  2. Alan Taylor Farnes argues convincingly (to me) that Exodus 21:32 does not reveal the value of an injured of slave. Consider his argument: "However, the figure in Exod 21,32 is not in fact a slave price but is rather a fine for damaging property. The rabbis of the Mishnah, although writing much later than Jesus' lifetime, seem to have understood the difference between a purchase price and a fine when they decide that if an enslaved person is gored by an ox then the enslaver should receive thirty sela 'whether [the slave] was worth a maneh or a single denar' (M. Bava Kamma 4.5). To the rabbis, the value of an enslaved person was irrelevant, and the thirty sela was a fine which was independent of the price of the enslaved person. Here in Exod 21,32 we have a fine and not a price" (Farnes, *Thirty Pieces*, 552).
  3. Farnes goes on to explain the purpose of the 30 shekels: "Similarly, Exod 21,32 does not contain a slave price but rather a fine meant to dissuade ox owners from letting their oxen run wild. The intent of the passage is to inform all ox owners that if their ox gores an enslaved person then the owner himself will lose the ox and thirty silver shekels. This is not equal to the price of an enslaved person but is rather a motivation to ensure that an ox does not run wild" (Ibid., 552-553).
  4. With the above in mind, we begin to think even if the thirty pieces of Zechariah is equal to the thirty shekels of Exodus, it was not a paltry sum, but a truly lordly one. Paltry sums don't provide much deterrent from criminal behavior.
- 3) Throwing the silver to the potter.

- a) Because all the comments about translational issues with “potter” from commentators are well above my paygrade and I am tempted simply to accept the one I like the most, I will simply take the ESV at face value. There was a potter in the house of the LORD and Zechariah threw the 30 pieces of silver to him.
  - b) Zechariah wasn't working for the people. He was working for the LORD. When the LORD told him to throw the money away, he did. Would I? I mean, I know I work for the LORD, but a workman is worthy of his wages, right? Surely God would never expect me not to take pay for my work? But if he told me to give it away, would I?
  - c) I believe a key to this is in vs. 11. They “knew it was the word of the LORD.” Not only was Zechariah working for the LORD, the community watching him knew it. They knew they weren't paying Zechariah for Zechariah's worth, but the LORD's. They weren't paying Zechariah for working for them, but for working for the LORD.
  - d) If the issue at hand is the wages were insultingly low, at what amount do we think God would have let Zechariah keep them? At what price would God have said, “Well, you were rotten sheep and shepherds, but at least you valued my appointed shepherd properly”? 50 pieces? 100? 1000? 10000? Is there a value?
  - e) Consider what is weighing in the balance with this. On the one hand is the value of God's shepherding, in the other is some amount of money. It doesn't even make sense, does it? If the LORD's shepherding is worth anything, it is worth everything. Do we really think anyone can buy off the Shepherd? The true value of shepherding from God is not worth money at any price, it is worth submission. These people were willing to pay Zechariah and send him on his way, thinking they had done right by the bargain in giving him the amount they did. And there is no amount in that bargain that would have been right.
4. The Foolish and Worthless Shepherd
- a. The LORD asks Zechariah to perform another sign act. This time, instead of being a good shepherd, he is asked to take the equipment of a foolish shepherd. However, we do not read what happens when he performs the action. We only hear the meaning behind it.
  - b. God had raised up Zechariah to be a good shepherd to the flock doomed for slaughter. He got rid of the worthless shepherds. But the sheep despised and loathed him. He gave them up to their wandering ways.
  - c. Instead of letting Zechariah just go his own merry way, God uses him to show the people what happens when a good shepherd is rejected. The flock gets a foolish and worthless one.
  - d. Sadly, when God describes how He wants Zechariah to act, thus representing how the foolish, worthless shepherds will act, He mirrors the wicked shepherds of Ezekiel 34.
  - e. Kyle Dunham provides another chart showing the verbal links between Ezekiel 34:2-4 and Zechariah 11:15-17. This one is included without alteration. (Dunham, *Eschatological Shepherds*, 22).

Hebrew Term	Gloss	<i>Ezekiel</i>	<i>Zechariah</i>
בִּקֵּשׁ	("seek")	Ezek 34:4	Zech 11:16
רָפָא	("heal")	Ezek 34:4	Zech 11:16
שָׁבַר	("broken")	Ezek 34:4	Zech 11:16
הַבֵּר יָאֵה	("the fat/choice [one]")	Ezek 34:3	Zech 11:16
הוֹי רֹעֵי	"woe to the shepherd[s])	Ezek 34:2	Zech 11:17

- f. In Ezekiel 34, God was going to punish the wicked shepherds and raise up a good one. In Zechariah, because the people have rejected the good shepherd, God will raise up a foolish and worthless one.
- g. But, for all the damage the worthless shepherd will administer to the LORD's flock, he won't get away with it. The worthless shepherd will be judged. And now we know why the shepherds were wailing in vss. 1-3.
- h. Notice this chapter is bookended by poems about lamenting shepherds. These are the same shepherds. We were introduced to their wailing at the beginning, then we are given the story that explains why they are wailing and brought back to them in the final poem.
- i. Because the "shepherd" is singular in vs. 17, Premillennialists see this as a poem of the Antichrist. Because the people reject the Christ, the Good Shepherd, they get the Antichrist, the Antishpherd. However, as demonstrated above, in the literary structure of the chapter, this shepherd is equivalent to the wailing shepherds in vss. 1-3.
- 1) Don't let the numbers fool. In Jeremiah 23:4, God says He is going set "shepherds" over His people, and then immediately demonstrates that the "shepherds" actually refer to the "righteous Branch" (Jeremiah 23:5).
  - 2) Of course, the Premillennialist might say the "shepherds" of Zechariah 11:1-3 actually refer to the singular Antichrist of Zechariah 11:17. However, that simply doesn't fit with the contrast. The whole scene has been an adoption and adaptation of the wicked shepherds vs. God motif found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The point is not that a singularly bad shepherd is coming at some eschatological moment. The point is if Israel won't follow the LORD as their shepherd, there will always be those ready to take His place and that will never work out well for those who follow them. And when Israel rejects the LORD, He will let those shepherds do their terrible work. Yes, He will judge them for it. But those who refused to take the warning of the prophets, will be judged as well.
  - 3) Webb says of this/these shepherd(s): "Understood in this way [the shepherd] does not have only one incarnation, so to speak, at one point in time. He is Nebuchadnezzar, but he is also the rapacious shepherds of 10:3. He represents all the bad leaders and exploiters Israel has had to endure, and will yet endure, because of their contempt for the loving care and discipline of God, their true shepherd" (Webb, *Zechariah*, 152).

5. Jesus: The Good Shepherd and the Thirty Pieces of Silver

- a. When Jesus opened the apostles' minds to understand what the Scripture had said about Him, surely this story was on the list.
- b. Fulfilling what was spoken by the prophet.
  - 1) To fully grasp how Zechariah's sign-acts relate to Jesus and vice versa, we must have a proper understanding of what Matthew meant when he said, "Thus was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet."
  - 2) He did not mean the prophets gave us a list of signs to watch for and when enough of them happen in one person, we've found the Messiah. Recall our discussion in VIII.D.2.b. about Jesus fulfilling Zechariah 9:9. We realized there, God was not telling us through Zechariah to wait for a guy to ride into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of a donkey. Similarly, God is not telling us to wait around for something to happen with 30 pieces of silver to know we've found the Messiah.
  - 3) That may happen some of the time. However, Matthew more generally means, "Are you watching what is happening in Jesus's life? Doesn't this sound familiar? Doesn't this sound like a story God has told us before? Surely that means something?"
  - 4) Consider an obvious example of this in Matthew 2:15.
    - a) "And he rose and took [Jesus] and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"
    - b) Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1.
      1. "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away..."
      2. Wait! That isn't a prediction about the Messiah. That isn't looking to the future at all. That is looking to the past. That is telling the story of the nation of Israel. That is talking about Israel, God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22).
      3. But Matthew says Jesus's trip to and from Egypt fulfills that passage. How?
    - c) Matthew's point is God works through types and shadows. He works in themes. He works through repeated historical narratives. When we see one story that parallels a previous one, we need to pay attention, God is telling us something through that.
    - d) When Jesus went into Egypt and came out, Matthew tells us, "Look, we know Israel was God's son. He was called out of Egypt. This guy, Jesus of Nazareth, went into Egypt and came out of it. The stories are the same. Jesus is fulfilling, that is, measuring up to the fullness, of that story."
  - 5) The stories, events, prophecies in the Old Testament tell us how our God works. When we see those stories repeating, we know God is working again/still. In this way, when Jesus's story mirrors what we find in the Old Testament, He is fulfilling, bringing to fullness, those events, stories, prophecies.
- c. Jesus declares Himself the Good Shepherd

- 1) When God commissioned Zechariah to shepherd the flock doomed to be slaughtered, He was not giving us a clue that we were supposed to be on the lookout for a shepherd who would become the Messiah. If He was, then we need to look somewhere other than Jesus. Jesus was a carpenter, not a shepherd.
  - 2) However, in John 10:11, when Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He is not saying, "Remember, one of the line items the Messiah is supposed to check off the list so you know who He is is being a shepherd." He is saying, "You remember what the prophets said about good and bad shepherds? I'm the good one."
  - 3) Jesus is not saying, "There's a passage in Zechariah" or "There's a passage in Ezekiel" or "There's a passage in Jeremiah, and I can check that thing off my list of prediction fulfillments." Neither was He saying, "Those passages were predicting a moment in history, and this is that moment." He is saying, "Do you remember everything you read about sheep, shepherds, shepherding, flocks through the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings? Do you recall over and over again you saw a contrast between good shepherds and bad shepherds? All of that was a thread leading to me. I am the Good Shepherd. I fit everything those passages tell you about being the Good Shepherd. Further, if you want to know more about me, go look at those passages and what they say about being a Good Shepherd. That's what I do and what I am."
  - 4) In the history of Israel through the Old Testament, all that was said about shepherding, sheep, flocks led up to Zechariah and his shepherd sign-acts and the statements to come in Zechariah's second oracle. And all of that pointed to Jesus.
  - 5) With that in mind, when Jesus says He is the Good Shepherd, He isn't just signaling how He cares for His followers. He isn't just saying, "I'm better than those guys who run away, who are selfish, who just see the flock as a means for their own personal profit."
  - 6) As the Old Testament story of good and bad shepherds culminated in these final pictures of shepherding in Zechariah, what commission was the good shepherd given? The commission to shepherd a flock doomed to slaughter. Jesus wasn't just telling the Jews who He was. He was telling them who they were. They were a flock doomed to be slaughtered. Their shepherds were leading them to slaughter. And there was only one way to escape. Follow the Good Shepherd.
  - 7) But here's the sad reality. Even as Jesus talks about being the Good Shepherd, He talks about the sacrifice that is coming. Why? Because He knows this flock doomed to be slaughtered is going to behave exactly as the one under Zechariah did. They are going to despise Him. They are going to reject Him.
  - 8) If we didn't already know how Jesus's story ends, if we had known the Old Testament Shepherd theme, when Jesus claimed to be the Good Shepherd, we should know, "Oh no! These people aren't going to listen to Him. They never do."
- d. Jesus rejected with thirty pieces of silver.
- 1) Matthew's gospel, Judas's betrayal, and the thirty pieces of silver.

- a) "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him" (Matthew 26:14-16).
  - b) "Then when Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself.' And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.' So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me'" (Matthew 27:3-10).
- 2) This fulfilled prophecy is like the others in Zechariah.
- a) At this point, it will probably not surprise you to hear me say the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah 11:13, like the other "Messianic" bits of Zechariah, should not be read as a sign given through Zechariah to provide something to look for in order to identify the Messiah.
  - b) If that were God's intent, we would actually have some significant trouble with the sign. The sign shows the Good Shepherd receiving thirty pieces of silver as wages for his work as the shepherd, the Good Shepherd being commanded by God to throw the money away, and the Good Shepherd throwing it to the potter in the Lord's house. Further, the sign does not include the Good Shepherd dying.
  - c) In Matthew's fulfillment of it the Good Shepherd never sees the thirty pieces of silver, never receives, never throws it anywhere. Rather, some other guy who is not the Good Shepherd gets the thirty pieces of silver as payment for betraying the Good Shepherd, that guy rethinks the deal, and throws the money into the temple. But even he doesn't throw it to the potter in the temple. Rather, the guys in the temple take the money and use it to buy a field with "potter" in the name. Judas was the one paid and one who threw the money. Was he the Good Shepherd? Of course not.
  - d) And, in case you missed it, Matthew actually says this all fulfills what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, not Zechariah.
  - e) So, what is going on here?
- 3) The rejection shouldn't surprise us.
- a) From the moment Jesus declared Himself the Good Shepherd, we should expect Him to be rejected. It's exactly what Israel always did with good shepherds.
  - b) And, we probably shouldn't be surprised the rejection contains some parallel to when the Good Shepherd in Zechariah was rejected.
- 4) Thirty pieces of silver is the price of rejection.

- a) Matthew is not trying to say, "Oh look, that sign we've been looking for in Zechariah 11:12-13 happened, Jesus must be the Messiah."
  - b) Rather, in good Matthew fashion, he is highlighting parallels. He is saying, this story of Jesus sure sounds like another story.
  - c) Further, at this point, having called attention to Zechariah 9:9 at the triumphal entrance, having called attention to Zechariah 13:7 in Matthew 26:31, having potentially called to mind Zechariah 9:11 in the institution of the Supper in Matthew 26:28, we should realize Matthew is making a case. He is not so much saying, "Zechariah gave us a list of signs to watch for and I noticed them." He is saying, "If you want to know what all this with Jesus means, go back and read the end of Zechariah."
  - d) The parallel between Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 27:3-10 is the parallel of a rejection price.
    - 1. It's about "the lordly price at which I was priced by them." The community in Zechariah 11:12-13 did not try to follow Zechariah. They did not try to persuade him to continue being the shepherd. They were willing to value his work at thirty pieces of silver and send him on his way.
    - 2. But more than that, they knew, according to Zechariah 11:11, he was actually acting on behalf of the LORD. Which means they were willing to pay thirty pieces of silver to send the LORD's shepherd on his way. This is the same as rejecting the LORD from being the shepherd for thirty pieces of silver.
    - 3. The chief priests and elders, certainly some of the wicked shepherds of Israel, rejected the LORD's anointed shepherd and their purchase price for that rejection was thirty pieces of silver.
  - e) Why does Matthew want us to see this connection to the Zechariah story? Because of what happens next. Matthew is warning his readers. Our King has come to us. He is the Good Shepherd. We rejected Him. Look at what happens next after the Good Shepherd gets rejected! Bad shepherds get raised up who inevitably lead the flock to the slaughter. What happens next? Judgment. Wailing. Lamenting.
  - f) "Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars" (Zechariah 11:1).
    - 1. When someone picking up on Matthew's push back to Zechariah's oracles goes back to read how the story of the rejected Good Shepherd ends, this sentence alone should stop them in their tracks.
    - 2. Do you recall what the cedars of Lebanon were used to build? That's right, the temple.
    - 3. If what is happening to Jesus in Matthew is the same thing as was happening in Zechariah, we expect the flock the Shepherd had tried to shepherd to go to the slaughter, we expect the wicked shepherds who won't lead properly to be judged, and then we expect Lebanon's cedars to burn. And in Jerusalem, that meant the temple being destroyed.
- 5) Zechariah's point and Matthew's point

a) Zechariah's point

1. Zechariah's point to his audience was not to give them a set of signs to look for to know when the Messiah had arrived.
2. His point was to get them to follow the LORD their King and Shepherd right then. If they did, they'd receive blessing. If they didn't, they'd get punished, and the temple they had just rebuilt would be destroyed again.

b) Matthew's point

1. Matthew's point was not to remind his audience of a set of signs they were supposed to be looking for to prove Jesus was the Messiah.
2. His point was to demonstrate God was working again. Jesus's story mirrors Zechariah's story. Jesus fulfills Zechariah's story, that is He fills up the full measure of Zechariah's story. When we see Jesus's story, we see God working the way God always works. His point was to get his audience to follow the LORD their King and Shepherd right then and to recognize the LORD their King and Shepherd was actually Jesus. His point was to let them know, "If we follow Jesus, we'll be blessed. If we reject Jesus, we get what everyone who ever rejected God's good shepherds get, we get bad shepherds who will lead us to destruction, death, and slaughter." But if we follow Jesus, He'll lead us to restoration and glory.
3. Ultimately, Matthew was pointing out if we don't follow Jesus, our King and Good Shepherd, then the shepherds we do follow will lead us to slaughter, they will wail, and the forest of Lebanon will burn. And in Jerusalem, that still mean the destruction of the temple.

c) The point for us.

1. We have the exact same choice. Jesus is the LORD our King and Shepherd. If we follow Him, we will be blessed. If we reject Him, we will be as sheep without a shepherd, He will give us up to the wicked, evil, foolish, worthless shepherds and we'll face judgment.
2. And for us, the point is more real because we know Matthew's warning went unheeded and the cedars of Lebanon really did open their doors and get burned in 70AD. How much more will we be judged if we ignore the warning and behave like our fathers, rejecting the words of the Prophet and the voice of the Good Shepherd?

6) Why did Matthew attribute this to the prophet Jeremiah?

- a) No end of questioning, discussion, trouble has come from Matthew 27:9: "Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah..." We find the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah. Why attribute it to Jeremiah?
- b) Claire Carroll gives a review of a handful of suggestions commentators have made over the years.



1. "...review a range of ten possible interpretations of the attribution of the above lines to Jeremiah. These include: Eusebius' suggestion of a 'careless transcriber' having inserted the name Jeremiah in place of either Zechariah or a simply 'the prophet'; the use of the name 'Jeremiah' as a reference to the entire prophetic corpus, which, in some old lists, is headed by Jeremiah; a simple case of 'confusion of memory', thought possible by Augustine and Luther among others; Strecker's suggestion that the lines are actually from a Jeremiah apocryphon; Jerome's view that the attribution to Jeremiah is not an attribution of the words *per se* but an attribution of the sense; Senior's suggestion that this is a Jeremian-*type* passage foretelling calamity" (Carroll, *Field of Blood*, 26).
- c) Michael Stead provides a great modern illustration and parallel to what is happening in Matthew 27:3-10, and he argues what Matthew does every time he points back to Zechariah. I think he makes a strong case.
1. "Matthew does to Zechariah the very same thing that Zechariah does to the 'former prophets'. Zechariah takes bits and pieces from multiple sources and weaves them together. For example, Zechariah 2 contains a vision of a man with measuring line which combines elements from Ezekiel 40, Jeremiah 31 and Lamentations 2, and likewise the shepherding allegory in Zechariah 11 combines the two sticks of Ezekiel 37:16-28 with a number of 'shepherding' passages from Jeremiah" (Stead, *Expect the Unexpected*, 45).
    - a. How many times as we looked at Zechariah's four scenes did we show him adopting and adapting pictures from multiple prophets, tying together things from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and sometimes even others among the Twelve?
  2. Stead gives this practice a modern name: "I have previously described Zechariah's technique with the fairly banal label of 'composite metaphor,' but my fifteen year old daughter has provided a better description by introducing me to the 'mashup' -- two songs overlaid and interwoven, where you can hear elements from both simultaneously. How does the concept of 'mashup' help? In the same way that Zechariah is a mashup of the former prophets, Matthew's Gospel contains mashups that explore the intersection between Zechariah and Jeremiah, Psalms, and others" (Ibid., 45-46).
    - a. In modern music, the mashup is done for different reasons. Sometimes for humorous effect, like the mashup of the themes from "The Fresh Prince of Bel Air" and "Thomas the Tank Engine."
    - b. But sometimes the mashup brings out a deeper meaning as two songs are put together, causing the listener to envision images and meanings from both at the same time.
    - c. For instance, when I did a YouTube search for examples of mashup, one of the first to pop up was a mashup of the BeeGees "Stayin' Alive" and AC/DC's "Back in Black." What kind of images and meanings come together as you hear the lyrics of a song repeatedly talking about "Stayin' Alive"?

Alive” set to the music of a song written in tribute to a lead vocalist who died at age 33? (Using this illustration does not indicate approval of either of those bands or all their music).

- d. Stead's point is Zechariah did that same thing. He mashed together pictures, points, themes, and verbal links from multiple prophets to make ongoing and sometimes new application to his later audience. Then Matthew does the same prompting us to envision the images of multiple prophets and prophecies together at the same time.
3. Stead explains what Matthew is doing and why:
    - a. “Firstly, the metaphor of the ‘mashup’ can describe how Matthew uses Zechariah. Matthew weaves together texts from Zechariah with other Old Testament texts and motifs to create a composite metaphor. This is not the same as midrash, a word that is sometimes used to describe Matthew’s use of the OT. Midrash is an exegetical technique that joins together seemingly unrelated texts, and as a result the meaning generated often appears arbitrary and even contrived. Matthew’s ‘mashup’ is different from midrash, because the connections he draws between texts is based on a principle of convergence. The various promises of the Old Testament are converging into a concurrent fulfilment in the person of Jesus” (Ibid. 63-64).
  4. Stead claims Matthew does this with four references to Zechariah:
    - “The entry to Jerusalem on a donkey in Matthew 21 is a mashup of Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 18 and 118.
    - “The 30 pieces of silver in Matthew 26/27 is a mashup of Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 19.
    - “‘Strike the Shepherd’ in Matthew 26 is a mashup of Zechariah 13:7 and Isaiah 8:14.
    - “The mourning of the nations in Matthew 24:30 is a mashup of Zechariah 12:12, 14:17 and Daniel 7:13-14” (Ibid., 46).
  5. I encourage you to read Stead’s entire article talking about all of Matthew’s Zechariah “mashups.” But I will include his main arguments regarding Matthew’s attribution to Jeremiah in Matthew 27:9-10.
    - a. “It cannot be the case that Matthew simply had a memory lapse, and wrote ‘Jeremiah’ by mistake instead of ‘Zechariah.’ There is too much in this ‘fulfilment’ that has no connection at all to Zechariah 11, and indeed runs against the grain of Zechariah 11. Matthew 27:10 says ‘and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me’, but Zechariah 11 contains no divine command to purchase anything, and no potter’s field. “The key to understanding what is going on is to recognize that Matthew 27 is a mashup of Zechariah 11 and Jeremiah 19. That is, Matthew sees a typological fulfillment of both of these passages in the historical circumstances of the purchase of the ‘field of blood’ for thirty pieces of silver--the

significance of the location points to Jeremiah 19, and the significance of the price points to Zechariah 11. To make the same point in another way, in this passage there is both a trail of blood, that leads back to Jeremiah 19, and a trail of silver, that leads us back to Zechariah 11” (Ibid., 54).

- b. “To focus first on the ‘innocent blood,’ blood runs through this passage. Judas betrays ‘innocent blood,’ and the leaders take the ‘blood money’ and use it to buy the ‘field of blood’ in the valley of Ben Hinnom as a burial plot. This location points back to Jeremiah 19.

“Jeremiah 19 is an indictment against the priests and the elders because they have rejected the Lord as their God and have ‘filled this place with innocent blood’ (Jeremiah 19:4). In Jeremiah 19, the prophet Jeremiah is told to buy a jar from the potter and take it to the valley of Ben Hinnom, and smash the jar to symbolise the destruction that is soon to befall God’s people. That valley will become a burial ground--renamed the ‘valley of slaughter’--because it will be filled with the bodies of all the slain, when the Lord brings judgment on those who had rejected him and shed innocent blood.

“Matthew 27:4-9 highlights the typological parallels between Jeremiah 19 and the actions of the chief priests and the elders—the shedding of innocent blood, a symbolic act that stands as an indictment against the priests, the renaming of a burial place to highlight bloodshed, and the purchase of something from the potter. Makes these connections to highlight the fact that Jeremiah 19 has been ‘fulfilled’ in a typological sense” (Ibid., 54-55).

- c. “This parallels Zechariah 11, where Israel’s leaders knowingly hand over thirty pieces of silver as the severance pay to the Lord as their shepherd. The quotation in Matthew 27 highlights the key elements from Zechariah 11 (the 30 pieces of silver, which are thrown down in the temple, then given to the potter) and reapplies this to the chief priests of Jesus. In Zechariah 11, it was the Lord God who was rejected and valued at 30 silver coins, whilst in Matthew 27, it is the Lord Jesus who is similarly valued and rejected. Matthew is making the point that the one who has been rejected is in fact God, and despite knowing this, the leaders of Israel still reject him regardless” (Ibid., 58).

6. Why use the “mashup”? Stead makes this great statement:

- a. “Another way of describing Matthew’s method is to say that Matthew’s mashup is shaped by a Biblical Theology that recognises the Old Testament scriptures as telling one story that points typologically to Christ and is all ultimately fulfilled in him” (Ibid., 64).

**Conclusion:**

- I. If the LORD's not our Shepherd, We're in Big, Big Trouble
  - A. One oracle, three chapter, four scenes: One message. All the Old Testament really is telling one story. Jesus fulfills, fills up the full measure, of all of it.
  - B. We have a Good Shepherd. We have a Good King. But He will not force Himself on us. If we will not follow Him, we will not have His blessings. Plain and simple. More than that, if we won't follow Him, He will raise up terrible shepherds for us to follow. If we keep pushing Him away, eventually He will let us go and give us up to the wicked shepherds we are willing to follow.
  - C. Webb sums it up nicely: "That is how it was with Israel, and how it is for us as well. The flock that 'detests' its true shepherd (11:8) will get a predatory tyrant in his place (11:16). In the end we get the kinds of leaders we have chosen, and that is God's judgment on us. This is why the church today needs to be constantly nourished and guided by the faithful teaching of God's Word, and be led by men who will give themselves to that as their fundamental calling. That is how God rules and cares for his people, and it is the only thing that will keep the wolves at bay" (Ibid., 153).
  - D. In other words, If the LORD's not our Shepherd, We're in Big, Big Trouble.

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## Appendix A

### “New Direction in Pooh Studies”

Below is a humorous consideration of the Documentary Hypothesis and Literary Criticism. Certainly, it proves nothing except how easy it is to find what you are looking for in any literature if you try hard enough. It perhaps also proves why “Literary Criticism” is different when dealing with literature than with the Bible.

The following essay was found at <https://www.uniontheology.org/resources/bible/biblical-theology/new-directions-in-pooh-studies> on February 25, 2023.

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**By David J. A. Clines**

**A biblical scholar and Emeritus Professor at the University of Sheffield**

**New Direction in Pooh Studies**

*Überlieferungs- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Pu-Buch*

There is little need, at the present stage of scholarship, to attempt a justification of the principle that the dogma of unitary authorship for works of literature must be totally abandoned. In all confidence we may say that *a priori* we may expect the Pooh corpus (*viz.* *Winnie-the-Pooh*, hereafter abbreviated W, containing traditions of higher antiquity than the Deutero-Pooh book, *The House at Pooh Corner*, hereafter abbreviated H) to be of composite origin; even if there were such a person as A.A. Milne, traditionally the ‘author’, we may be sure that he did not write the Pooh books. His name does not occur once within the narratives themselves, and we can hardly be expected to take a title-page, manifestly a later addition, seriously.[1]

#### 1. Sources of the Pooh Literature

Composite authorship is clearly indicated by a number of linguistic peculiarities and literary unevennesses.[2] We observe the oscillation between various names for Pooh, an unerring pointer to diversity of authorship. He is called within the space of half a page (W 3.31)[3]:

Pooh  
 Pooh  
 Winnie-the-Pooh  
 Winnie-the-Pooh  
 Winnie-the-Pooh  
 Bear

– a plain indication of the interweaving of a number of sources. Other names by which he is called in the P-corpus include:

Edward Bear (W 2.19)  
 Winnie-ther-Pooh (W 18)  
 Pooh-Bear (W 6.65)  
 P. Bear (W 9.132)  
 Sir Pooh de Bear (H 10.173)

There is also a tradition that he lived under the name of Sanders (W 1.2), which appears only once in our present texts, since for some reason now forgotten, Sanders traditions have been rigorously expunged from the corpus.[4] The name Sanders does however occur in one of the illustrations (W 1.3) in the archaic script, which, belonging as they do to the pre-verbal stage in the transmission of the traditions, have a strong claim to authenticity. There is a secondary and utterly implausible ‘explanation’ of the two principal names for Pooh, Winnie and Pooh, which is offered by the final redactor (W intro. x)[5] and which only displays the editor’s acute embarrassment with the double tradition. The complexity of the

problem is increased by the appearance within the same chapter (W 3) of the double name of Piglet's grandfather (Trespassers William), again implausibly explained by the redactor as 'in case he lost one' (W 3.30).

Doublets also occur. We may mention briefly the two accounts of meetings with a Heffalump (W 5; H 3). and two accounts of the building of a house.(H 1; 9), variously connected with Eeyore and with Owl. An excellent example of the redactor's method in intertwining his sources may be seen in the account of Pooh's being stuck in the entrance to Rabbit's house (W 2. 24). When Pooh realizes he is stuck, according to the first source:

'Oh, help!', said Pooh. 'I'd better go back.'

But according to the second source:

'Oh, bother!,' said Pooh. 'I shall have to go on.'

The redactor has simply set down these two contradictory statements side by side, and then has attempted to harmonize them by his own conflation:

'I can't do either!,' said Pooh. 'Oh, help and bother!'

The clearest criterion, however, for the analysis of the sources is the attitude taken to Pooh, who is clearly no 'non-descript individual'.<sup>[6]</sup> The whole P-corpus may indeed be divided into sources favourable to Pooh, and sources hostile to Pooh.

The dominant impression gained by the modern reader of the books is that Pooh is a Bear of Very Small Brain. The following descriptions occur:

Bear of Little Brain (W 9.121)  
 Bear of Very Little Brain (W 9.130; H 1.174; etc.)  
 Bear with a Pleasing Manner but a Positively Startling Lack of Brain (H 10.161)  
 He hasn't much brain, and may do something silly (W 9.127)  
 Silly old bear (W 2.25, 26, 29; 3.37; 8.101)  
 Silly Old Pooh (W 10.142)  
 His spelling is Wobbly (W 6.73)

He is also depicted as getting into scrapes, difficulties, and problems through his stupidity (*passim*).

It is of the greatest importance, however, to notice that this representation of Pooh actually comes from only one circle of tradition, which we may designate the D (or Dopey) source. A very different impression is given by other sources favourable to Pooh. Here he is the hero, deliverer (e.g. finder of Eeyore's tail, W 4), poet in many different genres (e.g. W 7.90), discoverer of the North Pole (W 8), and possibly also of the East Pole (W 9.122), though the tradition is somewhat uncertain at this point, inventor of the Floating Bear and the Brain of Pooh (W 9.129-30), culture-hero building the first house (H 1.27) and inventing Pooh-sticks (H 6). His epithets in these narratives include:

Brave and Clever Bear (W 9.129)  
 Astute and Helpful Bear (H 8.139)  
 The best bear in all the world (W 10.143)  
 Sir Pooh de Bear (H 10.173)

And he has bestowed on him a lengthy list of honorific titles (FOP, RC, PD, EC and TF, W 9.130).

We may discern, nonetheless, in the above catalogue, two portrayals of Pooh that are not entirely compatible with one another. According to some tales he is the man of genius and invention (e.g. inventor of the Brain of Pooh), but in others he figures rather as the respective intellectual (e.g. author of wisdom poetry). Thus we may well suspect that we are dealing here with two sources, both perhaps deriving from one original *Grundlage*, but which we may distinguish and denominate the J (or Genius)<sup>[7]</sup> source, and the E (or Egghead) source.

If we add to these three sources JED the work of the redactor of the Pooh corpus, to whom we might conveniently attach the siglum P (Pooh), we have the classic four-source theory that is the objective of all literary analysis. Further, the chronological order of the sources is plainly JEDP, for the following reasons. Only a character such as the J source depicts would have had the dynamism to bring into existence such a fund of narrative traditions; without doubt we owe to the vivid anthropomorphic J source our most reliable knowledge of the historical Pooh. A later collector of traditions from a more intellectual age has overlaid the original J *Grundschrift* with more intellectual (E) material. D, on the other hand, is the reaction of a later age which had grown tired of the tales about the brilliant Pooh that had so long formed part of the cultural heritage of the nation; we may speak of a re-interpretation of such massive proportions that the authentic Pooh was virtually lost sight of.[8]

The P writer has little of significance to contribute beyond editorial matter; he takes for granted the D interpretation of Pooh, his own interest being in chronological matters and suchlike. Even there, however, he is not always reliable; cf. for example W 1.2 'Once upon a time, a very long time ago now, about last Friday'; nevertheless he does preserve some valuable old traditions (e.g. the Sanders tradition, *ibid.*).[9]

## 2. The Mythology of the Pooh Literature

Since on the earthly level the chief focus of attention in the corpus is the hero Pooh, on the mythological plane great importance must be attached to the deity whom he worships. Pooh is of course a devotee of the goddess Honey. The stated time of her service he observes with unflinching regularity – as we learn from H 5.82 it is 11am (a traditional time for divine service). He speaks of this hour as the time when 'I generally get home. Because I have One or Two things to Do.' Naturally he speaks indirectly of his faith when addressing an unbeliever (Rabbit), but the capitalization makes plain that the things to be done are the performance of sacred acts. Pooh is no ordinary lay worshipper of Honey, but obviously a priest dedicated to her service; his so-called 'house', liberally furnished with 14 or 15 cult-objects (pots) (H 3.35), which he speaks of as 'comforting' to him (H 3.36) – which is the very function of religion – is undoubtedly a sanctuary, a 'house' or temple, of Honey.

Honey is a fertility goddess (cf. the use in the common language of 'honey' as a synonym for 'love', and the frequent use of terms for sweetness as endearments). She is referred to in the old gnostic saying, 'What is sweeter than Honey, what is stronger than a lion?' (originally, 'What is stronger than a Tigger?'). She is frequently alluded to in the Pooh corpus by reverential periphrases such as befit a deity of her stature, e.g. 'a little something' (W 8.116; H 4.56), 'a little smackerel of something' (H 1.2). I should like here to make the suggestion that we have in the figure of Honey a clue to the enigmatic inscription to be found in one of the primitive illustrations (W 1.18) Bath Mat. This is surely the Hebrew *bath me'at* 'Daughter of a Little', a well-known Semitic idiom for A Little Something.

Honey's consort is Christopher Robin, not perhaps generally recognized as a deity, but plainly such according to the evidence of the P corpus. He has the common double name of a deity, to which attention is drawn in the passage W 3.30: "'I've got two names", said Christopher Robin carelessly'. He can of course say this carelessly only because there is no doubt about his divine status; moreover it cannot be questioned that the first element is theophorous in the strictest sense. A clear proof of his divine power is provided very early on in H (1.6), where it is said: 'Christopher Robin had spent the morning indoors going to Africa and back' – in the fashion of Canaanite gods. He appears at various times as the *deus ex machina* in order to solve problems no one else can, for example when Piglet is mistaken for Roo and cannot establish his identity (W 7.96). Similarly, he gets Tigger down from the tree when all others have failed (H 4), and discovers Pooh and Piglet when they are desperately lost in a mist (H 7). Most illuminating of all is the narrative of the loss of Eeyore's tail:[10] Pooh finds the tail, but only Christopher Robin can perform the miracle of 'nailing it on in its right place again' (W 4.49), as it is crudely called in this early narrative, doubtless written down by an eyewitness immediately after the event. Interesting too is the remark made when the Flood comes: 'It rained, and it rained, and it rained, but the water couldn't come up to his house' (W 9.125). Of course not, for he lives on the mountain of the gods, 'at the very top of the Forest', as it is said (*ibid.*).

What kind of a deity is Christopher Robin? Here we can be in no doubt. We learn very early (W 1.7) that 'he lived behind a green door in the Forest,' which by itself is clear enough to all those who have sat

beneath the shade of the Golden Bough themselves. Two illustrations (W 10.134; H 10.166, significantly in both books) set the matter beyond dispute by their depiction of Christopher Robin's dwelling place as actually a tree. Christopher Robin is a vegetation deity, who lives in the tree, and it is no accident therefore that the whole action of the books (except for the D framework) takes place within the forest as the sphere in which the vegetation deity may be encountered. With this understanding of Christopher Robin, his relationship with Honey becomes perspicuous.

Is he a dying and rising God? It seems so, though we have only the barest hints. At the end of H, Christopher Robin is 'going away,' a euphemism, we may believe, for the annual death of the vegetation. The mysterious character of the change of the seasons is beautifully expressed in H 10.159:

Nobody knew why he was going; nobody knew where he was going; indeed, nobody even knew why he knew that Christopher Robin was going away. But somehow or other everybody in the Forest felt that It was happening at last.

Everyone knew that 'Things were going to be Different,' that is, that the sacral cycle of the year was passing into a new phase. In the 'enchanted spot', the high place 'on the very top of the Forest' with its sacred circle of sixty-something trees (H 10.169-71)[11], the ritual drama is enacted of the death or departure of the deity. Before he dies, Christopher Robin ensures by an act of will that the world will survive and continue to keep turning until his return:

By and by Christopher Robin came to the end of the things [i.e., the eschatological moment], and he sat there looking out over the world, and wishing [i.e. exercising an act of will] that it wouldn't stop (H 10.173).

His perpetual rebirth is alluded to in the last sentence of H, in which it is promised that wherever he goes and whatever 'happens' to him (a well-known euphemism for death), in the enchanted spot he will always be 'playing' – that is, performing his role in the sacred drama.

The suggestion may finally be made that the Pooh material found its cultic setting in the festival of Christopher Robin's rebirth and re-enthronement as king (compare, for example, his 'looking out over the world' in the passage just quoted). Christopher Robin is only once actually called king in the P literature, and significantly this occurs very close to the end of the second of the books (H 10.174); but we have a very clear piece of evidence from two illustrations in W (1.1; 10.146), in the first of which he is depicted descending the stairs, and in the latter of which he ascends the stairs, a symbol of his re-enthronement after ritual humiliation. We therefore may propose that the *Sitz im Leben* of the Pooh-corpus is the enthronement festival of Christopher Robin.

The name of the deity worshipped by Piglet, who lives in a different 'house' from Pooh, has been consistently deleted by the final editor, who was concerned only to glorify Christopher Robin and his consort Honey. But in spite of their differences of belief, it is noteworthy that Pooh and Piglet were able to engage in syncretistic or ecumenical activities. An important pericope on this theme affords a valuable insight into cultic practice of the time.

Half-way between Pooh's house and Piglet's house was a Thoughtful Spot where they met sometimes when they had decided to go and see each other, and as it was warm and out of the wind they would sit down there for a little and wonder what they would do now that they had seen each other (H 8.125).

This passage, with its key phrases 'half-way,' 'warm and out of the wind, and 'wonder what they would do now,' may well be regarded as the inspiration of later ecumenical movements. As is well known, the tendentious editor of the P corpus has fabricated the tale of Piglet's Pnal conversion to the faith of Pooh, by depicting his 'coming to live' with Pooh (H 9.158), but no credence should be lent to this manifest implausibility.

A shadowy father-figure, of whom Christopher Robin is apparently the son, appears at the beginning of W, but plays almost no part in the narratives thereafter. As he is associated with a bathroom (W 1.18), he perhaps plays a similar role in the Pooh pantheon to that of El at Ugarit, sitting at the source of the two streams (hot and cold; cf. the illustration, W 1.18). Christopher Robin then corresponds to Baal, and Honey to Anat; we are dealing therefore with an extremely ancient mythological system.



### 3. The *Gattung* of the Pooh Literature

The Pooh literature is essentially wisdom literature. A ready proof is the frequency with which aphorisms occur. Two examples will suffice. Pooh remarks about poetry:

Poetry and Hums aren't things which you get, they're things which get you. And all you can do is to go where they can find you (H 9.144).

Note the terse monosyllabic form of the utterance. Pooh's own sub-Aristotelian logic, recognizable as the product of 'clan wisdom,' is well illustrated in the following logion:

We keep looking for Home and not finding it, so I thought that if we looked for this Pit, we'd be sure not to find it, which would be a Good Thing, because we might find something that we weren't looking for, which might be just what we were looking for, really (H 7.121).

The human characters of the Pooh books (that is, excluding divine figures like Christopher Robin) have one striking feature in common: they are all wise men or sages, personifications of various types of wisdom.

Pooh's wisdom is, as we have seen, inventive wisdom (according to J), or reflective wisdom (E).

Owl's is academic wisdom: he can spell Tuesday so that you know it isn't Wednesday (H 5.76), and Christopher Robin respects him for this, because 'you can't help respecting anybody who can spell Tuesday even if he doesn't spell it right' (H 5.73). But academic wisdom is largely useless, as Rabbit notes: 'There are days when spelling Tuesday simply doesn't count' (H 5.73). Piglet's description of Owl is a very apt account of academic wisdom: 'Owl hasn't exactly got Brain (sc. in Pooh's sense?), but he Knows Things' (W 9.118).

Rabbit's wisdom is practical, organizing wisdom, as Piglet says: 'He hasn't Learnt in Books, but he can always Think of a Clever Plan' (ibid.). Recognition of the nature of Rabbit's wisdom explains the difficult passage at H 8.128, where Piglet remarks 'Rabbit has Brain', to which Pooh responds, 'I suppose that's why he never understands anything'; that is, his wisdom is not reflective wisdom like Pooh's (E).

Kanga's wisdom is intuitive wisdom; once again Piglet has isolated the essential quality of her wisdom: 'She isn't clever, Kanga isn't, but she would be so anxious about Roo that she would do a Good Thing to Do without thinking about it' (W 9.118).

Eeyore's wisdom is philosophical or speculative wisdom; he thought about things.

Sometimes he thought sadly to himself Why?, and sometimes he thought Wherefore?, and sometimes he thought Inasmuch as which?, and sometimes he didn't quite know what he was thinking about (W 4.39-40).

This is arguably the best account that has ever been given of the nature of philosophical thought.

Piglet's wisdom is the wisdom of faith; when he is in trouble he has no recourse to the various types of wisdom we have outlined; he simply says, 'I wonder what Christopher Robin would do' (W 9.118), and he casts himself on the mercy of others with the message in the bottle, irresistible in its naivety: 'HELP! PIGLET (ME)' (W 9.119). This is obviously intended by the editor as the climax of the book, coming as it does just before the final chapter in which Christopher Robin's 'departure' is recounted. It is a reasonable hypothesis, though one that requires further development, that a primary aim of the redactor was to demonstrate the supremacy of this type of wisdom over against those types represented by the other characters.

We are now in a position to give a comprehensive statement of the *Gattung* of the P corpus, and have thus attained the goal of all study of an ancient document; the *Gattung* is without doubt that of cultic wisdom literature in epico-mythological form.

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## Endnotes

- [1] I follow here the view of S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 9th edn, 1913), p. ix: 'The age and authorship of the books of the Old Testament can be determined (as far as this is possible) only upon the basis of the internal evidence supplied by the books themselves . . . no external evidence worthy of credit exists'.
- [2] To use a phrase of G. von Rad in his Genesis commentary.
- [3] References are given to chapter and page in the popular paperback version (*The Living Pooh*).
- [4] Possibly Sanders has been eliminated because he knew too much; cf. his erudite work on *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
- [5] The page reference 'x' probably symbolizes the mysterious and unknowable character of the real reason.
- [6] The phrase is that of J.H. Eaton, *Psalms: Introduction and Commentary* (Torch Bible Commentary; London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 71.
- [7] To forestall any criticism of the use of the sigium J for the Genius source, it should be pointed out that in classical documentary theory J never stands for words beginning with J (cf. J for Yahwist).
- [8] For a moving description of the age of D, cf. J. Bright, *History of Israel* (London: SCM Press, 2nd edn, 1972), p. 319: 'All over the contemporary world a certain anxiety was in the air. The ancient civilizations were coming to an end; the dikes were cracking, and a dark flood lapped without. Men were haunted by a gnawing insecurity. It was a dangerous time, a time when a man needed the help of his gods. Side by side with the excitement of newly found independence, there walked a profound unease, a premonition of judgement.'
- [9] The above analysis has been brilliantly characterized by R.K. Harrison as demonstrating an 'ability to arrive at definitive conclusions on the basis of only part of the total evidence, accompanied by a distinct reluctance to introduce anything more than the slightest theoretical modifications even when much more complete evidence is available' (Introduction to the Old Testament [London: Tyndale Press, 1970], p. 507).
- [10] Cf. David J.A. Clines, *The Tale of the Tail: or, The Story of the Story* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 1001; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).
- [11] Reference is clearly being made to the Babylonian sexagesimal system of reckoning.

## Appendix B

### Undesigned Coincidence in Matthew, Mark, and the Foal of the Donkey

- I. "Undesigned Coincidences": A Background (McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 21)
- A. The phrase "undesigned coincidences" was coined by Anglican theologian William Paley in his 1790 work *Horae Paulinae*.
  - B. In his 1794 book, *A View of the Evidences of Christianity*, he explained the concept and used it to argue for the truth of Scripture.
  - C. The term gained greater popularity in 1847 when Anglican priest John James Blunt published a book under the name *Undesigned Coincidences*.
  - D. It has recently received a renewal in the apologetic sphere due to the lectures of Timothy McGrew and a book by his wife Lydia McGrew entitled *Hidden in Plain View*.

## II. "Undesigned Coincidences": An Explanation

- A. "An undesigned coincidence is a notable connection between two or more accounts or texts that doesn't seem to have been planned by the person or people giving the accounts. Despite their apparent independence, the items fit together like pieces of a puzzle" (Ibid., 12).
- B. When two people tell you a story about the same event as eye-witnesses, the story will never sound the same. Each will include different details that matter more to them. But, the details will often fit together not by design, but by coincidence. McGrew uses a story from Alan and Betty about a meeting with Carl which Carl denies ever happened as an example. If Alan told you about their meeting at a coffee shop and said, "The place was so crowded that we could hardly find a spot for all three of us to sit." And Betty mentioned, "While we were talking, Alan accidentally knocked his coffee off into my lap." Betty doesn't mention the crowd, Alan doesn't mention the coffee spill.
- C. Granted, this doesn't prove beyond doubt the meeting occurred. You'd need more than this. But this is the kind of testimony that helps build a case that Alan and Betty did in fact meet with Carl. This is an undesigned coincidence. It is like two pieces of a puzzle that fit together.
- D. When Betty tells us Alan spilled his coffee in her lap, we may wonder what caused that and why it wasn't just a spill on a table. But hearing Alan's claim about how crowded it was provides the reason. The two different points coincidentally fit together and provide a fuller picture, supporting each other.
- E. But more than that, the thought that Alan and Betty colluded to design a story in which one would tell about the crowd and the other would tell about the spilled coffee is a bit beyond the pale. When people collude to make up a story, they normally make sure to get all the little details the same, they don't figure out how to tell different details that coincidentally fit together.
- F. Many skeptics reject the gospels and the entire Bible because they see stories told from different perspectives that include different details. Certainly, when details actually contradict, that will be a problem. But we should be more suspect of the gospels if each author detailed every story precisely the same way. That being said, sometimes how those details fit together actually provides fantastic testimony that both were either eye-witnesses or had heard actual eye-witness testimony.
- G. In *View of the Evidences of Christianity*, Paley said:
  1. "I know not a more rash or unphilosophical conduct of the understanding, than to reject the substance of a story, by reason of some diversity in the circumstances with which it is related. The usual character of human testimony is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches. When accounts of a transaction come from mouths of different witnesses, it is seldom that it is not possible to pick out apparent or real inconsistencies between them. These inconsistencies are studiously displayed by an adverse pleader, but oftentimes with little impression upon the minds of the judges. On the contrary, a close and minute agreement induces the suspicion of confederacy and fraud. When written histories touch upon the same scenes of action, the comparison almost always affords ground for a like reflection" (Paley, *Evidences*, 336).
- H. "Casual comments, allusions, and omissions that *fit together* are not what one would find in different fictional or fictionalized works written by different people. They are also not expected among different legendary stories that grew up gradually long after the events. They *are* the sort of thing that one gets in real witness testimony from people close-up to real events" (McGrew, *Hidden in Plain View*, 15).

- I. We find these all over the gospels. McGrew's book is a compendium. I highly recommend it to you as part of your study on evidences.
- J. But she doesn't include one that comes to light when skeptics attack Matthew for saying Jesus sent His disciples to bring a donkey and her colt with her in Matthew 21:2. I love it when skeptics attack, but when done studying, we discover stronger evidence for truth of the accounts than the skeptics thought they had against them.
- III. An Undesigned Coincidence in the Triumphal Entry: Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-10; Mark 11:1-10
- A. In Zechariah 9:9, we find, "Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."
1. The final phrase "a colt, the foal of a donkey," is an explanation of the donkey on which the king is mounted. In other words, the first instance of "donkey" is parallel and synonymous to "a colt, the foal of a donkey."
  2. Zechariah, with a very unwieldy phrasing, tells us about only one animal.
- B. However, when Matthew tells the story in Matthew 21:2, He tells the two disciples, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me." In Matthew 21:7, we find, "They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them." Matthew further specifically references the Zechariah passage.
- C. According to Mark 11:2, Jesus said, "Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it." Mark only mentions the one animal and does not reference Zechariah's prophecy.
- D. The skeptics believe they've found a contradiction. Not only that, but they accuse Matthew of making up things to fit a misunderstanding of Zechariah 9:9. They accuse Matthew of believing Zechariah prophesied two animals when he clearly prophesied only one. Further, they accuse Mark of making up stuff and adding a detail about being an animal on which no one has ever sat to gussy up the whole thing and make it into a royal affair.
- E. Of course, right off the bat we should be suspicious that modern students of an ancient language want to accuse a man who grew up speaking that language of misunderstanding how it worked. But that is a side issue.
- F. Robert Gundry, in his The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope explains what is actually happening in these passages.
1. "Of all Mt's fulfilment-citations, that of Zech 9:9 in Mt 21:5 is most universally considered an instance of prophecy creating tradition. There is no question but that the OT passage refers by synonymous parallelism to one animal. Both *המור* and *עיר* are masculine, the former emphasizing the function of carrying people or loads, the latter emphasizing youth. In contrast with the other gospel, Mt introduces into his narrative a mother animal alongside the *πῶλος* which carried Jesus, and he immediately quotes Zech 9:9. The charge is that Mt misunderstood the synonymous parallelism for synthetic parallelism and introduced a second animal in the narrative to correspond to what he mistakenly supposed was a second animal in the prophecy. This charge is carried farthest by O. Michel, who sees Mt thinking of an Oriental throne-seat over two animals, and reaches its peak of sarcasm in D. F. Strauss, who ridicules Mt for making Jesus ride on two animals at once.  
"According to Mk, the donkey on which Jesus rode had never been sat upon (Mk 11:2). This has been regarded as legendary accretion based upon the sacredness of an unused animal; but it is just as likely that Jesus deliberately chose an unused donkey for the sacred occasion. Mk betrays no reminiscence of Zech 9:9, neither quoting the

passage nor using the Septuagintal expression, πῶλον νέον, by which he could have avoided the periphrastic ἐφ' ὃν οὐδεὶς οὐπω ἀνθρώπων ἐγάθισεν.

“We now ask whether Mt really intended his quotation to refer to both animals in his narrative. An affirmative answer is usually assumed because the phrases in the quotation, ἐπὶ ὄνον and ἐπὶ πῶλον υἱὸν ὑποζυγίου, easily correspond to ὄνον and πῶλον in the narrative (v. 2). But we must not jump too hastily to the equation of ὄνος in the narrative with ὄνος in the quotation, for ὄνος can be masculine as well as feminine. A number of factors argue against the equation” (Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 197-198).

2. Gundry make several arguments for why Matthew wouldn't make such a linguistic mistake. Those are interesting, but do not make our point. I refer you to his book to discover those.
3. Then he concludes: “One may therefore doubt that Mt intended to break up the parallelism in Zech and that the prophecy led to the introduction of a second animal. The ὄνος in the narrative is feminine and refers to the mother animal. The ὄνος in the first line of the quotation is masculine and refers to the same young male animal as is referred to in the second line. Mk emphasizes the young donkey had never been ridden. But it is not likely an unbroken young donkey would have submitted to being ridden through milling, shouting crowds--unless its mother were led closely alongside to quiet the younger animal. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose Mt was working with a genuinely historical tradition. “Mt emphasizes the presence of the mother animal, not to equate her with the masculine המור in the quotation, but to underscore that the young donkey really was, as Mk said, unused” (Ibid., 199).

G. Mark doesn't mention both animals. But only mentioning one doesn't preclude a second. He is only concerned about the animal Jesus actually rode. But Mark does mention the one Jesus rode was unused. Matthew mentions two animals, a mother, and her colt. And that detail implies something. Why would the disciples need to bring both animals? Because an unbroken colt on whom no one has ever sat is much more likely to let you ride it if its mother is walking alongside.

H. Piecing the three passages together, we do find the picture of royalty. Jesus rides on a mount no one has ever sat upon. Mark and Matthew mention different details, but they fit together like a puzzle to provide the full picture of the account and the full point.

I. Their details coincidentally support each other. But who can think the two men got together and designed their accounts with these distinct details in order to give the full picture?

### Conclusion:

#### I. A Word of Caution

- A. McGrew explains the argument from undesigned coincidences is a cumulative one. Finding a single undesigned coincidence in the gospels does not by itself prove their complete veracity.
- B. Finding dozens makes the case. And there are.
- C. But in case you had not been introduced to the notion of undesigned coincidences, I thought I'd take this opportunity to introduce you.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, *italics* for emphasis in quotes is original to the quoted author.

<sup>3</sup> “No true Scotsman” is a common name given to the informal logical fallacy of appeal to purity. It works like this. “No true Scotsman wears undergarments under his kilt.” “But my uncle McElroy is a Scotsman and he wears undergarments under his kilt.” “Well, he’s not a true Scotsman, because not true Scotsman wears undergarments under his kilt.”

<sup>4</sup>I wish that were true, then maybe the tardiness of my outline would be justified. As it is, that's just a joke.

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