

**GOD WITH US**  
**Part 7: Kings & Prophets to Exile and Return**  
*Judah's Fall and God's Faithfulness*

**Message 15 – God Remembers**  
**Zechariah**

**Introduction**

Zechariah, a contemporary of Haggai, was a *priest and a prophet* to the post-exilic Jewish community as they tried to rebuild their way of life after the captivity. The name Zechariah means “God remembers.” This was a fitting name for a prophet at this point in Israel’s history for several reasons: 1) God remembered His people in captivity and brought them back to their land. 2) God remembered His promises to Israel’s forefathers and would move to fulfill those ancient promises. 3) God remembered Israel’s track record of disobedience and warned them not to repeat the sins of the past.

The key historical event that moved God to speak through Zechariah (and Haggai) was the rebuilding of the temple after 16 years of neglecting this work (see Ezra 5:1; 6:14). While the rebuilding of the temple formed the central theme of Haggai’s messages, the temple was more of a backdrop for Zechariah’s messages. God inspired Zechariah to challenge the people to examine their hearts and sincerely love God, not merely rebuild a temple and a ‘religion’ (eg. their ritual of fasting Ch.7). Zechariah was given 8 prophetic visions and several messages concerning the future of Israel and God’s firm plans to establish His final kingdom. However, Zechariah was also given the privilege of speaking the most (except for Isaiah), about *the coming Messiah* who would first suffer and forgive sin, but later reign as the Millennial King. Just as the people of Zechariah’s day were challenged and encouraged, we too can receive hope that God is on His throne, and keeps His promises. We must remain faithful to trust Him with our lives, and pursue a deeper relationship with Him.

The book of Zechariah has 3 basic sections:

Introduction: 1:1-6

Visions of the Future: 1:7 – 6:15

Messages about the Future: 7:1 – 14:21

## Introduction: 1:1-6

***“Return to Me, that I may return to you!”***

Zechariah opened with the “reciprocal principle.” God said to His people: *If you do X, then I will respond with Y.* (See also Zechariah 7:13; James 4:8). The word “return” is the O.T. parallel to the N.T. word “repent,” signifying a heart-desire to turn back to God. (See the following passages where God calls His people to return to Him: Deut.4:30,31; 2Chron.30:6-9; Jer.3:6-10; 3:11-15; 3:21-23; Joel 2:12-14.) In Zechariah, the call to return formed the foundation for all that God wanted to say. The people had physically returned to their land from captivity; but a full return to the Lord with their hearts would determine whether they lived under God’s blessing in the future, or would continue to experience His hand of discipline.

Note that the example of “the fathers” is mentioned 4 times in the opening 6 verses. God was warning the post-exilic community that their fate would be the same as their predecessors if they failed to walk closely to Him. Zechariah’s introductory section has one overriding message to the people: *Give heed to the Word of God and you will be spared from the wrath of God!*

*History holds valuable lessons for those who choose to study it and heed it. Yet, sadly, history proves that we do not learn from history! The entire O.T. historical narrative was recorded for this very reason, to give us lessons to learn from and live by (note Romans 15:4; 1Corinth.10:11). The O.T. has been rich in the recounting of people’s convictions, choices and outcomes, but also those of the nations and empires. As we near the end of our study of the O.T. history, what are some major lessons that you have learned that you will take into the future (positive and negative lessons)?*

## Visions of the Future: 1:7 – 6:15

Many prophets were given visions that conveyed God’s messages. Zechariah is unusual in that the entire first half of the book is a sequence of 8 visions. After each vision Zechariah asked God questions about the visions. The answers he received are the interpretations that follow.

### 1. Horses on patrol: 1:7-17

***“These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth” (1:10).***

God has His patrol out taking stock of conditions on the earth. In this vision, the report back to God was that the surrounding nations were peaceful and at rest. Yet, the nation Israel was not at rest, due to the hardship of captivity and now trying to rebuild. God's message was that He was exceedingly jealous for the welfare of His people. He promised compassion toward His people, while at the same time promising judgment upon the nations that went too far inflicting pain upon Israel.

*Sometimes we may feel as if God does not know about the things that are happening to us. Yet, He does know . . . everything. You might want to stop and pray, thanking God that He has His patrolmen out right now, surveying your situation and reporting back to Him so to speak. God never misses a beat. What a comfort, especially when it seems like life is getting the upper hand on us.*

## 2. Horns and Craftsmen: 1:18-21

***“These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man lifts up his head; but these craftsmen have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it” (1:21).***

The 4 horns represented the 4 world powers that had dominated Israel (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia). The 4 craftsmen represented the 4 world powers appointed by God to bring judgment upon the 4 horns (each successive kingdom brought down the previous one (Assyria, Babylon, Persia and Greece). Daniel the prophet also spoke of 4 kingdoms (Dan. 2:31-45 and 7:1 – 8:28). The point? While God was using world powers to discipline Israel, His people had been oppressed, humiliated and enslaved by these nations, which often took their domination too far. Thus, God would exact His vengeance upon all the nations that transgressed their rightful boundary with Israel (a theme in Zechariah).

*God measures out perfect justice . . . even if not on our timetable. It took centuries for God to level the score with nations and empires that had harmed His people. No injustice ever goes unnoticed with God. **“For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:14).** Is there some injustice in your life that you need to commit to God's perfect justice?*

### 3. The Measuring Line: 2:1-13

***“Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. I will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst” (2:4,5).***

A man was seen measuring a city. The measuring line was a metaphor for either judgment *or* blessing. Here, it pictured God’s future blessing upon Israel. He will prosper them, protect them, and allow His presence to dwell among them.

God is seen moving into action to fight for His people (2:6-13). He shouts (vv.6,7), releases people from captivity (v.6), waves His hand over the enemy (v.9), dwells with His people (v.10), possesses Judah and chooses Jerusalem (v.12) and is aroused to action from His holy habitation (v.13). The nations that have touched “*the apple of God’s eye*” (Israel) will be judged!

### 4. Joshua Cleansed from Sin: 3:1-10

***“See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes” (3:4).***

Joshua the High Priest was the spiritual leader of Israel. He worked with Zerubbabel the governor in the rebuilding of the temple. Though only Joshua is seen in this vision, he represented the entire nation of Israel. Zechariah saw Satan standing before God accusing Joshua of sin (see similarly Revelation 12:9,10 where Satan is called “the accuser”). Then, he saw an advocate step forward to rebuke Satan, while defending Joshua’s value and cleansing him from sin. His filthy garments were replaced with festal robes (symbolic of righteousness).

*We are all like Joshua the High Priest! We all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). All our righteous deeds are but filthy rags in God’s sight (Isaiah 64:6 and Jeremiah 2:22). Yet, God mercifully sent Jesus as our Savior, Advocate and Defender. He took our sins upon Himself. Once we have accepted Jesus as our sin-bearer, our Savior, we are clothed in His righteous robes. Joshua was called “a brand plucked from the fire” - a piece of wood that was useless and charred; then rescued from the flames soon enough to be made useful again. God loves us! He is our Savior! And He has a future for each of us!*

The final part of this vision contained a message for Joshua the High Priest; but it concerned the *ultimate* High Priest/King who

would come from God – the Messiah (of whom Joshua was a type). The “Branch” is a term that was used to refer to the Messiah as One who would be like a branch stemming from the family tree of King David. The removal of the iniquity of the land “*in one day*” could be a reference to the day that Jesus the Messiah died on the cross. Everyone “*sitting under his vine and fig tree*” is a metaphor for the kingdom that the Messiah will someday bring to Israel.

## **5. The Lampstand: 4:1-14**

***“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit” (4:6).***

All the parts of this vision worked together to picture *the power of the Spirit of God* flowing through God’s servants for the accomplishment of His work. Zerubbabel would finish the work of building the temple by means of the Spirit’s power. The 2 olive trees could represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two leaders of the temple-building effort. Or, they could represent Haggai and Zechariah, the voices that the Spirit of God used to spur the community forward in their work.

*When God invites us to work WITH Him, He also promises to work IN us – through the supernatural power of His indwelling Spirit. We must not rely on our own strength, wisdom, abilities or resources to do God’s work. We are exhorted to invite Him to empower us to accomplish “exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to His power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20). Are you asking the Holy Spirit to give you His special power for what God has called you to be and do?*

## **6. The Flying Scroll: 5:1-4**

***“This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land . . .” (5:3).***

All the visions thus far have focused on consolation and blessing for Israel. Here we see a different message: before blessing comes scourging. God will send forth His curse (the flying scroll with judgments written on it) to purge from the land all those who commit evil. Then, in the closely connected vision that follows, the ultimate source of evil is exposed.

## **7. The Woman inside the Ephah: 5:5-11**

***“This is Wickedness!” And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening” (5:8).***

Satan and his world system inspire all forms of evil. Just as Satan's kingdom is depicted as an evil woman in Revelation 18, so here a woman named "*Wickedness*" pictured Satan's evil empire. The ephah was an ancient Hebrew dry measurement equal to a bushel. The woman was sitting inside this ephah and may picture a connection between evil and commercialism (similar to Rev.18). The woman was lifted up and carried away to "*the land of Shinar*" and glorified in her own place. Shinar was used in the Bible in connection with the name "Babylon". It became a synonym for the world system operated by Satan in opposition to the kingdom of God (read Revelation 18 for a better understanding of Babylon, Satan and the woman).

#### **8. The Four Chariots: 6:1-8**

***"These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world" (6:5).***

The first vision depicted patrolling horses taking inventory of conditions on earth. This final vision showed horses with war chariots, emphasizing the judging work of the four spirits of heaven (probably angelic beings assigned to execute God's wrath). Each chariot was assigned to a specific region (v.8). to "*appease God's wrath*" (v.8, NASB).

#### **9. The symbolic crowning of Joshua the High Priest: 6:9-15**

While this was not a vision, it was a symbolic action carried out by Zechariah that had great prophetic significance. It was the capstone of all the previous visions concerning the future.

***"Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices" (6:12,13).***

A crown was to be made of gold and silver from offerings given by the returned exiles. Then, it was to be placed on the head of Joshua the High Priest. This was unusual, in that the crown was reserved for the King, not the Priest. The message was clear: Someday in the future, God would send the Messiah (the Branch) and He would unite the two offices of Priest and King. He would be a Priest Who offered the requisite sacrifice for the sins of mankind; but He would also be a King Who will come to rule over

mankind. Even those who are “far off” (Gentiles) will come and build the temple of the Lord in the day of His rule (6:15). (Same idea in 8:23.)

*On Good Friday, Jesus became our great High Priest, offering the sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the world. On Easter Sunday He conquered Satan's stronghold, the realm of death. On the Day of Pentecost, He ascended to heaven to take His seat at the right hand of the Father as King of kings and Lord of lords. Give thanks to God that you have a Priest-King Who has met all the requirements to bring you back into an everlasting relationship with God!*

### **Messages about the Future: 7:1 – 14:21**

Approximately 2 years after the sequence of visions, the work of rebuilding the temple was half finished. God gave to Zechariah messages that addressed both the near and long-term future of Israel and the rest of the world.

#### **1. Fasting turned to Feasting: 7:1 – 8:23**

A question arose among the returned exiles as to whether they should continue fasting on the 5<sup>th</sup> month, as they had been doing during the 70 years of captivity. God's response is telling.

*“Ask all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for Me that you fasted? And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves? (7:5,6).*

God saw that their fasting and weeping did not have the right motives. He reminded them of a former generation known for empty religious ceremonies (eg. Isaiah 58:3-9). And He reminded them of the prophets He raised up to call them to “true religion” (eg. Amos5:21-24; Isaiah1:10-17), whom they continually ignored.

*Beware of “going through the motions” with God. He sees right through our external forms of religion and is looking directly into the thoughts and motives of our hearts. This is why it is so important to prepare your heart as you enter into times of fellowship with and worship of God. Notice what Jesus said about worshippers in His day: “This people honor Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8). Make sure your heart is drawing near to God when you come to Him!*

Yet, in spite of past and present unfaithfulness on the part of His people, God promised to remain faithful to them.

***This is what the LORD Almighty says: “I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God” (8:7,8).***

What does the Lord want from His people in return?

***“These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and render true and sound judgment in your courts; do not plot evil against each other, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this,” declares the LORD (8:16,17).***

A section that began with a question about fasting ends with a glorious vision of a future Jerusalem where people from every nation will come to worship the one, true God!

***“In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you’” (8:23).***

## **2. Judgment upon Israel’s neighbors: 9:1-8**

Zechariah has several sections detailing God’s judgment upon Israel’s neighbors. Here, close-by neighbors are singled out. The cities of Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Gaza were all “neighbors” that had troubled Israel for many centuries. God would repay them for their harsh treatment of His people.

## **3. Israel’s King will come to defend His flock: 9:9-17**

Zechariah jumps without warning from the near future to the distant future. He saw the Lord coming to fight for His people on a future day of battle. Surprisingly, in a passage depicting God as Israel’s mighty warrior, we find this Messianic prophecy with a gentle twist.

***“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey . . . He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth” (9:9,11).***

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey at the beginning of Holy Week, He was fulfilling this prophecy from Zechariah. He came as the ‘(royal) son of King David’, but in righteous humility. (Matthew 21:1-11).

#### **4. He will shepherd His flock with compassion: 10:1-12**

Historically, Israel had lacked the kinds of leaders (kings, priests, prophets, etc.) that shepherded God’s flock with truth, wisdom, care and diligence. This leadership failure was grievous to God because Israel was His precious flock, the jewels in the crown upon His head (9:16). Thus, God promised to judge the worthless leaders and rise up to personally shepherd His own flock.

***“My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD Almighty will care for His flock, the people of Judah, and make them like a proud horse in battle” (10:3).***

#### **5. The flock doomed for the slaughter: 11:1-17**

In a surprising turn, Zechariah prophesied about a future judgment that would come upon Israel because they would reject their one true Shepherd. They would value Him at the same low price of ‘30 shekels of silver’! The Mosaic Law said this low price should be paid to an owner whose slave was gored by an ox!

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

Thirty shekels of silver was the price paid to Judas Iscariot to hire him to hand Jesus over to the Jewish authorities. Because of the rejection of the true Shepherd, the Lord will someday allow a worthless (yet alluring) individual to arise to shepherd Israel.

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

Many commentators see here a reference to the end-times Anti-Christ who will arise to rule the world. Others view this as a reference to the rulers of Rome who arose to crush Jerusalem and scatter the Jewish people in 70 A.D. after the nation had rejected Jesus as their Messiah and Shepherd.

## **6. The Lord's deliverance of Israel in the Last Days: 12:1-13:6**

The 12<sup>th</sup> chapter opens with the nations of the earth gathering to make war against Judah and Jerusalem (this seems to refer to the end-times battle of Armageddon). The Lord will move mightily to fight for Israel and to empower her to overcome her enemies. In turn, all Israel will be moved by the Spirit to deeply repent over their rejection of their Shepherd/Messiah. The wording is striking:

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

Israel will recognize her rejection of the One they pierced! As they mourn over their sin, God will graciously open a fountain of cleansing for His people.

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

God will banish all idolatry and false prophecy from the land so that along with cleansing there is ongoing purity.

*Where God sees repentant hearts, He always opens a fountain of forgiveness to purify those hearts from sin and shame. Have you given your burdens to our gracious God of cleansing? He will wash away your sins, and cleanse you from your guilt and shame.*

## **7. The Shepherd struck down, the Sheep scattered: 13:7-9**

Zechariah jumps back to the theme of ch.11, where Israel was falling under the judgment of God for rejecting their true Shepherd. Here, the Shepherd is struck down resulting in the scattering of His sheep.

***“Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones” (13:7b).***

Jesus quoted this passage to His disciples when He predicted Peter's denials and the scattering of all of them on the night of His arrest (Matthew 26:31). In the wider sense, the “scattering of the sheep” (the nation Israel) happened in the post-70 A.D. time-frame when the Jews were scattered across the Roman empire.

## **8. Jerusalem sacked, but the Lord arrives just in time: 14:1-21**

Like ch.12, this final chapter opens with Jerusalem being attacked by the rest of the world. Just when it appears that the battle is lost, the Lord appears to fight for His people. He will appear with great power on the Mount of Olives, causing a huge earthquake.

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

What follows is one of the grandest descriptions in all of Scripture of the arrival of the Messiah to establish His kingdom on earth.

***“Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with Him. On that day, there will be neither sunlight nor cold, frosty darkness. It will be a unique day—a day known only to the LORD—with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter. The LORD will be king over the whole earth. On that day, there will be one LORD, and His name the only name” (14:5-9).***

At His return, the nations that are fighting against Israel will be demolished by His mighty power. There will be a literal 1,000 years where Christ the Lord will rule the earth as the Sovereign and only true King (see Revelation 20). Those from other nations who survive will come to Jerusalem annually to worship the Lord at the Feast of Tabernacles. If a nation refuses to come, God will send a drought upon their land! And in Jerusalem, the holiness of God will pervade every aspect of life, down to the smallest detail:

***“On that day, ‘HOLY TO THE LORD’ will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holy to the LORD Almighty . . .” (14:20,21).***

Given all of his visions and messages concerning the end-times, it is no wonder that the book of Zechariah has been called the “Revelation” of the Old Testament. How fitting! “God remembers” His covenant with His people and, even though they continue to stumble and fall, He will fulfill His covenant promises all the way to the end of time!

## Christ in Zechariah

The prophecies given to Zechariah concerning the future Messiah are summarized below. The verses listed in the N.T. are only a portion of where the fulfilled verses of Messiah are found.

<b>Prophecy of Christ</b>	<b>Fulfillment</b>
Servant 3:8	Mark 10:45
Branch 3:8; 6:12	Luke 1:78
King-Priest 6:13	Hebrews 6:20-7:1
Lowly King 9:9,10	Matt. 21:4,5; Jn. 12:14-16
Betrayed 11:12,13	Matthew 27:9
Hands pierced 12:10	John 19:37
Cleansing fountain 13:1	Revelation 1:5
Humanity & Deity 13:7; 6:12	John 8:40; 1:1
Smitten Shepherd 13:7-9	Matt. 26:31; Mark 14:27
Second Coming 14:5,9	Jn.10:16; Rev.11:15;21:27

*(Irving L. Jensen: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; p.45)*

### Discussion Questions

1. Zechariah was a trustworthy servant whom God used to be His mouthpiece. He had to say hard things to the people, yet also far-reaching prophecies that must have sounded crazy! Can God trust me to be His mouthpiece regardless of the message?
2. God brings great comfort by His reminders of past prophecies already fulfilled. I can take comfort and have peace when this world seems full of heartache, evil and chaos. He is trustworthy!
3. As a Gentile believer in Jesus Christ, I can be filled with so much gratitude as I know that I am a child of the 'Holy One', and promised a future with Him for Eternity. Who do you need to pray for/reach out to with the message of Jesus' love and forgiveness?
4. God delights in small beginnings, and causes growth for His glory and our pleasure. He also delights in those who feel they are weak, giving attention and strength to those who are humble and rely sincerely on Him. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit" declares the Lord. How does this encourage you?
5. God has given me specific clear prophecies about the future battle against evil and the coming of Christ to reign over His Millennial Kingdom. He wants me to be encouraged that righteousness will triumph over evil, and He is just and firmly in control of the times. (These are the themes of the best films because 'something' in us knows that good will ultimately win over evil!)