

# **Verse-by-Verse Studies of Zechariah Chapters 1-8 and Malachi 2:17-4:6**

These prophetic passages deal, for the most part, with God's plans to save His people and to judge the world at the end of this age. Malachi includes the theme that Christ will send His messenger/Elijah the prophet before He comes to judge. Zechariah chapters 1-8 include the theme that true Israel will reign over the remnant of the peoples of the nations left after His end-time judgments. The fact that the Angel of the Lord, God the Son, the preincarnate Christ, plays a major role in both passages makes these passages all the more important and interesting.

I am making a few small changes to this paper for this internet version. For one thing, the page numbers changed by one page (I corrected the page numbers in the Table of Contents to incorporate the new page numbers), and I am not including the headers.

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On the Angel of the LORD, see under Zechariah 1:8-16; 2:1-13; 3:1-10; 4:1-14; 6:11-15; and under Malachi 3:1.

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 1

All Bible quotations in this paper were taken from the NASB (1995 edition) unless otherwise noted.

**In the eighth month of the second year of Darius** [Darius I Hystapes reigned over the Medo-Persian world-kingdom from 521–486 BC. The eighth month of his second year was in 520 BC.<sup>1</sup> Two months earlier, “in the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel...governor of Judah, and to Joshua...the high priest, saying...” (Hag. 1:1). That word dealt with the need for the people of Judah to repent and get busy rebuilding the temple. Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14 show that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were both involved with rebuilding the temple.

After Cyrus (the Medo-Persian king) overthrew the Babylonians (539/538 BC), he permitted (and helped) the Jews return to Jerusalem (and Judah) to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). The first group to return, under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua (Jeshua) the high priest, and others, numbered 42,360 (Ezra 2:1, 2, 64). Not long after they returned, they “built the altar of the God of Israel to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the law of Moses...” (Ezra 3:2), and the following year (536 BC) they laid the foundation for the temple (see Ezra 2:68-3:13). However, because of opposition, they did not rebuild the temple, not until God forced the issue through Haggai and Zechariah. They began to rebuild the temple in 520 BC; they finished it in 516 BC., **the word of the LORD** [*Yahweh* in Hebrew; actually, the Hebrew just has the four consonants (*yhw*h, written from right to left in the Hebrew).] **came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo** [There is widespread agreement that this is the same Iddo mentioned in Neh. 12:4, 16; Ezra 8:17 (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14), which would mean that Zechariah was a priest.] **saying, (2) “The LORD was very angry with your fathers. (3) Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Return to Me,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘that I may return to you,’ says the LORD of hosts.** [Although the Jews had repented to some extent and started to rebuild the temple some two months before these prophetic words came to Zechariah, there was a need for further repentance, which often is the case. Some undoubtedly hadn’t repented hardly at all; others needed to repent on a deeper level.] **(4) “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ ’ But they did not listen or give heed to Me,” declares the LORD. (5) “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? [Even though the former prophets (like Isaiah and Jeremiah) had already died, God’s words always come to pass, including His words regarding judgment—His words do not die!] (6) But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented** [The fathers repented (at least some of them repented to some extent) after the Babylonians destroyed the temple and much of Jerusalem and carried Judah into exile.] **and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts purposed to**

<sup>1</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1972], page 87) points out that the eighth month of the year 520 BC began October 27.

**do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.’ ” ’ ” ’ ”**

**(7) On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius** [This date is three months after the date mentioned in Zech. 1:1, but the day of the month is not given in Zech 1:1. Now it was 519 BC. Haggai 1:12-15 with Hag. 2:10-23 apparently explain the significance of the “twenty-fourth day” of the month. The “twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king” is mentioned in Hag. 1:15. As Hag. 1:12-15 show, that was the day that the Jews, under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor of Judah and Joshua the high priest, began to work on the temple. (Haggai 1:1 shows that it was on the first day of the sixth month of that same year that the word of the LORD came to Haggai regarding the need for the Jews to repent and get busy rebuilding the temple.)

The “twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius” is mentioned in Hag. 2:10 (also see Hag. 2:18). On that day the word of the LORD came to Haggai. That prophetic word included the good news that, now that Judah had repented (at least to some significant extent, which very much included starting to rebuild the temple), from that day onward God would begin to bless Judah.

The same “twenty-fourth day [of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius]” is mentioned in Hag. 2:20. On that day the word of the LORD came to Haggai a second time. The second word was directed to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, but the message applied mostly to the One of whom Zerubbabel was a type, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great King. That prophecy included the message that God will shake the heavens and the earth (which refers, at least for the most part, to His end-time judgment of the world<sup>2</sup>) and that Zerubbabel (as a type for Christ) will become a signet *ring* for God, which undoubtedly includes Christ’s having authority over God’s worldwide kingdom.], **the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows** [Eight visions follow, continuing through Zech. 6:8; there is widespread agreement that all the visions were given to Zechariah on the same night. The same basic prophetic themes permeate these visions that permeate the other end-time prophecies of the book of Zechariah and many other books of the Bible: After intense chastening judgments, God will fully save, sanctify, exalt, and glorify the elect remnant of Judah/Israel through the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Lamb of God, and the Great High Priest; God will judge the nations through the Lord Jesus Christ, but He will also save a multitudinous remnant of the peoples of the nations left after that judgment; He will establish His worldwide kingdom (centered in Jerusalem) headed up by the Lord Jesus Christ and His people (true Israel) will reign with Him; all opposition will be swept away and the kingdom will be established in God’s time through the all-powerful Spirit of God and God’s heavenly armies.]: **(8) I saw at night, and behold, a man** [I agree with the widespread viewpoint that this very special *man* is to be equated with the *Angel of the LORD*, who is mentioned in verse 11, who is the preincarnate Christ, the eternal Son of God.<sup>3</sup> The Angel of the LORD also

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<sup>2</sup> Although the prophecies of Zechariah deal mostly with the end-times, end-time prophecies were quite relevant and comforting for the people of Zechariah’s day. For one thing, they confirmed the biblical theme that those who stay faithful to God will ultimately be exalted.

<sup>3</sup> The Angel of the LORD is also referred to as a *man* in Zech. 2:1; 6:12; Gen. 18:2; Dan. 10:5; 12:6; Josh. 5:13, and other verses. When we read everything that the Old Testament says about the Angel of the LORD, it is very clear that this *man* is much more than a human being or any other created being. He is God, God the Son. Created angels are sometimes called *man/men* too (cf., e.g., Gen. 18:2, 16, 22 [Gen.

plays a very prominent role in Zechariah chapters 2 and 3, where, for one thing, He is called LORD (Yahweh), which would be blasphemous if the Angel were not deity (God) with God the Father (and God the Spirit)—He is! The fact that the Angel of the LORD has a very prominent place in Zechariah chapters 1-6 makes these chapters all the more important and interesting. (Chapter 5 is the only chapter of the six where He doesn't appear or isn't included in the prophecy.<sup>4</sup>) I discussed the Angel of the LORD, who appears as the man dressed in linen in Ezekiel chapters 9, 10 and Daniel chapters 10–12, in some detail on pages 165-179 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.] **was riding** [It would probably be better to translate “was mounted.”] **on a red horse** [The color *red*, which goes with warfare, the shedding of blood, and judgment, is appropriate for the Angel of the LORD in the context of the prophecies of Zechariah, with the emphasis on His waging war against His enemies, especially in His end-time judgment of the world (cf., e.g., Zech. 2:8, 9; 14:3-21). Joshua 5:13-6:5 are an important cross-reference for seeing the Angel of the LORD in His capacity of waging war. In those verses He appeared to Joshua as “the captain of the LORD’s host” just before Israel was to wage war against the city of Jericho. The words *Angel of the LORD* aren’t used in those verses in Joshua, but there is widespread agreement that He was the one who appeared to Joshua. For one thing, that Person was called “LORD [Yahweh]” in Josh. 6:2. (Yahweh is an appropriate name for God the Son too.) Also see Isa. 63:1-6. *Red* horses are mentioned later in this verse (Zech. 1:8). Zechariah 6:1-8 are an important cross-references for *red* horses. Also see Rev. 6:4.], **and he** [He] **was standing** [There is widespread agreement that He was mounted on His horse, “standing among the myrtle trees.”] **among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine** [I agree with the widespread viewpoint that the “myrtle trees” serve as a symbol for Judah/Israel here and that the “ravine” (a low place) symbolizes the low state of the people of Judah at that time (and throughout most of the history of Israel, as they were dominated by the nations/world kingdoms). (Actually, their greater problem was that they were dominated by sin and spiritual death.) These prophecies confirmed that this low state would not continue forever. Eventually the sin/spiritual death/Satan problem will be fully solved, the nations will be judged, and Israel/Judah (true Israel) will be exalted over the nations forever.], **with red, sorrel and white horses behind him.** [“Him.” Though they were not mentioned, angelic riders were undoubtedly mounted on these horses. The fact that these riders were behind the Angel of the LORD helps demonstrate, along with the words of Zech. 1:11, that He had authority over them. There is widespread agreement regarding what the colors *red* and *white* symbolize here. We have already discussed the color red. The color white symbolizes God’s purity and His victory. In this context, as with the *white* horses in Zech. 6:1-8, the color white undoubtedly includes the reality that God’s victory (including His establishing divine order) will be shared with His people after He overthrows His enemies and the enemies of His people. On white horses, also see Rev. 19:11-19; those verses picture the Lord Jesus Christ and His armies (which include the

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19:1 shows that two of the three *men* were angels; the other one was the Angel of the LORD]; Dan. 8:15 [This verse is instructive in that it says regarding the angel Gabriel, “one who looked like a man”; also see Dan. 10:16, 18]; Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10; and Heb. 13:2).

<sup>4</sup> It is clear though that the Lord Jesus Christ will be behind the end-time purifying of the land of Judah spoken of throughout chapter 5.

raptured saints) mounted on white horses.<sup>5</sup> The setting (for Rev. 19:11-19) is just after Christ has judged and destroyed Babylon the great harlot and just before He judges and destroys Antichrist and his armies, having gathered them to Armageddon. It's clear that the Lord Jesus Christ can be pictured riding a *red* horse or a *white* horse, but it seems that the color *red* would not be appropriate after His end-time warfare has been completed.

There is no agreement regarding the translation or interpretation for the color mentioned between red and white here in verse 8. The NASB has "sorrel," which is a light reddish brown; the NIV has, "brown"; the KJV has "speckled"; and there are several other viewpoints. I prefer the viewpoint that these horses were of mixed color, probably both red and white, which is a common view.<sup>6</sup> That mixed color could include the idea that God's judgments against some peoples are less severe than against others: See on the dappled horses of Zech. 6:3, 6.] **(9) Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me** [The angel who was speaking with Zechariah can be called an *interpreting angel*; he is mentioned twelve times during the course of the eight visions of Zech. 1:7-6:8 (Zech. 1:9, 13, 14, 19; 2:3; 4:1, 4, 5; 5:5, 10; 6:4, 5). We also see an interpreting angel in Ezekiel chapters 40-48, starting with 40:3, 4; in Dan. 8:15-19; 9:21-23; and Rev. 1:1; 22:6-16.] **said to me, "I will show you what these are." (10) And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees** [the Angel of the LORD] **answered and said, "These are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol<sup>7</sup> the earth."** ["The Persians were well known for their mounted couriers, who traveled daily through the empire maintaining the most efficient communication system known in the

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<sup>5</sup> The rider on the white horse in Rev. 6:1, 2 is different in some ways. That rider isn't going forth as a warrior to destroy God's enemies in His end-time judgment of the world; that rider (the Lord Jesus Christ or a symbol for the Word of the gospel going forth) rides forth throughout this present age conquering the hearts of those who submit to the gospel in faith. Thanks be to God for conquering our hearts!

<sup>6</sup> I'll quote several sentences from what David Baron says regarding the colors here (*Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* [Kregel, 1981 reprint], pages 27, 28). "The red is significant of judgment, blood, vengeance. ... The exact color to be understood by the word *seruqqim*, translated in the A.V. 'speckled,' or 'bay,' as in the margin, or 'sorrel,' as in the R.V., cannot be fixed with certainty. [Baron has a footnote, "The word does not occur elsewhere in the Hebrew as an adjective of colour."] I might fill several pages with the guesses and suggestions and disputations on this word by the learned, but it most probably is meant to describe a mixed colour—a combination of the first and last mentioned in the passage—and would signify that those mounted on these horses were to be sent forth on a mission of a *mixed* character—namely, of judgment and mercy; while the white is the symbol of victory, triumph and glory... which shall be to God's people after their great champion rides forth 'conquering and to conquer,' and executing vengeance of their enemies."

I'll also quote a few sentences from what Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers say regarding this color (*Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* [Doubleday, 1987], page 113). "What about 'sorrel?' ... As a horse color term, it apparently represents a combination of red and white; cf. Arabic *'ašpar*, which designates horses that have a ruddy tinge over white (*BDB* 977). ...." And I'll quote a sentence from what Paul L. Redditt says here (*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* [Eerdmans, 1995], page 52). "The KJV reads 'speckled'; and NEB offers 'dappled' [spotted], based [in part] on the Vulg[ate] and [the Syriac] Peshitta."

<sup>7</sup> In a marginal note the NASB says the literal meaning of the Hebrew is to "walk about through." This doesn't mean that the only role these angelic riders ever fulfill is to go about to observe what is happening on the earth. For one thing, the colors of the horses suggest that these angelic riders are sometimes actively involved with what is happening on the earth, and the Bible has much to say about the frequent involvement of God's angels. The same Hebrew verb is used in Job 1:7 of Satan and in Zech. 6:7 of God's angelic chariots going forth across the earth on their assignments.

ancient world.”<sup>8</sup>] **(11) So they [the riders on the horses] answered the angel [Angel] of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, “We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet.”** [This wasn’t the news that the people of Judah wanted to hear. They knew that the world kingdom/nations must be intensely shaken by God’s judgment(s) before Judah/Israel can be exalted (cf., e.g., Hag. 2:4-9, 20-23).] **(12) Then the angel [Angel] of the LORD [who was (and is) with the people of God in their times of trial/trouble, and who interceded in their behalf<sup>9</sup>] said [interceding before God the Father], “O LORD of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?”** [As the context there shows, the “seventy years” of Zech. 7:5 began when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 587/586 BC. The same seventy years are apparently spoken of here.<sup>10</sup> Now it was 519 BC (Zech. 1:7). Some seventy years had passed. Judah had received permission (from Cyrus) several years before (in 539/538 BC) to return to Judah to rebuild the temple, but the remnant that returned experienced much opposition from the nations/Gentiles, including some opposition from kings of Persia (cf. Ezra 4:1-5). They did not rebuild the temple, and they experienced more of God’s curses than of His blessings (cf. Hag. 1:6-11; 2:16-19; and Zech. 8:9-13). The blessings promised in Hag. 2:18, 19 (after Judah repented and began to rebuild the temple), which had been promised two months earlier than the time of this present revelation (Zech. 1:7), hadn’t been all that noticeable yet. Also, as I mentioned, most of the blessings spoken of by Haggai and Zechariah looked to the future, to the end of this age, after Judah/Israel is saved through the Lord Jesus Christ.] **(13) The LORD [Yahweh] answered the angel who was speaking with me [The LORD answered the intercession spoken by the Angel of the LORD by speaking to the interpreting angel, “the angel who was speaking with [Zechariah].”] with gracious words, comforting words [cf. Isa. 40:1, 2; Zech. 1:17]. (14) So the angel who was speaking with me [the interpreting angel] said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion [cf. Zech. 8:2]. (15) But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry [with the people of Judah], they [the nations] furthered the disaster [cf. Isa. 47:6].” (16) “Therefore thus says the LORD, “I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and a measuring line [Apparently the primary idea here is that this “measuring line” will be used in the building/rebuilding work that will take place in Jerusalem (and Israel/Judah) after God’s end-time judgment of the world. These words would also**

<sup>8</sup> *Bible Background Commentary - Old Testament*, John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas (Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), page 799.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Rom. 8:34. Although the Son of God was genuinely concerned for the welfare of Israel/Judah (as He is genuinely concerned for the welfare of Christians) and interceded on their behalf, He was even more concerned for the glory of God the Father and for His perfect will to come to pass. Furthermore, it is important to understand that God the Father is as concerned for the welfare of His people (true Israel) as is the Angel of the LORD. The Father demonstrated this concern in a major way in the sacrifice of His Son.

<sup>10</sup> It is possible that the seventy years of Zech. 1:12 equate with the seventy years of Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2, which started in 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar first gained control of Jerusalem and Judah and carried some Jews, including Daniel and his three friends, to Babylon (cf. Dan. 1:1-7). Those seventy years (a round number) that began with 605 BC ended when Cyrus overthrew the Babylonians and permitted the Jews return to rebuild the temple in 539/538 BC.



receive a preliminary, partial fulfillment in Zechariah's day with the rebuilding of the temple (God's "house"), which was finished in 516 BC.] **will be stretched over Jerusalem** [cf. Zech. 2:1-5<sup>11</sup>]." ' [The Angel of the LORD was with Judah/Israel in Zechariah's day, and the temple was being rebuilt and would be finished in a few years, but the building spoken of here and in Zech. 2:1-5 (and often) will not take place until the end of the age, until after the end-time remnant of Judah/Israel is saved through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. At that time God's work in Jerusalem/Judah will be on a higher dimension than a literal "house/temple" (see on the building of God's house in Zech. 4:6-10 in this paper). God will fully sanctify His people and glorify them; glorified (true) Israel will be the *temple* in which God dwells, and He will be the *temple* in which they worship (cf. Rev. 21:22).<sup>12</sup> I consider it quite possible that Jerusalem will not have a literal temple during the millennial kingdom, and even if there is a temple, I don't believe that animal sacrifices will be offered there. *The Lamb of God has been slain once for all!* Revelation 21:22 shows that New Jerusalem of the eternal state (after the millennium) will not have a literal temple.] (17) **"Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'My cities will again overflow with prosperity [cf. Isa. 44:26; 61:4], and the LORD will again comfort Zion [cf. Isa. 40:1, 2; 51:3; and Zech. 1:13] and again choose Jerusalem [cf. Zech. 2:12].'' "** (18) [Zechariah 1:18-21 (2:1-4 in the Hebrew Bible) deal with the second vision (of the eight visions of Zech. 1:7-6:8).] **Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there were four horns. (19) So I said to the angel who was speaking with me [the interpreting angel], What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem."** [One common view is that these four horns equate with the four world-kingdoms of Daniel chapters 2 and 7 (the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman/revived Roman kingdoms). God used the Babylonians to overthrow the Assyrians; He used the Medo-Persians to overthrow the Babylonians, which opened the door for the Jews to return to Jerusalem and Judah in the days of Zechariah; He used the Greeks to overthrow the Persians; He used the Romans to overthrow the Greeks; and at the end of this age, the Lord Jesus Christ and His people will overthrow Antichrist's world-kingdom. As I mentioned, it is understood that God's worldwide kingdom cannot be fully established until God has fully dealt with His enemies and the enemies of His people on the earth.

That is a reasonable viewpoint, and it could be the viewpoint intended by God, but if "Israel," which is mentioned here in 1:19, refers to the northern kingdom (and it probably does; for one thing, the ultimate salvation of the northern kingdom is included in the book of Zechariah [cf. Zech. 8:13; 9:1; 9:10-10:12 ("Ephraim" in Zech. 9:10, 13 and 10:7 speaks of the northern kingdom)] and in other Old Testament prophetic books [cf., e.g., Ezekiel chapter 37]), then, if we are going to list four specific kingdoms, it would be difficult to exclude the Assyrian world-kingdom, which was the kingdom that overthrew the northern kingdom and exiled the Israelites.

<sup>11</sup> The *measuring* of Zech. 2:1-5 is a figurative measuring to determine the status of Jerusalem after it has been glorified. Apparently it is relevant that the Hebrew behind "measuring line" in Zech. 1:16 is different than the Hebrew behind those words in Zech. 2:1.

<sup>12</sup> New covenant believers, even during this present age, before the Lord Jesus returns to the earth, worship in the Spirit, without having a physical temple. All the members of true Israel will be glorified, including having glorified bodies and reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ, by the time the millennial kingdom begins. (See under Rev. 20:4 in my paper dated November 1998.)

It probably isn't important for us to list four specific kingdoms here. The four horns could represent, for example, all the kingdoms/nations *worldwide* (from the *four* corners of the earth/from the *four* directions, north, south, east, and west) that attack and scatter Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem (and the Christian church, which is part of God's true Israel) from the earliest days until the end of this present age when they will be attacked by kingdoms/nations coming from across the earth, especially the revived Roman Empire headed up by Antichrist. The Old Testament frequently mentions that Judah/Israel will be gathered from a *worldwide* dispersion at the end of this age (see, for example, Zech. 2:7-9; 6:15; 8:8; and 10:6-12). These verses (Zech. 1:18-21) include the message that God will deal with all such kingdoms/nations that have rejected Him and attacked His people. (In these prophecies of Zechariah, all the emphasis is on God's end-time judgment of the world.)] **(20) Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. (21) I said, "What are these coming to do?" And he said, "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."** [God always is fully prepared; He has His "four craftsmen" fully prepared and anxious to throw down the four horns at the right time.]

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 2

**Then I [Zechariah] lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *there was a man* [I agree with the view that this *man* was the Angel of the LORD (as in Zech. 1:8-12; 6:12). The Angel of the LORD plays a major role here in chapter 2. His appearance in Zechariah chapters 1-6 makes these chapters all the more important and interesting, and we learn a lot about this all-important Person.] **with a measuring line in his [His] hand.** [As the following verses show, this *man* was on His way to measure Jerusalem—*measure* in a *figurative* sense<sup>13</sup>—that He might reveal important information to Zechariah regarding God’s plans for Jerusalem (and for the people of Judah/Israel) *after* He has removed His enemies (and the enemies of His people) in His end-time judgment of the world and has glorified the city (and the people of Judah/Israel). This glorification will take place about the time the millennial kingdom begins.] **(2) So I said, “Where are you going?” And he [He] said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.” (3) And behold, the angel who was speaking with me [the interpreting angel (see Zech. 1:9)] was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him** [It seems that the interpreting angel was going out toward the Angel of the LORD to receive from Him the information regarding His *measuring* of Jerusalem. While the interpreting angel was on the way, he was met by another angel, who had apparently been sent by the Angel of the LORD with the revelation that follows in this chapter. It seems that all the words that follow here in Zechariah chapter 2 came from the Angel of the LORD (through this other angel).] **(4) and said to him [to the interpreting angel], “Run, speak to that young man [Zechariah], saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls [In the margin the NASB says, “Literally like *unwalled villages*; or like *open country*.”] because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. (5) For I,’ declares the LORD [*Yahweh*. It would be possible to understand the words “I” and “LORD [*Yahweh*]” here in verse 5 (and in verse 6) to refer to God the Father, the One who sent the Angel of the LORD, but it is much more natural in this context (especially because of what follows in verses 8-11) to understand “I” and “LORD” to refer to the Angel of the LORD. As I mentioned when discussing the Angel of the LORD [*Yahweh*] under Zechariah chapter 1, sometimes this Angel (the Angel of *Yahweh*) is called “LORD [*Yahweh*],” which would be blasphemous if the Angel were not deity with God the Father (and God the Spirit). The New Testament enables us to better understand this Person, the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, an uncreated Person, the preincarnate Christ.], ‘will be a wall of fire around her [Jerusalem], and I will be the glory in her midst.’ ” [The presence of God (especially in the Person of God the Son, the Angel of the LORD) in Jerusalem in millennial glory will serve as a protective “wall” for the elect of Judah/Israel (true****

<sup>13</sup> Compare the *figurative measuring* of Rev. 11:1, 2. John wasn’t taking actual measurements with a measuring rod; he was being given information (very important information) regarding the status of the Jews, the temple, the sacrificial altar, and the city of Jerusalem at the time of the first half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. The measuring of Zech. 2:1, 2 is different than the measuring of Zech. 1:16. It seems that the “measuring line” of Zech. 1:16 is to be used in the building (rebuilding) of Jerusalem. It is probably relevant that the Hebrew behind “measuring line” in Zech. 1:16 is different than the Hebrew here in 2:1. Note that Zech. 2:2 doesn’t mention the measuring of Jerusalem as part of a building project and that 2:4, 5 go on to show what Jerusalem will be like *after* it is glorified.

Israel), and as verse 4 shows, the good news regarding the extremely large numbers of men and cattle dwelling in Jerusalem at that time will make it impractical to have a wall around the city. The glory of God that Ezekiel saw leave the temple (when God left the temple) in Ezekiel chapters 9-11 will return, even as Ezekiel (prophetically) saw it return in Ezek. 43:1-5—that future glory will very far surpass the glory that was manifested under the old covenant.] **(6) “Ho there! Flee from the land of the north** [“The land of the north” apparently refers to Babylon here. Note that Babylon is mentioned in verse 7. Verses like Jer. 1:14, 15; 25:9 show that the “land of the north” can refer to Babylon.],” **declares the LORD, “for I [Again, the words “LORD” and “I” of this verse could be understood to refer to God the Father, but in this context they apparently refer to the Angel of the LORD.] have dispersed [or, scattered (in judgment for sin)] you [the people of Judah/Israel; the people who had Jerusalem as their capital city] as the four winds of the heavens,” declares the LORD.** [These words (and the words of verse 7) may have had some application for the large number of Jews who still lived in Babylon (who had not returned from the exile to Babylon) at that time (519 BC), but since this prophecy looks mostly to the end of this age (as do most of the prophecies in the book of Zechariah and a large number of the prophecies throughout the rest of the Bible), I believe we should think of Judah/Israel’s having been dispersed *worldwide*.

The Old Testament prophets frequently speak of the return of Judah/Israel from a *worldwide* dispersion *after* God (the triune God), in His end-time judgment of the world, has overthrown the nations who had been subjecting Judah/Israel (cf., e.g., Zech. 2:8, 9; 6:1-8; 8:7, 8; 10:6-12; Isa. 11:11-16; and 27:12, 13). *Babylon* is frequently used in prophetic passages as a symbol for the world (including parts of Isaiah chapters 13, 14 and Jeremiah chapters 50, 51; and in Rev. 14:8; 16:19; and 17:1-19:6). Furthermore, the fact that this verse speaks of Judah/Israel’s being dispersed *as the four winds of the heavens* fits a *worldwide* dispersion.] **(7) “Ho, Zion!** [“Zion” here refers to the people of Judah/Israel.] **Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon.” (8) For thus says the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts** [“hosts” means armies (especially referring to God’s angelic armies)], **“After glory He has sent me** [“Me.” It is important to see that “Me” here refers to the Angel of the LORD. The NASB has “Me” (with a capital “M”) at the end of verse 9 and again toward the end of verse 11 (both referring to the One who has been sent, the Angel of the LORD); it also has “My,” referring to the Angel of the LORD in verses 9, 11. The NKJV (here in verse 8) has, “He has sent Me after glory.” The wording here in verse 8 (and the wording that continues through verse 11) seems to go out of its way to make the point that the Angel of the LORD (who is distinguished from God the Father, who sent Him, and who is very often called the “LORD [Yahweh] of hosts,” including in verses 9 and 11, or “LORD [Yahweh]”) can also be called the “LORD of hosts [armies].” This isn’t surprising once we realize that the name *Yahweh* is (as I mentioned) sometimes used for the Angel of the LORD.

God the Father will be *glorified*, as will the Lord Jesus Christ (the Angel of the LORD), through His end-time judgment of the nations, who have been rejecting Him and oppressing His people (Judah/Israel and the Christians) and the saving/delivering of His people.<sup>14</sup> But there seems to be some emphasis here on God’s (the triune God’s)

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<sup>14</sup> There is some emphasis here on God’s being glorified through saving/delivering Judah/ Israel from the oppressive rule of the nations in His end-time judgment of the world, but other passages in Zechariah (see Zech. 3:1-10; 5:1-11; 12:10-13:9; and 14:20, 21) and other passages throughout the Bible speak of the

sharing His *glory* with His people (true Israel) as He dwells in their midst: He will glorify them and the city of Jerusalem (cf., e.g., Zech. 2:5; Isaiah chapter 60).] **against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.** [Compare Deut. 32:10; Psalm 17:8. God’s people (all the members of true Israel, which includes Christians) are precious to God the Father, and He takes it very personal when they are attacked or mistreated.] **(9) For behold, I [the Angel of the Lord] will wave My hand over them [over the nations (in judgment); cf. Isa. 19:16] so that they will be plunder for their slaves.** [The sons of Judah/Israel, who are *slaves* of the nations before God’s end-time judgment of the world through the Lord Jesus Christ, will end up plundering the nations and will have authority over the remnant of the peoples of the nations (the remnant of the peoples of the nations that God leaves after His end-time judgment of the world<sup>15</sup>). A large number of biblical prophecies speak of this *great reversal* that will take place through God’s end-time judgment of the world, as His people (true Israel, including all Christians) are exalted over the nations. This will work for the great good (the salvation) of the remnant of the peoples of the nations. As verse 11 (and other passages in Zechariah and throughout the Bible) shows, the remnant of the peoples of the nations will be saved through submitting to God and His Son (the resurrected Lamb of God) in faith. But, as verse 12 (and many other prophetic passages) shows, true Israel will continue to have a special, privileged relationship with God after the remnant of the peoples of the nations is saved. True Israel will reign with God, including reigning over the nations, forever. (See, for example, Revelation chapters 20-22.<sup>16</sup>)] **Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me. (10) Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” declares the LORD [Yahweh]. (11) “Many nations [The remnant of the peoples of the nations worldwide will submit to God (cf., e.g., Isa. 2:1-4; 14:1, 2<sup>17</sup>; Zech. 2:9-11; 8:20-23; 9:10; 14:16-21<sup>18</sup>; and Rev. 15:3, 4<sup>19</sup>; 21:3, 4, 24-27; 22:1-3; cf. Rev. 20:1-3.] will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. (12) The LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. (13) Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”** [The idea here in

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much greater salvation from sin, Satan, and spiritual death that will come to the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah through the Lord Jesus Christ. All true Christians will be raptured, glorified, and begin to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ at the time of His mid-week return.

<sup>15</sup> The prophecies of Zechariah (and many other prophecies throughout the Bible) show that God will also judge Judah/Israel in His end-time judgment of the world. It is the remnant of Judah/Israel that God will leave after that end-time shaking that will be saved through the Lord Jesus Christ. Judah/Israel will be judged and reduced to a repentant remnant before the nations are judged and reduced to a repentant remnant.

<sup>16</sup> Revelation chapters 20-22 (along with a large number of other prophetic passages) show that true Israel will forever remain distinct from those called the nations. Those chapters of the book of Revelation (and many other prophetic passages that deal with this topic) are discussed in some detail in my paper dated November 1998.

<sup>17</sup> These two passages from the book of Isaiah and many other prophetic passages from Isaiah are discussed in my paper *Verse-by-Verse Studies of Selected Eschatological Prophecies from the Book of Isaiah*, dated August 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah chapters 9-14 are discussed in some detail in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>19</sup> See my paper on Rev. 14:6-19:21.

verse 13 is that God, mostly in the Person of the Angel of the LORD, is coming to judge the world at the end of this age. He will make everything right, in accordance with the Word of God.]

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 3

**Then he showed me Joshua the high priest** [This Joshua, a descendant of Aaron, was the high priest of Judah at that time, in the days of the prophets Zechariah and Haggai (cf., e.g., Ezra 5:2; Hag. 1:1; and Zech. 6:11). In that role Joshua represented the nation before God; what was said regarding him in verses 1-4 had much direct application for the nation; his being cleansed was the cleansing of the nation (for the repentant believers of the nation). There is some emphasis, however, on Joshua himself, as the high priest, in verses 1-7. Verses 6, 7 deal with a comforting charge the Angel of the LORD gave Joshua regarding his ministry. Then in verse 8 Joshua the high priest (and the priests) is used as a symbol for the much greater high priest yet to come, who will, for one thing, fully solve the sin problem for the believers of Judah/Israel (for Gentile believers too).] **standing before the angel [Angel] of the LORD [Yahweh.** As in Zechariah chapters 1, 2 (and in many other passages in the Old Testament), the Angel of the LORD was the Son of God, the preincarnate Christ. Here He was acting in His role of Judge.], **and Satan** [In the margin the NASB has, “Or the *Adversary* or *Accuser*.” Compare 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:6-2:8; and Rev. 12:10.] **standing at his [Joshua’s] right hand to accuse him** [Joshua]. [Compare Psalm 109:6, 7. One major problem was the fact that Satan had legitimate accusations to make regarding the sins of Joshua and the priesthood and the people of Judah/Israel. But God had a plan to fully solve the sin problem; He had the plan before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:18-20). The book of Zechariah (see Zech. 12:10; 13:7; cf. 3:9; 11:12, 13) and many other books of the Bible (especially in the New Testament) show that God’s plan of salvation centers in the Sacrifice of His sinless Son, the Lamb of God, and the high priesthood ministry of the resurrected, glorified Messiah/Christ that is established on the basis of that one Sacrifice.

What the old-covenant priesthood and sacrifices could not accomplish, His one sacrifice and priesthood accomplishes once for all (for all who submit in faith to God the Father and His Son and His plan of salvation). The sacrificial blood of Christ Jesus has authority and power to bring complete forgiveness and right standing with God along with the even-more-important new birth and freedom from the authority and power of sin, Satan, and spiritual death, which enables believers to be righteous and holy with the very righteousness and holiness of God, not to mention their ultimate glorification.

Even though new-covenant salvation was not available in the days of the Old Testament, believers at that time could (through repentance and faith) receive and walk in the grace that God made available to them. (The grace that came to believers in Old Testament days, very much including the grace spoken of in Zech. 3:1-7, came on the basis of the yet-future sacrifice of the Lamb of God. And the grace that opens the door to eternal glory for all believers (including the believers who lived in the days of the Old Testament) also comes through the Lord Jesus Christ, with some emphasis on His sacrificial, atoning death [cf., e.g., Rev. 21:27].) Zechariah 3:1-7 speak of a major manifestation of the grace of God that was extended to Joshua and the repentant believers of that day. Zechariah 3:8-10 prophesy of a much greater manifestation of God’s grace that will come to the end-time remnant of Judah/Israel when they receive

new-covenant salvation through submitting (in faith) to the Lord Jesus Christ.] **(2) The LORD** [“The LORD [*Yahweh* in Hebrew]” here (as in Zech. 2:5, 6, 8, 10, 11 and in quite a few other verses of the Old Testament) refers to the Angel of the LORD, who is deity with God the Father and God the Spirit. He is distinguished from God the Father in this verse, as He frequently is, in that the two following uses of *Yahweh* in this verse refer to God the Father.] **said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the LORD who [in His grace] has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!** [Compare Jude 1:9.] **Is this not a brand plucked from the fire** [“Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” NIV]?” [Joshua the high priest and the nation of Judah, which Joshua represented before God, was like a “brand plucked from the fire” in that, despite their pitiful condition (because of sin and the penalties/consequences for sin [cf. Amos 4:11]), God had determined to save them.<sup>20</sup> In verses 3-5, we see the state of Joshua the high priest change, drastically and gloriously change; the people of Judah (the believers) and the city and nation experienced this change along with the high priest, who represented them before God.

The words of Zech. 3:1-7 apply to the days of Joshua the high priest. As we have seen when discussing Zechariah chapters 1, 2, God began to bless Judah/Israel when they repented and began to rebuild the temple, etc. The prophetic words of Zech. 3:8-10, however, apply mostly to the future, to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ will save the end-time remnant of Judah/Israel (after they repent and submit to Him in faith), as pictured, for example, in Zechariah chapters 12-14; Rom. 11:25-27.<sup>21</sup>

A very important aspect of understanding the all-important atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ is to see that He, the Lamb of God, bore all our sins/transgressions/iniquities, very much including the major transgression of Adam and Eve that brought death (spiritual death and physical death) to them and their offspring, with the guilt (so we could be forgiven), and with the penalties (so we could be saved from/get out from under those penalties). If the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinless Lamb of God, had not borne the penalties of spiritual death<sup>22</sup> and bondage to sin and Satan (and his evil angels and demon spirits), we could not have been saved out of that pitiful, sinful state. Mankind came under the authority of spiritual death, sin, and Satan as a result (as a consequence/penalty) of sin, especially the sin of Adam, but also the sins of our forefathers and our sins. *Our* sins are the ones *we* will have to answer for when we stand before God the Judge. God stripped sin, Satan, and spiritual death of their authority over us in the atoning death of Christ.

The important truths mentioned in the last paragraph are discussed in some detail in my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. One key point that is discussed in the first three chapters of that book is that the Hebrew words for sin, iniquity, and transgression (unlike our English words) include within their range of meaning the *penalties* for sin,

<sup>20</sup> For one thing, they had recently been plucked from the fire of the Babylonian captivity, but the books of Haggai and Zechariah (including the first two chapters of Zechariah and Zech. 3:3-5) show that things were still very far from being right for those who had returned from captivity before Judah began to respond to the Word of God through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

<sup>21</sup> Zechariah chapters 12-14 are discussed verse-by-verse in my book *Mid-Week Rapture*. Romans 11:25-27 are discussed in my paper dated March 2001.

<sup>22</sup> I didn't say that Jesus Christ died spiritually; He didn't, and it's a serious mistake to say that He did. I have discussed this rather important point in my previous writings. See footnote 4 under Psalm 22 in my paper dated September 2004 and endnote 2 on page 12 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.



iniquity, and transgression.<sup>23</sup> We will not be able to adequately understand all that Jesus did for us in His atoning death unless we see that He bore the *penalties* for our sin/iniquity/transgression so we could get out from under those penalties, *especially the penalties of spiritual death and bondage to sin and Satan*, but also many other penalties, including the ultimate penalty of hell. I'll say more regarding these all-important truths as we continue.] **(3) Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel [Angel].** [The “filthy garments” represent the sinful state of Joshua, the priests, and the people of Judah.] **(4) He spoke and said to those who were standing before him** [Him. The Angel of the LORD undoubtedly spoke to angelic beings (perhaps cherubim/seraphim) who were standing before Him (cf., e.g., Isa. 6:5-7).], **saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him [from Joshua].” Again [And] he said to him [to Joshua], “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you** [For the Angel of the LORD to have had the filthy garments removed from the high priest (and from the nation, the believers of the nation) and to take away his iniquity (and that of the believers of the nation), in this old-covenant context, could not incorporate the full, glorious new-covenant dimension of these words. Under the old covenant, the new birth wasn't available and the full sanctifying work of the blood of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. But they could be forgiven then, and they could experience a new beginning with God; furthermore, some sanctifying grace was available in Old Testament days for those who would appropriate it in humble faith.<sup>24</sup>

Zechariah 3:8-10 prophesied of the day that the repentant end-time believing remnant of Judah will be cleansed in the full new-covenant dimension: Along with total forgiveness, their *bondage to iniquity* (and to spiritual death and demons) will be taken away—they will be sanctified (made holy) through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God by/in the *Holy Spirit* by grace through faith (cf., e.g., Zech. 5:1-11; 12:10-13:6; 14:20, 21; Isa. 53:1-12, especially verse 11; Ezek. 36:25-27; Rom. 6:1-23; 8:1-14; and 1 Pet. 2:24).<sup>25</sup>

I have discovered over the years that most Bible-believing Christians, though they have a solid understanding of the fact that forgiveness is provided through the atoning death (through the blood) of Christ, do not have a solid understanding of the fact that the Bible just as clearly teaches that Christians are called and enabled to walk in righteousness and holiness (by the grace/Spirit of God), with the victory over sin, through the atoning death of the Lamb of God. This means a whole lot more than beginning to gradually reduce the amount of sin through a lifelong sanctifying process, and that we will only be able to stop sinning after we die and are glorified (which is the view most widely held among evangelical Christians in our day). The Bible has a whole

<sup>23</sup> The first chapter deals with a Hebrew noun normally translated *transgression*. The second chapter deals with a Hebrew noun normally translated *iniquity*. And the third chapter deals with a Hebrew noun normally translated *sin*. One feature that makes those chapters extra important is that they include detailed discussions of key verses of Isaiah chapter 53, which is one of the most important chapters in the Bible that deals with the all-important atoning death of the Lamb of God.

<sup>24</sup> As Heb. 9:13 shows, much of the *cleansing* under the old covenant was an *external* cleansing. There was, however, some *internal* sanctifying/cleansing too (cf., e.g., Lev. 19:1-37; and a large number of other passages could be cited).

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 53:11 is discussed on pages 25-29 of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. The verses in Romans are discussed on pages 96-104, 116-123 of the same book, and 1 Pet. 2:24 on pages 22, 23. Quite a large number of other passages are also discussed in that book which show that God has provided the authority and power for the righteousness and holiness of believers through the atoning death of the Lamb of God.

lot to say about holiness (an abiding state of being set apart for God, from sin, Satan, and spiritual death) being provided through the new covenant, which has been established on the atoning death of the Lamb of God. This is the primary topic of *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. We cannot have a solid faith for holiness and victory over sin until we understand in our hearts, clearly understand, that this *is* what the Bible teaches. This is good news! God is after transformation to righteous holy living (by grace through faith), not after more condemnation.] **and will clothe you with festal robes.**” [The KJV has, “with a change of raiment”; the NIV has “rich garments”; and the NKJV has “rich robes.” However we translate the Hebrew noun used here, the dominant idea is that *clean* garments are to replace the unclean. The one foundational problem that man has, the sin problem, is fully solved through full salvation in Christ Jesus. God even takes believers (after glorification) to a much higher existence than what Adam and Eve had before the fall. What a salvation plan! And what a price God paid (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) so we could have such a salvation (by grace through faith).] **(5) Then I [Zechariah] said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel [Angel] of the LORD was standing by.** [Apparently the turban was part of the holy garments worn by the high priest (cf. Ex. 28:4, 36-39). I assume that the Angel of the LORD would have seen to it that a *clean turban* be put on Joshua’s head if Joshua hadn’t made this request, but God leaves much room for the input of His people. He didn’t create us and save us to be passive; we are destined to reign (in humility) with God (the triune God).] **(6) And the angel [Angel] of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, (7) “Thus says the LORD of hosts [The “LORD of hosts” apparently refers to God the Father here<sup>26</sup>; His words (spoken by the Angel of the LORD) continue through verse 10.], ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern [It would probably be better to translate something like “you will also act as judge”; the NKJV has “you shall also judge My house.”] My house and also have charge of My courts [God’s house here refers to the temple, even as the courts refer to the courts in the temple.], and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here [Those who were standing there were angelic, heavenly beings; note “those who were standing before [the Angel of the LORD]” in verse 4].<sup>27</sup> (8) Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol [The NIV has, “who are symbolic of things to come.” The Hebrew isn’t all that clear here, but Joshua is certainly to be included as one of the “men who are a symbol.” In fact he, being the *high priest*, was the primary one intended as a symbol here. Joshua’s “friends” (or we could translate “companions” with the NKJV or “associates” with the NIV) apparently referred to priests.<sup>28</sup> The high priest (and priesthood) served as a symbol (he foreshadowed) the**

<sup>26</sup> Note the words at the end of verse 8, “behold, I [God the Father] am going to bring in My servant [Servant] Servant the Branch [Christ Jesus].”

<sup>27</sup> Although these words were intended for Joshua the high priest, the principle that if we walk in God’s ways and are faithful to do the things we have been commissioned to do (by His grace) He will give us access to the heavenly dimension and anoint us by His Spirit applies to all believers, especially new-covenant believers, who have a much better covenant with God.

<sup>28</sup> It seems that God could have easily skipped mentioning the priests here, but (apparently) He wanted to demonstrate that He hadn’t forgotten the priests and that their work was important in His plans. God

much greater high priest yet to come (the Lord Jesus Christ),<sup>29</sup> who would fully solve the sin problem and fully sanctify/cleanse the people of Judah/Israel through His one Sacrifice and ministry. See Zech. 12:10-13:6.<sup>30</sup> This same complete, new-covenant, sanctifying cleansing is also pictured in Zech. 5:1-11.], **for behold, I [God the Father] am going to bring in My servant [Servant (cf., e.g., Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-7; and 52:12-53:12)] the Branch.** [Several Old Testament prophecies refer to the Messiah (Christ Jesus) as the Branch (cf. Isa. 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:15; and Zech. 6:12). Christ Jesus is the only One able to fully cleanse/sanctify/save Judah/Israel (or Gentiles).] **(9) For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua [The “stone” represents Christ Jesus (cf. Psalm 118:22; Isa. 8:14; 26:18; Dan. 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; and 1 Pet. 2:6, 7). It isn’t clear what Zechariah saw in this night vision regarding “the stone that [God] set before Joshua,” but we don’t really need further information to understand the meaning of these words.]; on one stone [which is the same very special stone just mentioned] are seven eyes.** [These “seven eyes” are apparently explained by Zech. 4:10, “...these seven...*these are* the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth (cf. Rev. 5:6).” The seven eyes (with seven being a number of divine perfection and completeness) were not located on the stone; they were directed to (looking at) this stone, this very special stone.] **Behold, I will engrave an inscription**

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doesn’t forget any of His people, and He has important plans for all of them, for this age, and more so for the age to come.

<sup>29</sup> Zechariah 6:11-13 show that Joshua the high priest was a type of (foreshadowed) the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high priest to come. Actually, Zech. 6:11 mentions that He will be a *priest* on His throne. It doesn’t mention *high* priest, but the Bible makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Great High Priest (cf. Heb. 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:10; 6:20; 7:26, 28; 8:1, 3; 9:11; and 10:21). Some other verses that refer to Him as a *priest* are Psalm 110:5 and Heb. 5:5; the high priest was, of course, a priest too.

It seems that the intention here was to speak of Joshua the high priest (and the priests) as foreshadowing the coming of the Great High Priest, and that is the way these words are typically interpreted, but it is also true that the *cleansing* of Joshua (and the priests and the believers of the nation) at that time foreshadowed the much greater cleansing that will come to the end-time remnant of Judah/Israel at the end of this age. Actually, there is nothing about the word “friends (companions, associates)” that requires us to limit this word to the priests.

<sup>30</sup> Born-again Christians are called and enabled to walk in full salvation throughout this age, but the Bible shows that Judah/Israel, as a nation (more specifically, the remnant of the nation), will not submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved through Him until the end of this age (e.g., Rom. 11:25-27).

**on it,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.'** [The *inscription* that is *engraved* on the stone apparently deals with, or at least includes, the all-important atoning death of the Lamb of God and His resultant high-priestly ministry that will ultimately "remove the iniquity" (fully sanctify) the end-time remnant of Judah/Israel "in one day" (as pictured, for example, in Zech. 12:10-13:6; 5:1-11; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:25-27; and Rom. 11:25-27).] **(10) 'In that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'** [After Judah/Israel has been saved and sanctified by the Lord Jesus Christ, they will begin a never-ending state of peace and blessedness, which will start about the time the millennial kingdom begins.]

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 4

[Zechariah chapter 4 contains the *fifth* vision of the eight visions contained in Zech. 1:7-6:8.] **Then the angel who was speaking with me** [The interpreting angel was speaking with Zechariah.] **returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.** [Apparently Zechariah had not literally fallen asleep, but he had already received quite a bit of heavy-duty revelation that night.] **(2) He said to me, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it** [In the tabernacle there was a golden lampstand with seven lamps that was built according to God’s instructions (cf. Ex. 25:31-40). There was no bowl on the top of that lamp to disperse oil to the individual lamps, but each of the seven lamps held olive oil (cf. Ex. 27:20, 21) and gave light by burning the oil with a wick.]; **(3) also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.”** [The two olive trees, which play a very important role in this vision, are explained in verses 11-14.] **(4) Then I [Zechariah] said to the angel who was speaking with me** [the interpreting angel] **saying, “What are these, my lord?” (5) So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” And I said, “No, my lord.” (6) Then he said to me, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel** [Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah at that time (Hag. 1:1). He was the grandson of King Jeconiah (who was called Jehoiachin in 2 Kings 24:10-16); Zerubbabel and Jeconiah are both listed in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ (according to the flesh) in Matt. 1:11, 12. The prophetic words that follow (here in Zechariah chapter 4) had an important application for Zerubbabel (and for the nation he governed), who was involved with rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem at that time, but these words had a much greater application for the building project of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf., e.g., Zech. 1:16, 17; 2:1-12; 6:12-15; and 14:9-11, 16-21), of whom Zerubbabel was a type.] **saying, ‘Not by might nor by power** [The temple would be completed (516 BC) and so would the building project of the Lord Jesus Christ, but not by the *might* or *power* of man, or for the glory of man. The “house/temple” built by the Lord Jesus Christ is the kingdom of God, which in its ultimate form includes new Jerusalem (see Revelation chapters 21, 22); this house/temple embraces all God’s elect people of all the ages. God (the triune God) is the true builder of both projects; they are both accomplished by His grace and for His glory, and for the great good of His people; God’s people play important roles in the building projects (by His grace/Spirit through faith).], **but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts. (7) ‘What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain** [Compare Isa. 40:4; Jer. 51:25.]; **and he [Zerubbabel, but especially the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Zerubbabel was a type] will bring forth the top stone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!” ’ ’** [The “great mountain” represents the formidable opposition of Satan and his kingdom of evil, including the opposition of those men who are aligned with his kingdom, against both building projects. (Mountains sometimes serve as a symbol for kingdoms; that could be the idea here.) This verse proclaimed the good news that both building projects will be completed. The shouts of “grace, grace” upon the completion of the building projects acknowledge that the projects were accomplished by the *grace* of God

and that He (the triune God) must receive all the glory.<sup>31</sup>] **(8) Also the word of the LORD came to me [Zechariah], saying, (9) “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house [Regarding Zerubbabel’s rebuilding of the temple, see Hag. 1:12-15; Ezra 3:8-13.], and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me [Me] to you.** [“You” is plural in the Hebrew. Since the words of the last sentence here in verse 9 are the equivalent of the words at the end of Zech. 2: 9 and 11, it seems clear that the Angel of the LORD was speaking here; He was speaking to the people of Judah/Israel (all believers). The Angel of the LORD had been sent by God the Father. He has been sent to and for the elect of God, not just to and for the elect of Zerubbabel’s day, but to and for all the elect that will have a place in God’s glorified new Jerusalem.] **(10) For who has despised the day of small things?** [The “small things” referred, for one thing, to the rebuilding of the temple in Zerubbabel’s day. That temple (and the work of God in the people of Judah and in behalf of those people in that day) seemed rather insignificant; the rebuilt temple was far less glorious than the temple that Solomon had built some four hundred years earlier (see Hag. 2:3; Ezra 3:10-13). But we must not despise (think little of) seemingly small things that God does. Small things add up and God’s seemingly small beginnings in the days of Zerubbabel were destined to have a super glorious ending through the saving, building work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must trust God and walk by faith, faith in God, which includes having faith in what He has said, and obeying His commandments and instructions. As the apostle Paul, a servant of God who faced many trials, said, “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).] **But these seven** [We are informed later in this verse that “these seven” refer to “the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth.” I believe these *seven eyes* are the same seven eyes that were mentioned in Zech. 3:9. *Seven* is a symbolic number for perfection and completeness. God knows and watches what is happening everywhere at all times. Revelation 5:6 pictures the Lord Jesus Christ having “seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.” The “seven Spirits” refer in a symbolic way to the Holy Spirit (cf. Rev. 1:4; 3:1; and 4:5). Based on Rev. 5:6, “these seven/the eyes of the LORD” can be understood to refer to the omnipresent Holy Spirit.] **will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel** [The “plumb line” is to be used for building, for the building of the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and for the much-more-important building of the temple/house/kingdom of God throughout this age and especially at the end of this age by the Lord Jesus Christ (of whom Zerubbabel was a type). We have already been informed of these building projects through the prophecies already given by Zechariah (and many other prophetic passages in the Bible speak of the building project(s) of the Lord Jesus Christ).]—**these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth** [cf. 2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3; and Jer. 16:17].” [The eyes of the LORD—that is, the LORD Himself—“will be glad” when He sees His plans coming to pass step by step until the time the building projects are completed and we have arrived at the state of eternal glory pictured in Revelation chapters 21, 22. It isn’t that God the Father passively watches what others, like Zerubbabel and the Lord Jesus Christ are doing/building; the Bible makes it very clear

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<sup>31</sup> The word “it” in the words “Grace, grace to it!” refers to the “top stone” of the temple/house/kingdom, but it is clear that the cause for rejoicing is that the bringing forth of the top stone indicates the completion of the building project.

that He is actively involved with the age-long projects of creating, saving, building, judging, etc.] **(11) Then I said to him** [to the interpreting angel], **“What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?”** **(12) And I answered the second time and said to him, “What are the two olive branches [“or *clusters*”] which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden *oil* from themselves [into the bowl on top of the lampstand, which in turn distributes the olive oil to the seven lamps]?”** **(13) So he answered me, saying, “Do you not know what these are?”** **And I said, “No, my lord.”** **(14) Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones [“*Lit sons of fresh oil*”] who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”** [This prophetic picture is highly symbolic. It is designed to show the importance of the ministries of Zerubbabel (who plays a major role in the book of Haggai and here in Zechariah chapter 4), and of Joshua the high priest (who plays a major role in the book of Haggai and in Zechariah chapter 3), but especially the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom both Zerubbabel and Joshua were types. The two olive trees supply olive oil to the lamps of the lampstand. There is widespread agreement that the two olive trees represent Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor. They were anointed by God to give light and to accomplish their ministries (cf., e.g., Ex. 29:7; 1 Sam. 16:1, 12, 13; and Isa. 61:1-3). The significant future ministry of the two prophets/witnesses of Rev. 11:3-11 builds on Zechariah chapter 4 (see Rev. 11:4), and it helps us understand Zechariah chapter 4.<sup>32</sup>

The primary fact that makes this prophetic picture so important is that Joshua (as high priest) and Zerubbabel (as the civil authority in the lineage of King David, and listed in the genealogy of Christ Jesus) both serve as types of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah 6:11-13 show that the Lord Jesus Christ “will be a priest on His throne”—He will fill the office of high priest, and He will rule on His throne. And Zech. 6:12, 13 show that He is the One who will build the temple (house/kingdom, ultimately the new heaven and new earth with new Jerusalem of Revelation chapters 21, 22) of the Lord. Also, the names *Messiah* (from the Hebrew) and *Christ* (from the Greek) mean *Anointed One*. Obviously the Angel of the LORD (the Son of God, who is deity with God the Father and God the Spirit, and through whom all things that were created were created) didn’t need to be anointed, but in that the Lord Jesus Christ was the God-*man*, He did need to be anointed by the Spirit of God.

We can probably say that the golden lampstand represents the people of God, the people of God in that day were associated with Judah/Israel. The Christian churches of different cities are called *lampstands* in Revelation chapters 2, 3. The people of God were/are called to show forth the light (which includes God’s truth and righteousness) and glory of God before the nations. The fact that Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor were pictured as olive trees pouring oil into the lampstand showed that much of the flow of the Spirit of God to Judah in that day came through their ministries. God does the work, and He must receive all the glory, but He chooses to use men in important assignments. All the ministries that God sets in the body of Christ are important to the proper functioning of the body. The contribution of each individual Christian, as they fulfill their measure assigned by God (by His enabling grace/Spirit), is important to the proper functioning of the body. Any life that is lived for God in

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<sup>32</sup> Revelation chapter 11, which is a prophetic chapter of key importance, is discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

accordance with His will and plan is significant; it is a serious mistake (even sinful) to “despise” any such life.]



## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 5

Zechariah chapter 5 contains the *sixth* and *seventh* prophetic visions of the eight visions that are recorded in Zech. 1:7-6:8. The seventh vision, which starts with verse 5, is closely related to the sixth vision; it seems to build on the sixth vision. (C. F. Keil only sees one vision here in chapter 5.) These visions deal with God's end-time judgments of Judah/Israel that will, for one thing, be part of His sanctifying/cleansing the nation: All (unrepentant) sinners and wickedness will be removed from the land.

We can speak of two stages of God's work of sanctifying/cleansing Judah/Israel in the last days. The *first stage* will begin about the time of Antichrist's abomination of desolation.<sup>33</sup> Judah/Israel will be reduced to a repentant remnant during the one-month period of intense shaking that will begin with the abomination. Some two thirds of the sons of Judah/Israel will be cut off by death or by exile during that period (see Zech. 13:8-14:2; Zechariah chapters 12-14 are discussed in chapter 15 of *Mid-Week Rapture*). The one third that will be left will constitute the repentant end-time elect *remnant* of Judah/Israel.

The end-time remnant of Judah/Israel will be ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes, as pictured, for example, in Zech. 12:10 (cf. Matt. 23:39; Rev. 11:13). They will be sanctified/cleansed by Him when they submit to Him in faith (see Zech. 12:10-13:6; 3:9; 14:20, 21).<sup>34</sup> This sanctifying/cleansing can be considered a *second stage* of God's end-time sanctifying/cleansing of Judah/Israel.

I'll quote Zech. 13:1-3, " 'In that day [after the remnant of Judah/Israel has submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ] a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. (2) It will come about in that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets [speaking of false prophets, as the next verse shows] and the unclean spirit from the land. (3) And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, "You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD"; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.' "

Zechariah chapter 5 speaks of God's removal of (unrepentant) sinners and of wickedness from the land of Judah/Israel; this is part of His sanctifying/cleansing Judah/Israel.

**Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll. (2) And he [the interpreting angel] said to me [Zechariah the prophet], "What do you see?" And I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits."** [The *flying scroll* is explained by verses 3, 4. The most important thing about this scroll is that it has curses written on it, and when it goes forth across the

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<sup>33</sup> As I have discussed in some detail in my eschatological writings (start with *Mid-Week Rapture*), I believe the abomination of desolation will be initiated by Antichrist about a month before Christ's mid-week return and the rapture.

<sup>34</sup> As I have discussed in some detail in my eschatological writings, I believe the repentant end-time remnant of Judah/Israel will submit to the Lord Jesus Christ in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, about the time He comes to the Mount of Olives, right after the mid-week rapture (not in time to be taken in the rapture).

land of Judah/Israel it will completely purge away all the (unrepentant) sinners from the land, along with everything that has been defiled by sin, in accordance with the writing on the scroll. This unrolled scroll is quite large, some thirty feet by fifteen feet. No one will be able to ignore this scroll when it goes forth. The fact that the scroll flies fits the idea of swift judgment.

There is some similarity between this scroll and the scroll mentioned in Ezek. 2:8-3:11. Written on that scroll, on the front and on the back, were lamentations, mourning, and woe (Ezek. 2:10). God told Ezekiel to eat the scroll and then to go proclaim its contents to the people of Judah in the sinful, largely unrepentant days in the early years of the Babylonian captivity before the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed in 587/586 BC. God gave Ezekiel these instructions as part of his commission to be a prophet in 593/592 BC (Ezek. 1:1-3:27); he ministered among the exiles in Babylon, having been carried into exile in 597 BC (cf. 2 Kings 24:10-16). Also compare the scroll(s) of Rev. 5:1 and 10:2-11.] **(3) Then he said to me, “This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land** [In the margin the NASB points out that the Hebrew could also be translated “earth,” instead of “land”; I believe the *land* of Judah/Israel is intended here. The NIV has “land”; the KJV and NKJV have “earth.”<sup>35</sup>]; **surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side. (4) I will make it go forth,” declares the LORD of hosts, “and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name; and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones.”** [I’m confident that the two sins spelled out in these two verses, stealing and swearing falsely, are representative of all sins and that the end result of this scroll’s going forth will be the removal of all (unrepentant) sinners and all sin (everything that is unclean and defiling will be purged from Judah/Israel at the end of this age; cf., e.g., Zech. 3:9; 5:5-11; 12:10-13:6; 14:20, 21; and Mal. 3:5). The Mosaic Law, which was the foundation for the old covenant, spoke often of the *curses* that would come to Israelites who were unfaithful to God and His Law. The two sins specifically mentioned here in verses 3, 4 are, of course, forbidden by the Mosaic Law, including in the ten commandments (cf. Ex. 20:7 [with Lev. 19:12; Matt. 5:33], 15).] **(5) Then the angel** [the interpreting angel] **who was speaking with me went out and said to me** [Zechariah the prophet], **“Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth.”** **(6) I said, “What is it?” And he said, “This is the ephah going forth.”** [An *ephah* was a dry measure equal to one tenth of an homer, about two thirds of a bushel. The ephah here was as a container; it was covered, as the next verse shows, with a lead cover. This container with its heavy cover was clearly designed to be escape proof.] **Again he said, “This is their appearance in all the land** [There is some doubt about how to translate these last words and about the meaning of these words, but the overall meaning is clear enough: All (unrepentant) sinners and all wickedness will be removed from Judah/Israel. The NIV (following Greek and Syriac manuscripts) translates, “This is the iniquity of the people throughout

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<sup>35</sup> Compare Isa. 24:6. Isaiah chapters 24-27 are important prophetic chapters (some refer to this passage as Isaiah’s Apocalypse) that deal with God’s end-time judgment of the world. Isaiah chapters 24-27 are discussed in some detail in my paper dated August 2000.

the land.”<sup>36</sup> (In the margin the NIV has, “or *appearance*,” which probably is the most common way the Hebrew is translated here.) With the translation of the NASB, the word “their” probably refers to the (unrepentant) sinners of the land (along with their defiling sin). “Their appearance” is that by God’s judgment they have been placed in the ephah, which is to be removed from the land of Judah/Israel; wickedness of every form will be totally removed from “all the land” of Judah/Israel forever.] **(7) (and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman** [The woman here was a symbol for “wickedness” (verse 8).] **sitting inside the ephah.” (8) Then he said, “This is Wickedness!” And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening. (9) Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork [strong wings], and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. (10) I said to the angel who was speaking with me, “Where are they taking the ephah?” (11) Then he said to me, “To build a temple [Lit *house*] for her [a temple for the wickedness removed from Judah/Israel] in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal.”** [“The land of Shinar” is Babylon (cf., e.g., Dan. 1:2). Babylon is frequently used in the Bible as a symbol for the godless, sinful world, the world of which Satan is god, and that is the apparent meaning here. The “wickedness,” which is totally inappropriate for God’s kingdom, is totally removed from Judah/Israel and taken to Babylon (a kingdom characterized by wickedness). Although it isn’t mentioned here, it is understood that Babylon will be judged and totally removed in God’s end-time judgment of the world (cf., e.g., Rev. 14:8; and 16:17-19:3).]

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<sup>36</sup> Since we don’t have the original Hebrew manuscripts, it happens on occasion that the Greek (or sometimes another language) manuscripts will preserve the original (correct) reading where the Hebrew manuscripts that we possess have a corrupted reading.

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 6

[Zechariah 6:1-8 give the *eighth* and last vision of the eight night visions of Zech. 1:7-6:8. Zechariah 6:9-15 contain a very important prophetic word about Christ's being a priest (He is the Great High Priest) and the King on His throne and about His building God's ultimate temple/house/kingdom.] **Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming forth from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains.** [I'm satisfied with the common view that the two mountains are Mount Zion (the temple mount) and the Mount of Olives, which is just east of Mount Zion, at Jerusalem. In this context, with the focus on God's end-time judgment of the nations, it is reasonable to think of the chariots coming forth from God at Jerusalem.<sup>37</sup> The four chariots are used in God's judgment of the nations. The chariots will be discussed further as we continue. Verse 6 speaks of the chariots being sent forth to the "north country" and the "south country," which refer to kingdoms *north* and *south* of Jerusalem (and the land of Judah/Israel), which is the center of the earth, biblically speaking. The fact that the mountains at Jerusalem are *bronze* mountains helps convey the idea that God's kingdom is indestructible—it will stand forever, unlike the kingdoms of the world (cf., e.g., Daniel chapter 2, especially verses 44, 45; 7:13, 14, 22, 26, 27<sup>38</sup>).] **(2) With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, (3) with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot strong dappled horses.** [The Hebrew adjective translated *strong* is used for the dappled horses here, but there is widespread agreement that verse 7 shows that all the horses are *strong* horses, whatever their color. At the end of verse 3, the NIV has, "—all of them powerful."] **(4) Then I [Zechariah the prophet] spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me [the interpreting angel], "What are these, my lord?" (5) The angel replied to me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth, (6) with one of which** [The first words of verse 6 mean "with one of the four spirits [that were just mentioned in verse 5] the black horses are going forth..." In verses 4 and 5 the word *these* refers to the four chariots spoken of in verses 1-3. The *four chariots* seem to be equated, therefore, with the *four spirits of heaven* in these verses. The four spirits of heaven are not explained here,<sup>39</sup> but it is clear

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<sup>37</sup> Compare, for example, Joel 3:16, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel chapters 2 and 7 are discussed verse-by-verse in chapters 5 and 6 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>39</sup> The four spirits refer to four powerful spiritual forces loyal to God. The fact that the spirits were standing before God demonstrates that something more than impersonal forces are spoken of here. The number *four* fits the idea of their *worldwide* involvement. "The universality of the judgment is indicated by the number *four*, Cf. 'the *four corners of the earth*' (Isa. 11:12); 'the *four winds of heaven*' (Zech. 6:5; Jer. 49:36)" (Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah* [Zondervan, 1982], page 102). "The number four speaks of the universality of the judgment to be carried out by God's agencies..." (Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* [Multnomah Press, 1979], page 76).

Only the "north country" and the "south country" are mentioned in these verses, but I believe it's clear that God's *worldwide* judgment is in view. For one thing, the way the words the "north country" and the "south country" are used here they could cover the entire world. Going to or from Judah/Israel by land you typically went north or south—to the west was the Mediterranean Sea and to the east was extensive desert land. Furthermore, as I'll document under verses 6-8, kingdoms that were far to the east and west of Israel were sometimes spoken of in the Bible as being kingdoms of the *north*, and the same thing was

here that the four spirits (in company with the horses) are going forth to accomplish God's judgments on the nations. I believe these judgments will take place at the end of this age, just before the millennial kingdom begins.] **the black horses are going forth to the north country; and the white ones go forth after them, while the dappled ones go forth to the south country.** [For the interpretation see footnote 39 and under verse 8.] **(7) When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth.** [There is widespread agreement that the "strong ones" refer to all the horses with their chariots, not just to the dappled ones. I'm not satisfied with the translation "to patrol" here or later in this verse. That verb hardly fits the idea of going forth on missions of judgment.<sup>40</sup> It would be better to translate they were eager "to go throughout the earth" with the NIV. In the margin the NASB says the literal translation is "walk about through." The horses *were eager* (the Hebrew would be more literally translated "were seeking to go") to go on their assignments; God's heavenly ministers are always eager to do His will, very much including when it comes to His work of judging. They know that His will is always right, good, and necessary.] **And He** ["He" here and in the next verse refers to the "Lord of all the earth," who was mentioned in verse 5, but it isn't clear to me whether God the Father or God the Son (the Angel of the LORD) speaks here in verses 7, 8; it isn't important for us to know which Person speaks here. I lean toward God the Father, but since the Angel of the LORD speaks again in 6:15 (even as He spoke several times earlier in the book of Zechariah), He could be the One speaking here too. The fact that verse 8 goes on to speak of the *wrath* of God, doesn't prove that God the Father is the One speaking here. Revelation 6:16, 17, for example, in a context dealing with the end-time judgment of the world, speaks of the wrath of God the Father *and* God the Son.] **said, "Go, patrol the earth." So they patrolled the earth. (8) Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, "See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath** [*"Lit caused My Spirit to rest"* (margin of NASB)] **in the land of the north.**" [This account is quite brief. For one thing, it doesn't mention any assignment(s) for the chariot with the red horses. I assume that that chariot goes forth worldwide bringing warfare and bloodshed as part of God's end-time judgment of the world. On the color *red*, see under Zech. 1:8. The judgment of the "land of the north" (the "north country" Zech. 6:6) is given special prominence in this vision. Judah/Israel had problems with kingdoms/nations that came from the south (especially Egypt), but their greatest problems came from the north. That included the world-kingdoms of the Assyrians (cf., e.g., Isa. 14:31; Zeph. 2:13), Babylonians (cf., e.g., Jer. 1:13-15; 25:9),<sup>41</sup> Greeks, Romans, and their greatest problem is yet to come out of the north through the revived Roman empire that will be ruled by Antichrist. If this eighth vision of Zechariah deals (at least for the most part)

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true regarding kingdoms of the *south* (including Egypt, which was/is west of Israel even as it is south). "Nothing is said...of horses going east and west because the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) bordered Israel's land on the west and the Arabian desert on the east. The millennial scope of this and of all eight of the night visions necessitates a world-wide sally of the horses (denoted by the number four) with their chariots, as in the first vision in the case of the horsed riders presented there (Zech. 1:7-17). ..." (Unger, *Zechariah*, page 106).

<sup>40</sup> As verse 5 shows, the four spirits went forth *after standing before God*, from whom they undoubtedly received their assigned missions.

<sup>41</sup> These references demonstrate that Assyria and Babylon are kingdoms of the *north*, and there are other such verses.

with God's end-time judgment of the world, which I believe it does, Antichrist's kingdom is the primary one in view here. Antichrist is the *king of the north* in Dan. 11:36-45.<sup>42</sup>

I believe these verses (Zech. 6:5-8) show that God sends the most intense judgment against the land of the north, where the greatest judgment is needed. Verse 8 shows that God has wrath, undoubtedly special wrath, against the land of the north (because of their intense blasphemous attacks against Him, His people, His kingdom, even against the temple at Jerusalem).<sup>43</sup> Verse 6 shows that God sends the chariot with the *black* horses against the north country. I assume the black horses represent very intense judgment. The judgment associated with the black horses totally turns off their lights, so to speak.<sup>44</sup> Then the chariot with the *white* horses, with white representing God's victory and purity, move in to establish His reign over that part of the world.<sup>45</sup> Although this detail isn't mentioned (along with quite a few other details), I believe we are to understand that the chariot with the white horses will go to, and take over, the entire world before God is done with His end-time judgment of the world.

What about the chariot with the *dappled* horses sent forth to the south country (verse 6)? Dappled means spotted, speckled; I consider it probable that these horses were a mixture of black and white, which would fit the idea of less severe judgment than with the black horses.<sup>46</sup> I believe the idea is that less severe judgment is sent to the land of the south.

On God's *appeasing His wrath* through judgment, see Ezek. 5:1-17 (espec. 5:13); Ezek. 24:1-14 (espec. 24:13).] (9) [The eighth and last night vision ends with verse 8, but the prophetic passage that finishes chapter 6 seems to build on the eighth night vision, and it is closely related to much of the content of the eight night visions. For one thing, those who are far off that will come to help build the temple/house/kingdom in the last days (see Zech. 6:15) will not come until after God's end-time judgment of the

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<sup>42</sup> Daniel 11:36-45 are discussed in chapter 9 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>43</sup> The Babylonians destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in 587/586 BC. Antichrist will blaspheme God on a large scale (as long as God permits for His own purposes); he will even stop the sacrifices and demand worship in the temple that is to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Antichrist's *abomination of desolation* will center in that temple. God had already judged Babylon through the Medo-Persians in the days of Zechariah and had permitted the exiles to return to Jerusalem and Judah, but His judgment against Antichrist's (and the devil's) Babylon is yet to come. Regarding *Babylon*, see on Zech. 2:7; 5:11.

<sup>44</sup> Darkness (both symbolic/spiritual darkness and natural/physical darkness) is often associated with God's day(s) of judgment in the Bible. (This fact is documented in some detail in my paper on Genesis chapters 1-3.) Revelation 6:12, for example, which deals with God's end-time judgment of the world, mentions that "the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair...."

<sup>45</sup> On *white* horses, see on Zech. 1:8

<sup>46</sup> There is widespread agreement that the Hebrew adjective (*barod*) translated *dappled* (by the NASB) is closely related to the Hebrew noun for hail (*barad*). The BDB Hebrew Lexicon suggests that the *spotted, marked, or speckled* condition resembles something (of a darker color) that has been sprinkled with hail (white). " 'Dappled' suggests white spots on a dark background" (L. Carl Laney, *Zechariah* [Moody Press, 1984], page 70). The same Hebrew noun was used in Gen. 31:10, 12 of *spotted* (NIV) goats. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (by L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, Study Edition [Brill, 2001], page 154) points out that Syriac (an Aramaic dialect that became the literary and liturgical language of the ancient Syrian Christian churches, which is a language similar to Hebrew) uses *bar<sup>e</sup>da* for "speckled black and white." *Langenscheidt's Pocket Hebrew Dictionary to the Old Testament* says that the Hebrew adjective *barod* means "spotted, pied." ("Pied," according to Webster's Dictionary, means "covered with patches or spots of two or more colors; piebald...."; "Piebald" means "covered with patches or spots of two colors; esp. with white and black....")

world that is pictured in the eighth night vision. The exiles who came from Babylon to Jerusalem at that time (in Zechariah's day), who are spoken of in Zech. 6:9-14, prefigure those who will come to help build the temple/house/kingdom at the end of the age, after God's end-time judgment of the world. (Quite a few prophetic passages speak of the remnant of Judah/Israel that is scattered worldwide and of the remnant of the peoples of the nations worldwide coming to God at Jerusalem after His end-time judgment of the world.) The fact that Zech. 6:9-15 deal extensively with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Branch of the LORD, the One who builds the ultimate temple/house/kingdom of God, makes these prophetic verses all the more important and interesting.] **The word of the LORD also came to me** [I prefer the translation of the NKJV, "Then (or, "And" KJV) the word of the LORD came to me." This verse is exactly the same as Zech. 4:8 in the Hebrew.], **saying, (10) "Take** [The NKJV has, "Receive *the gift*."] **an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah; and you go the same day** [I prefer "on that day," which is a literal translation of the Hebrew.<sup>47</sup>] **and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon.** [There is quite a bit of confusion regarding how to translate the Hebrew of verse 10 (it's possible that we don't have the Hebrew text in its original form for this verse) and regarding a few details, but the overall meaning of verses 9-11 is clear enough.<sup>48</sup> Zechariah was instructed to take silver and gold from three Jewish exiles who make the trip from Babylon to Jerusalem with an offering to help rebuild the temple, and he was to make (have made) an *ornate* crown of silver and gold and to set the crown on the head of Joshua the high priest, which foreshadowed the crowning of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest (and the Great King) who will reign on the

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<sup>47</sup> For one thing, the words "on that day" are often used in the Bible with reference to God's day of judgment at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Isa. 4:2; 27:12, 13; and Amos 9:11). Of course Zechariah wasn't supposed to wait until after God's end-time judgment of the world to carry out his assignment (which is spelled out in Zech. 6:9-15), but since his assignment was apparently designed (by God) to prefigure what will take place at the end of this age, it is quite possible that the words "on that day" allude to that day. In the context of Zech. 6:9-11, the words "on that day" probably refer to the day that the exiles arrive from Babylon (in Zechariah's day).

<sup>48</sup> The NIV has, "Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah." The translations of the KJV and NKJV are similar to the NIV. It isn't clear what role(s) Josiah the son of Zephaniah plays here. Apparently the three exiles were staying at his house. It is quite possible that Josiah made an offering at that time too. Some believe that verse 10 includes the idea that Josiah the son of Zephaniah had come from Babylon too. It is possible that Josiah the son of Zephaniah was the one to make the *ornate* crown.

The Hebrew isn't easy for verse 10, but I suspect that much of the confusion regarding this verse has arisen because it has *wrongly* been assumed that the delegation had already arrived from Babylon when Zechariah received this prophetic word (which he apparently received the same night he received the eight visions). I suspect they hadn't arrived yet. (God would have known, of course, that these particular men were coming and when they were coming, undoubtedly very soon after Zechariah received this revelation.) I suggest "on that day" (regarding this prepositional phrase see the preceding footnote) refers to the day the exiles will arrive from Babylon. These verses don't make this point clear, but if the idea is correct that the exiles hadn't arrived yet, Zechariah would have clearly understood exactly what he was supposed to do. If this is the right idea, then the verb at the end of verse 10 would be translated something more like "where they will arrive from Babylon." This verb is in the perfect "tense" in the Hebrew, which would be most often translated something like "have arrived," but a translation of the perfect translated with an English future is quite common. There are, in fact, several examples in the verses that follow in Zechariah chapter 6, including "He will build" in verse 12 and "He will rule" and "He will be" in verse 13.

earth in the last days (including His end-time judging and His reigning in the millennial kingdom). Whatever role(s) Josiah the son of Zephaniah's played (see footnote 48), he was commended by God along with the other three (see verse 14).] **(11) Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.** [We have already discussed the important fact that Joshua the high priest served as a type for the coming Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>49</sup> (We have also discussed the important fact that Zerubbabel served as a type for of the coming Great King, the Lord Jesus Christ.) For Zechariah to crown Joshua the high priest, at the direction of God, was for him to prophetically proclaim that the coming Great High Priest will also be the King reigning on His throne. Psalm 110 is a very important cross-reference in that it prophesies of Christ's ruling and of His being a priest (but not a Levitical priest).<sup>50</sup> That significant psalm prophesies regarding Christ's end-time judgment of the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ began to function as our Great High Priest (cf., e.g., Heb. 5:5, 6, 9, 10; 6:19, 20) and to reign after He was raised from the dead—He has all authority now (cf., e.g., Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; and Rev. 3:21), but it is not yet the Father's time for Him to come and reign on the earth, which will include judging mankind and establishing peace on the earth (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:23-28; Rev. 11:15-18; the reign spoken of in both passages will not begin until Christ returns to the earth in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, at the time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation).<sup>51</sup>] **(12) Then say to him [to Joshua the high priest], 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, a man whose name is Branch ["Lit *Sprout*"] (margin of NASB). Under Zech. 3:8 I noted that *Branch* is used several times in the Old Testament as a symbol for the coming Messiah/Christ., for He will branch out ["Lit *sprout up*"] (margin of NASB). His beginning among men was rather inconspicuous (cf. Isa. 53:2); He was even rejected by most of the Israelites; but ultimately all men will acknowledge His infinite glory.] from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD.** [Even as the temple was rebuilt under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest in the days of Zechariah (cf. Hag. 1:12-15), the ultimate temple/house of the LORD will be built by the Lord Jesus Christ. That ultimate temple/house is the kingdom of God, which includes the Christian church, and which culminates with the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem that are pictured in the last two chapters of the Bible. Regarding His work of *building*, see Zech. 1:16, 17; 2:1-13; and 4:6-10.] **(13) Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor [or, splendor, majesty, glory] and sit and rule on His throne [cf., e.g., Isa. 9:1-7; 11:1-10<sup>52</sup>; Jer. 23:5, 6]. Thus, He will be a priest [even the Great High Priest] on His throne, and the counsel of peace [*shalom*] will be between the two offices." '**

<sup>49</sup> See on Zechariah chapter 3. Joshua the high priest was all the more appropriate as a type for the Lord Jesus Christ in that the name *Jesus* is a Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*. "The Aramaic Targum, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the Midrash all regard the verse [Zech. 6:12] as messianic. The words were addressed to Joshua; yet it is clear that the language refers to the messianic Branch" (Kenneth L. Barker, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 7 [Zondervan, 1985], page 640).

<sup>50</sup> Psalm 110 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in chapter 19 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>51</sup> First Corinthians 15:23-28 are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture* and in my paper dated November 1998; Revelation 11:15-18 are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>52</sup> These two prophetic passages from the book of Isaiah, along with quite a few other very important prophetic passages from Isaiah, are discussed in my paper dated August 2000.



[God ordained the office of high priest (and priest) in the Mosaic Law, but the high priest was not a king, and he did not rule on a throne. God also provided the office of king for Israel in Old Testament days, starting with Saul, then David and his household. As I have pointed out, both offices were to be combined in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only One able to establish *peace* in Israel, throughout the earth, and throughout the universe.

To bring about peace requires fully solving the sin problem—men can't have peace with God, or with themselves, or with one another, or with the environment until the sin problem is solved, and Jesus Christ is the only One able to solve the sin problem and to totally remove sin from God's kingdom. His solving the sin problem includes judgment that removes all the unrepentant. To fully establish peace in God's kingdom will require totally removing the devil and the evil angels and demons who follow him. Christ's work of sanctifying/cleansing and judging has been spoken of throughout the preceding chapters and verses of Zechariah, and these themes continue as the book of Zechariah continues with chapters 9-14. (Zechariah chapters 9-14 are discussed in some detail in *Mid-Week Rapture*.)] **(14) Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah.** [Here we learn that this special crown that Zechariah was to make (have made) was to be kept in the temple as a reminder. It seems clear enough that "Hen the son of Zephaniah" here in verse 14 is the same person called "Josiah the son of Zephaniah" in verse 10; so too for "Helem" here in verse 14, who was called "Heldai" in verse 10.] **(15) Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD.** [The three Jews who came from Babylon to bring an offering to help rebuild the temple prefigure those who will come to build the ultimate temple of the LORD, which is built by the Lord Jesus Christ. The repentant remnant of the Jews who are scattered throughout the earth will come to God at Jerusalem after His end-time judgment of the world. (This is a common prophetic theme; see under Zech. 2:6.) These words also undoubtedly include the remnant of the peoples of the nations (who are distinct from God's true Israel) who will come to God at Jerusalem after His end-time judgment of the world. (This too is a common prophetic theme [cf., e.g., Isa. 2:2-4; 60:4-17; and Hag. 2:6-9]; see under Zech. 2:9-11.) Taking these words in the fullest sense, they also include all who become Christians (whether Jews or Gentiles) throughout this present age; they are part of God's true Israel, and part of God's temple/house/kingdom (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:21, 22; Heb. 3:6; and 1 Pet. 2:5), and they have a part in building God's temple/house/ kingdom by the grace of God in Christ through faith.] **Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me [Me] to you.** [As in Zech. 2:9-11; 4:9, it seems clear to me that the Angel of the LORD (the One who had been sent by God the Father) is speaking here.] **And it will take place if you completely obey the LORD your God.** [Compare Deut. 28:1. To the extent we, God's people, don't fully obey God, we rob Him of glory and cause disorder in His kingdom. We can't alter His overall plan to have a new heaven and new earth with its new Jerusalem, but we can, in a worst-case scenario, forfeit our place in that eternal kingdom that is full of glory.]

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 7

[As we'll see, Zechariah chapters 7 and 8 are tied together in content.] **In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev.** [This date is a little more than two years after the date that Judah, under the leadership of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, began to rebuild the temple (Hag. 1:12-15). The temple would not be completed for another two years, on the twelfth month of the *sixth* year of King Darius, the king of the Persian empire (Ezra 6:15).] **(2) Now the town of Bethel** [Compare Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32; and 11:31; this town/city was twelve miles north of Jerusalem.] **had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their [or, his] men to seek the favor of the LORD, (3) speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, "Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain** [The NIV has, "shall I mourn and fast." Under the Hebrew verb *nazar*, which is translated "fast" by the NIV, the BDB Hebrew Lexicon gives the meaning as "consecrate my(self), i.e. by fasting." See Zech. 8:19.], **as I have done these many years?"** ["These many years" go back to the *fifth* month of the year 587/586 BC, to the time when the Babylonians destroyed the temple and Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8-10; Jer. 52:12-14). The people of Bethel were undoubtedly prompted to ask this question because the temple was well on the way to being rebuilt.] **(4) Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, (5) "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years** [Since it was now 518 BC, it had been almost exactly *seventy years* since the temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians (587/586 BC). The destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in the fifth month was an extremely traumatic event in the life of Judah/Israel. In Israel today (and not just in Israel), Jews observe a day of mourning and fasting on the ninth day of the fifth month (the month of Ab). They are mourning the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians on that day; they are also mourning several other traumatic events that took place on that same day.<sup>53</sup> The mourning and fasting in the *seventh* month was done in remembrance of the murder of Gedeliah, who was the Jew the Babylonians left in

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<sup>53</sup> I'll quote part of what David Baron says on this topic (*Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* [Kregel, 1981 reprint], pages 213, 214). "...according to the Talmud and Jewish historians, the following list of calamities all happened on the same day, namely: (1) On that day the decree went forth from God in the wilderness that the people should not enter the land because of their unbelief; (2) on the very same day of the destruction of the First Temple by the Chaldeans [Babylonians], the Second Temple also was destroyed by the Romans [in AD 70]; (3) on that day, after the rising of Bar Cochba, the city of Bethar was taken [by the Romans in AD 135; the Jews had rebelled against Rome], 'in which were thousands and myriads of Israel, and they had a great king [Bar Cochba] whom all Israel and the greatest of the wise men [including Rabbi Akiba] thought was King Messiah'; but (4) he [Bar Cochba] fell into the hands of the Gentiles, and they were all put to death, and the affliction was great, like as it was in the desolation of the Sanctuary [by the Romans in AD 70]; and (5) and lastly, on that day 'the wicked Turnus Rufus... ploughed up the (hill of) the Sanctuary, and the parts round about it, to fulfil that which was said by Micah, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field." ' ' In an article dealing with this day, [jewishencyclopedia.com](http://jewishencyclopedia.com) mentions "the drawing of the plow over the Holy City and the Temple a year later (that is, a year later than the fall of the fortress of Bethar in AD 135), in order to turn the place into a Roman colony...." The Jews also mourn the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 on this day, which occurred, they say, on this same day.

charge in the land of Judah after they destroyed the temple, etc.; Gedaliah (and the Jews and Babylonians with him) was murdered by Jews shortly after the Babylonian armies left Judah (2 Kings 25:25, 26; Jer. 41:1-3).<sup>54</sup>], **was it actually for Me that you fasted?**

**(6) When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?** [God's response to the question of the people of Bethel that He spoke to "all the people of the land and the priests" shows that He resented some of the implications, attitudes, and motives behind the question of verse 3. (God knew, of course, what was in the hearts and minds of the Jews of that day, as He does with the Jews and Gentiles of every generation.) It seems they were putting the emphasis on what they had been doing for God for "these many years"; they probably were rather proud of themselves in a religious sort of way (didn't they *merit* God's favor?; hadn't they *earned* His blessing by their religious works?), and they undoubtedly were feeling sorry for themselves. Fasting to be effective must involve a sincere humbling of the heart before God that leads to true and deep repentance, where repentance is required.

God's response showed, for one thing, that what they had been doing—and that included what they were doing when they were eating and drinking as well as when they were mourning and fasting—they had been doing more for themselves than for Him. Instead of really understanding and putting the emphasis on the extreme seriousness of the sins of their forefathers and their unrepentance, and on their own sins and the need for repentance, and of being concerned on a deep level for the honor and glory of God, they were more concerned with the intensity and the longevity of the judgments that had come upon them. As we'll discuss under verse 12, God had warned Judah again and again through His prophets that intense judgments would come upon them, including the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem and the exile, if they did not repent. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God."] **(7) Are not *these* the words which the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with its cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited** [The *Negev* speaks of the southern part of Judah; the *foothills* speak of the western part of Judah.]" " [That is, the words which God has just spoken to the people of Judah (in verses 5, 6) dealing with the fact that they were living for themselves more than they were living for Him (they were not putting Him and His Word first place in their hearts and lives as they were required to do) had also been spoken (by God's prophets) to the people of Judah in the days before God's judgment fell (through the Babylonians) on account of their external religiosity and unrepentant hearts.

Rituals and religious works, very much including mourning and fasting, are totally unacceptable to God and worthless (or worse) if they are done (offered to Him) as a substitute for repentance, where repentance is required, and for loving Him, obeying Him, and living for Him, from the hearts (in faith), in accordance with His Word, and by His enabling grace and for His glory. God's people (and that includes Christians) often try to substitute ritual for reality, but it will not work for good. (See, for example,

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<sup>54</sup> The article on the ninth day of Ab at jewishencyclopedia.com mentions that the fast on the third day of Tishri (the seventh month), "the day when Gedaliah was assassinated" is still observed, as are the fasts on the seventeenth day of Tammuz (the fourth month), "when the first breach was made in the wall [of Jerusalem by the Babylonians]" and on the tenth of Tebet (the tenth month), "when the siege [of Jerusalem by the Babylonians] began." The fasts of the *fourth* and *tenth* months are mentioned in Zech. 8:19.

1 Sam. 15:22, 23; Isa. 1:1-31; 58:1-14; Hos. 6:6; and Amos 5:21-24). This doesn't mean that the Jews of Zechariah's day were as sinful as the Jews who lived in the days before intense judgment fell (the books of Haggai and Zechariah show that they had repented to some extent), but these words of verses 5-7 certainly contained a powerful warning to the Jews of Zechariah's day (and they contain a powerful warning for any of God's people that are doing something similar.) **(8) Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah saying, (9) "Thus has the LORD of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; (10) and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.'** [God spoke such words to all generations of Judah/Israel; for one thing, these commandments were included in the Mosaic Law, which all Jews were required to keep; but here in verses 8-10 (as the following verses show) the words "Thus has the LORD of hosts said" refer to what God had said to the people of Judah/Israel who lived in the years preceding the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. Anyway, God certainly intended the Jews of Zechariah's day (and all God's people) to take these words to heart.] **(11) But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. (12) They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets** [Compare, for example, 2 Chron. 36:11-21; Neh. 9:30; Jer. 5:1-31; 7:21-31; 8:4-7; 17:23; and Ezek. 2:3-3:11.]; **therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts.** [The destruction of the temple and all that was involved in the Babylonian captivity came to pass in strict accordance with "the words which the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous..." (verse 7). God had been calling Judah to repent for many years through many prophets and warning them that if they didn't repent He would chasten them very severely, including the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians and the exile. See, for example, Jer. 4:19-31; 6:1-8:22; 26:1-15; Ezek. 4:1-5:17; 7:1-11:13; and Zech. 1:4-6; and there are many more such verses. God's true prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel for example, had to contend with a large number of false prophets who kept telling Judah what they wanted to hear, that God would never let Jerusalem fall. Just like today, God's people have a strong tendency to accept God's promises of blessing and protection while ignoring or explaining away His warnings regarding judgment, even loss of salvation, if His people won't repent, where repentance is required.] **(13) And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen** [Compare, for example, Prov. 1:20-33; Isa. 1:15; Jer. 11:9-14; and 14:10-12. The time came that when some of the people of Judah did repent to some extent, under the pressure of God's judgments, He did not withdraw His promised judgments, and Judah was carried into exile and the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed.<sup>55</sup>], **"says the LORD of hosts; (14) "but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated** ["was left so desolate" NIV] **behind them so that no one went back**

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<sup>55</sup> Those believing Jews who were righteous (like Jeremiah) and those few who truly repented in those days were not able to stop the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple, but God could bless such people, one way, or another, even in difficult circumstances, and (significantly) they were on the narrow path that leads to eternal glory.

**and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate.”** [God had earlier scattered the people of the northern kingdom of Israel through the Assyrian world-kingdom; the capital city of Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 722/721 BC. There is widespread agreement that the word “they” of the words “they made the pleasant land desolate” refers to the people of Judah/Israel; they were the ones ultimately responsible for the devastation of the promised land.]

## ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 8

Zechariah chapter 8, which builds on chapter 7, is filled with good news regarding the ultimate future for Jerusalem and Judah. From our perspective it is clear that the prophecies deal mostly with the ultimate salvation of Jerusalem and Judah at the end of the age. This chapter also contains good news regarding the ultimate conversion, salvation, and blessing for the remnant of the peoples of the nations left after God's end-time judgment of the world. Most of the content of this chapter is a repeat of things already spoken in earlier chapters of Zechariah.

Zechariah 8:18, 19 strongly ties this chapter to chapter 7 in that it deals with the question of chapter 7, regarding whether the people of Judah should continue to mourn and fast the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians (in 587/586 BC). Here in chapter 8, as in chapter 7, that question isn't really answered for the people of Zechariah's generation, but they were informed that eventually *fasts of mourning* will become *feasts of rejoicing*. God had not commanded Judah to mourn and fast on any of the four days mentioned in Zech. 8:19.

**Then the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, (2) "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.'** [Compare Zech. 1:14-2:13. God's exceeding jealousy for Zion/Jerusalem/Judah/Israel and His great wrath against her enemies (including Satan and his hosts and those of mankind who continue to follow him) will result in the ultimate total salvation of Zion and the ultimate total overthrow, judgment, and removal of her enemies.] **(3) Thus says the LORD, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.** [Compare, for example, Zech. 1:16, 17; 2:5, 10-12; and 14:3, 4, 8-10, 16-21.] **Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth** [Compare Zech. 8:16, 19; Isa. 1:26. God's *truth*, which permeates everything where He is fully reigning, includes His righteousness and holiness: Ephesians 4:24 speaks of the "righteousness and holiness of the truth."], **and the mountain of the LORD of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.** [Compare, for example, Zech. 2:5; 3:1-10; 5:1-11; 12:10-13:6; and 14:20, 21.] **(4) Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.** [The point is that, because of the presence of God and His full salvation and blessings, old men and old women will again dwell in Jerusalem. They won't be cut off by premature death or be forced to live in exile. The Bible speaks of great longevity in the millennial kingdom (cf. Isa. 65:20<sup>56</sup>). There won't be any death in the eternal state (e.g., Rev. 21:4).] **(5) And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'** [See footnote 56.] **(6) Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'If it is too difficult in**

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<sup>56</sup> Isaiah 65:17-25 are discussed on pages 56-59 of my paper dated August 2000. One point I make there (and in other writings) is that I believe all the members of God's true Israel will be glorified by the time the millennial kingdom begins. The peoples of the nations, however, will not be glorified in the millennial kingdom and the potential for sin and death will still exist.

Zechariah 8:5 pictures a time when children are still being born, before glorification. The peoples of the nations will apparently continue to bear children throughout the millennium, but not the people of God's true Israel, who will be glorified.

**the sight of the remnant of this people in those days, will it also be too difficult in My sight?** [cf. Gen. 18:14; Jer. 32:17, 27] **declares the LORD of hosts.** [“Those days” were still future. From our perspective we can see that they were thousands of years in the future. The prophetic words of Zechariah chapter 8 (like most of the prophetic words of the entire book of Zechariah) will not be fulfilled until the end of this age, after Judah/Israel submits to the Lord Jesus Christ and receives full salvation through Him.] **(7) Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; (8) and I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.’** [Verses 7, 8 prophesy regarding God’s saving the end-time remnant of the people of Judah/Israel who are scattered across the earth<sup>57</sup> as part of His end-time shaking of the world. See under Zech. 2:6. He will save them from worldwide dispersion and captivity, and, much more importantly, He will save them with new-covenant salvation through Christ Jesus.] **(9) Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong** [Compare Jud. 7:11; Isa. 35:3, 4 (“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear, your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you’ ” NIV). Verse 13 includes the words, “Do not fear; let your hands be strong,” and verse 15 includes the words, “Do not fear!” For these people to let their hands be strong was for them to resist fear and take courage, to put God first and to trust Him (which includes fearing Him rather than fearing anyone or anything else), and to be diligent to faithfully do (by His enabling grace) all that He required of them. That included finishing the temple, but that was only a small part of what God required of them. He always requires His people to put Him first in their hearts and to be obedient to Him in accordance with His Word. On the need for righteousness, see verses 16, 17.], **you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those** [I would skip the comma and this word which was added by the NASB in italics.] **who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.** [Haggai and Zechariah were the prophets who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD (the temple) was laid that the temple might be built (Ezra 5:1, 2; 6:14; Hag. 1:12-15; and 2:15, 18.)] **(10) For before those days** [the days before Judah repented and began to rebuild the temple] **there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another.** [See Hag. 1:6-11; 2:14-19.] **(11) But now** [now that Judah had repented and the temple was being rebuilt] **I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days** [cf. Hag. 2:19], **’ declares the LORD of hosts. (12) For there will be peace for the seed: the vine will yield its fruit, the land will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew** [God’s grace and the repentance of Judah had brought *peace* to the land (they will sow and harvest in peace; contrast the *no peace* of verse 10); peace with God would yield, for one thing, peace for the seed planted in the land, including sufficient moisture, and the land will yield its produce (compare Lev. 26:3-10; contrast Lev. 26:16, 19, 20, 26; Hag. 1:6-11; and 2:16-19).]; **and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things. (13) It will**

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<sup>57</sup> Verses like Psalm 50:1; 113:3; and Mal. 1:11 demonstrate that the “land of the east” and the “land of the west” cover the entire earth/world.

**come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel** [Israel (the northern kingdom) and Judah (the southern kingdom) were a “curse among the nations” in that it was understood among the nations that Judah/Israel had been severely *cursed*, which led to the nations using Judah/Israel in a curse with words like, “May you be cursed as Israel/Judah has been cursed.” Compare Isa. 65:15; Jer. 24:9; 29:18, 21, 22; and 42:18. God had promised in the Mosaic Law and throughout the Old Testament to *curse* Israel/Judah if they rebelled and turned their backs on Him (cf., e.g., Lev. 26:14-39; Deut. 11:26-29; 28:15-68; 2 Kings 22:19; Jer. 29:15-20; and there are many more such verses).

The prophecies of Zechariah show (as do the prophecies of many other Old Testament prophets) that the remnant of Israel (the northern kingdom) will be saved at the end of this age. See Zech. 9:10-10:12 (“Ephraim” in 9:10, 13; 10:7 and the “house of Joseph” in 10:6 speak of the northern kingdom).<sup>58</sup>], **so I will save you that you may become a blessing.** [After God saves Judah/Israel at the end of this age and removes the curse(s) (cf. Zech. 14:11), they will become a blessing, including becoming a blessing “among the nations” (contrast “curse among the nations” here in verse 13). The nations will know that Judah/Israel has been greatly blessed by God. For one thing, instead of using their name in a curse, the nations will be able to use their name in a blessing like, “May you be blessed as Judah/Israel has been blessed.” (Compare Gen. 48:20; Ruth 4:11, 12.) Much more importantly (even if this idea wasn’t necessarily included here in verse 13), after Judah/Israel is saved and greatly blessed by God they will prove to be a great *blessing* to the repentant remnant of the peoples of the nations left after God’s end-time judgment of the world (see, for example, Zech. 8:20-23; 2:11; 6:15; 14:16-21; Isa. 2:2-4; 60:1-22; 61:4-11; and 66:18-24<sup>59</sup>).] **Do not fear** [The Old and the New Testaments both speak much of the need to fear (sinning against) God; to fear anyone or anything else instead of God often leads to sinning against Him.]; **let your hands be strong.** [On these words see under verse 9.] **(14) For thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Just as I purposed to do harm to you** [These words speak of God’s chastening judgments (the curses). The Hebrew could be translated “Just as I purposed to do *evil* to you.” There is a contrast between these words and the words of the following verse, “I have again purposed to do *good* to Jerusalem and the house of Judah.” There is no idea, of course, of God’s doing evil in the sense of His doing something wrong/sinful, but He repeatedly warns throughout the Bible that He will chasten His people with things that are not in themselves good. Chastening judgments (curses) are designed to wake up God’s people and help motivate them to repent. When (if) God’s people repent, chastening works for great *good*.] **when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘and I have not relented, (15) so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!** [These prophetic words were spoken to the repentant remnant (at least many of them had repented to some significant extent) that had begun to rebuild the temple in the days of Zechariah, and they had an important application for that generation, but the primary fulfillment of these words (the last few words of verse 12 on through verse 15) will not come to pass until the repentant end-time remnant of Judah/Israel submits to the Lord Jesus Christ (as pictured, for

<sup>58</sup> Zechariah chapters 9, 10 are discussed in chapters 12, 13 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>59</sup> These passages from Isaiah are discussed in my paper dated November 1998 and/or in my paper dated August 2000.



example, in Zech. 12:10-13:6; Rom. 11:25-27).] **(16)** [Compare Zech. 7:9, 10.] **These are the things which you should do** [We could translate “These are the things you must do”; it’s very clear that God was not giving suggestions or options for His people to consider. This same truth applies, of course, to all the commandments in the Bible. The commandments mentioned here in verses 16, 17 were undoubtedly picked because they were often being violated in those days. The righteousness of God’s people (by His grace through faith) always leads to blessings, ultimately the blessing of eternal glory; The sin of God’s people robs God of glory and leads to curses instead of blessings (in the worst-case scenario, sin leads to forfeiture of salvation and eternal damnation).]: **speak the truth** [cf. Zech. 8:3; Eph. 4:25] **to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.** [The “gates” of the ancient cities of Judah/Israel were where they had their law courts (cf. Deut. 16:18 [The margin of the NASB points out that “towns” is literally “gates.”]; Deut. 21:19; Ruth 4:1-12; Isa. 29:21; and Amos 5:10-13).] **(17) Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another** [cf. Prov. 3:29; Jer. 4:14; and Zech. 7:10], **and do not love perjury** [“Lit *false oath*” (margin of NASB). Compare Zech. 5:4; Mal. 3:5.]; **for all these are what I hate** [cf. Prov. 6:16-19; Mal. 2:16], **declares the LORD.** **(18) Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, (19) “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘The fast of the fourth** [See footnote 54 in this paper; cf. 2 Kings 25:2-7; Jer. 39:2.], **the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months** [cf. 2 Kings 25:1; Jer. 39:1; 52:4.] **will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace.’** [This verse builds on the question regarding the fast of the *fifth* month in Zech. 7:3 and the mention of the fast of the *fifth* and *seventh* months in Zech. 7:5. Those fasts and the other two fasts mentioned here in verse 19 relate to the time when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and carried Judah into exile in 587/586 BC.<sup>60</sup>

In Zechariah chapter 7 God didn’t answer the question as to whether the Jews should continue to mourn and fast because of the destruction of the temple in the fifth month. Instead He dealt with problems with their attitudes, priorities, motives, and perceptions. Here in verse 19 He didn’t tell them to stop these fasts (He had never told them to start these fasts in the first place), but He did inform them that the time will come (when they have received full salvation through faith in Christ Jesus in the last days) that they will be rejoicing—not mourning and fasting—on these days, and every day, forever (cf., e.g., Isa. 12:1-6; 65:17-25; and Jer. 31:10-25).

The people of God of every generation (including those who lived under the old covenant and those who live under the new covenant) must *love truth and peace*. Those who do not make truth and peace a top priority are in serious danger of forfeiting the right to be people of God.] **(20) Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. (21) The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, “Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I will also go** [The last four words (“I will also go”) apparently give the response of the city (cities) that is invited to go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts. “I” is used for (the people of) the town/city of Bethel in Zech. 7:3.]” [These words of 8:20, 21 apparently build on the

<sup>60</sup> The Babylonian captivity began in 605 BC. They carried some Jews into Babylonian captivity at that early date, including Daniel and his three friends.

words of Zech. 7:1, 2, where the town/city of Bethel sent a delegation to Jerusalem “to seek the favor of the LORD.” The Hebrew behind “to seek the favor of the LORD” is exactly the same as the Hebrew behind the words “to entreat the favor of the LORD” here in 8:21, and the same words are used again at the end of 8:22.

If not for the following verses (verses 22, 23), we might have thought that verses 20, 21 were speaking only about Jews coming to Jerusalem to entreat the favor of God, but verses 22, 23 make it clear that the Gentiles will be coming too. The fact that the remnant of the peoples of the nations left after God’s end-time judgment of the world will come to Jerusalem to worship God is a common prophetic theme (cf., e.g., Zech. 2:11; 6:15; 9:10; 14:16-21; Isa. 2:2-4; and Jer. 16:19-21).] **(22) So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD.’ (23) Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations [“Lit *languages of the nations*” (margin of NASB). Compare Isa. 66:18; the Hebrew noun for “tongues/languages” used here is also used there.] will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.” ’** [Verse 23 doesn’t force the idea on you, but it fits well with the common prophetic theme that the people of Judah/Israel—in the fullest sense this embraces all the people of God’s true Israel—will have a privileged position vis-à-vis the saved remnant of the peoples of the nations. Compare, for example, Zech. 2:8-12; Isa. 14:1, 2; 49:22, 23; 60:1-61:11; Amos 9:11, 12; Rev. 20:3, 4; and Rev. 21:1-4; and 21:24-22:5.<sup>61</sup> For one thing, the people of true Israel will reign with God, including reigning over the peoples of the nations. The last two chapters of the Bible (Revelation chapters 21, 22) prophesy of the eternal state, after the millennial kingdom. In those chapters, the people of true Israel (God’s “bond-servants” [Rev. 22:3]) are distinct from (the saved remnant of) the peoples of the *nations*. The people of true Israel are reigning, and Rev. 22:5 says “they will reign forever and ever.”

The fact that the people of true Israel will be reigning certainly will not detract from the fact that the peoples of the nations will be glorified and enjoy a spectacular full salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, according to God’s eternal plans. No one will have any complaints. Everyone who has a place in God’s eternal kingdom will stand in awe of His glory and the glory of His salvation, and they will know that they have been saved by grace. There won’t be any complaining, whining, superiority complexes, inferiority complexes, or anything else that would disrupt God’s (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit’s) being glorified, or His divine order. The former things will have all passed away (Rev. 21:4). Thanks be to God!]

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<sup>61</sup> These verses are all discussed in my paper dated November 1998. Revelation chapter 12 is an important reference for God’s *true Israel*. The woman and her offspring of that chapter represent (are a symbol for) true Israel. That important chapter is discussed in some detail in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

## MALACHI 2:17-3:18

I'll quote the paragraph that Craig A. Blaising has regarding the date when the prophet Malachi wrote this book.<sup>62</sup> "Malachi's reference to a Persian governor (Mal. 1:8) shows that the book was written *after* 538 B.C. Most scholars agree that the Book of Malachi was written around 450-430 B.C., for these reasons: (1) Malachi's rebuke of the priests' malpractice in the temple shows that the temple had been rebuilt and the priesthood reestablished. (2) The moral and spiritual conditions Malachi addressed were similar to those encountered by Ezra, who returned in 458, and Nehemiah, who returned in 444. These included intermarriages with Gentiles (2:10-11; cf. Ezra 9:1-2; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-28), lack of the people's support for the Levites (Mal. 3:10; cf. Neh. 13:10), and oppression of the poor (Mal. 3:5; cf. Neh. 5:4-5). Either Malachi was addressing the same generation that Ezra and Nehemiah spoke to, or Malachi spoke to a later generation some time after Ezra's and Nehemiah's corrections."

A few comments regarding Malachi chapters 1, 2. I'm not including chapters 1, 2 in this paper, with the exception of the last verse of chapter 2, which is closely associated with the first verses of chapter 3. For one thing, chapters 1, 2 (unlike chapters 3, 4) do not have much eschatological content. Malachi 1:11 is a notable exception,<sup>63</sup> " 'For from the rising of the sun even to its setting [These words mean *worldwide*], My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations,' says the LORD of hosts." God's name being glorified by the peoples of the nations in the future was contrasted with His name being profaned by the people of Israel/Judah in Malachi's day, which is spoken of, for example, in the following verse, Mal. 1:12, "But you are profaning it [God's name]...."

The sins of Israel/Judah profaned God's name. (The sins of Christians profane God's name too.) Malachi lists quite a few of those sins in this book, including their bringing unacceptable offerings to God (like bringing "what was taken by robbery and *what is* lame or sick" [Mal. 1:13]). Malachi 2:13, in context, shows that even when the offerings themselves would have been acceptable, God does not accept offerings from those living in sin, not without genuine repentance. Many other passages make this same point, including Isaiah chapter 1.

Malachi chapters 3, 4 (and many other passages of scripture) show that the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah will glorify God's name after He purifies them (and fully saves them) in the last days. The remnant of the peoples of the nations will glorify God's name *after* His end-time judgment of the world. Many prophetic passages show that true Israel will reign over the saved remnant of the peoples of the nations after God's end-time judgment of the world.

**(2:17) You have wearied the LORD [Hebrew *Yahweh*] with your words. Yet you say, "How have we wearied *Him*?" In that you say, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them [cf., e.g., Prov. 17:15]," or, "Where is the God of justice?" [I am sure that God hated these blasphemous charges. Compare, for example, Rom. 3:8, where the apostle Paul lamented the fact that some**

<sup>62</sup> *Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament* (Cook Communication Ministries, 1985), page 1573.

<sup>63</sup> Also see Mal. 1:14.

blasphemously accused him of teaching “Let us do evil that good may come.” Those making charges like “Where is the God of justice?” were (and are) typically far from being ready to stand before Him in judgment, even if they thought they were ready. Amos 5:18 shows that many of the Israelites of Amos’ day were “longing for the day of the LORD,” thinking that He would come and destroy all their sinful enemies and exalt them, not realizing that they themselves (speaking of the great majority) were quite sinful and not nearly ready to stand before Him in judgment. Amos 5:18 shows that for all such people the day will bring darkness (and curses), not light (and blessings).

In Luke 13:1-5, for a powerful illustration, the Lord Jesus Christ said to the Jews of His day that they would all perish in God’s judgments if they did not repent. His countrymen (speaking of the majority) did not see themselves in that light. Most people, very much including the people of God (very much including Christians), are slow to see their sin and the seriousness of their sin. It wasn’t enough to be a son of Israel, even if they had Abraham as their father, the Law, the temple and the sacrificial offerings, circumcision, etc. In fact, the more light and blessings people receive from God, the more He expects of them, and the more serious He considers their sin.

It *was* true though, as the Bible frequently acknowledges, that God did not typically fully enforce His reign in Old Testament days (including Malachi’s day and most other generations), including His not fully judging where judgment was called for to make things right on the earth, whether among the people of Israel, or among the peoples of the nations. For one thing, He knew that (at the right time) He was going to send His Son into the world, which would solve the sin problem for those who would submit to His reign (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:25). For another thing, He knew that there was no need to make things fully balance out with justice during this age in that He will have the opportunity to make all things right in His end-time judgment of the world.<sup>64</sup> God, in His mercy, often delays judgment (He typically calls His people to repent, including through His prophets, and He typically gives much time for repentance [cf., e.g., 2 Pet. 3:9]), but He will ultimately judge and deal with all sin that hasn’t been dealt with through repentance, forgiveness, and salvation.

A primary point that I want to emphasize in this study of Mal. 2:17-4:6 is that God typically sends prophets to His people before He sends intense judgment to them, and that this principle applies in a major way before His end-time judgment of the world. God’s merciful generosity in delaying judgment and holding back the full intensity of His wrath was often misinterpreted by many Israelites (cf. Rom. 2:4). They came up with ideas like you could not believe prophets like Jeremiah, who kept prophesying year after year that Jerusalem would fall to the Babylonians if Israel/Judah did not repent (even including the destruction of the temple), or like God never will judge and make things right.] (3:1) “**Behold, I** [As the words at the end of this verse demonstrate, Yahweh is speaking here. The name *Yahweh* (or *Yahweh of hosts*) is appropriate for God the Son (who became the Messiah/Christ) along with God the Father; God the Son seems to be the One speaking here (and on through the rest of the book of Malachi, with the exception of 3:16). We will see more regarding this glorious Speaker as we continue with this verse.] **am going to send My messenger** [The Hebrew word behind “My

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<sup>64</sup> That judgment will begin when Jesus returns in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. God’s end-time judgment of the world will not be completed until after the great-white-throne judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom.

messenger” is *malaki*. The “*i*” ending means “my.” This same Hebrew word is used for Malachi (the prophet who wrote the book of Malachi) in Mal. 1:1.<sup>65</sup> Malachi wasn’t “My messenger” spoken of here in 3:1, but he was a forerunner for that messenger (along with many other prophets) in that he was used by God to call Israel/Judah to a proper, necessary fear of God and repentance (though not with the intensity, power, or effectiveness of the end-time *messenger(s)* yet to come). This Hebrew noun (*malak*) is also frequently translated *angel/Angel*.<sup>66</sup>], **and he will clear the way before Me.** [I’ll quote what Jesus said in Matt. 11:10, 13 (cf. Mark 1:2; Luke 1:76; and 7:27). “This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ (14) And if you are willing to accept *it*, John himself is Elijah who is to come.” Jesus was “quoting” Mal. 3:1, and (in the context of Matt. 11:2-15) it is clear that He was referring to John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; and John 1:21<sup>67</sup>).

Note that Jesus called him *Elijah*. There is widespread agreement that “My messenger” of Mal. 3:1 is to be equated with “Elijah the prophet” of Mal. 4:5. (Luke 1:16, 17, which I’ll quote under Mal. 4:5, help confirm that the prophecy of Mal. 4:5, 6 regarding “Elijah the prophet” includes the ministry of John the Baptist.) I’ll quote Mal. 4:5, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.” Malachi chapter 4 deals with God’s day of judgment of the world at the end of this age, but the emphasis in that chapter is all on His judgment of Israel/Judah.

Malachi chapter 4 (and other scripture) helps confirm that “My messenger” of Mal. 3:1 cannot be limited to John the Baptist, who helped clear/prepare the way for the *first* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. As the book of Malachi shows (and other scripture) a big part of what it meant for the messenger to clear/prepare the way for the coming of the Lord was for him to call the people to repent *before* the Lord comes and judgment falls. As significant as John the Baptist’s ministry was, it was not nearly as significant as the prophetic ministry that will clear/prepare the way for the *second* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Malachi chapters 3, 4 show that a primary function of the ministry of “My messenger/Elijah” will be to call Israel/Judah to repentance before the Lord comes to judge them (and the entire world) at the end of the age. Intense judgment of Israel/Judah followed the *first* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ—including the destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple, at the hands of the Romans; and the Jewish nation that rejected Christ was (in some ways and to some extent) temporarily rejected and set

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<sup>65</sup> Malachi 2:7 also uses this same Hebrew noun for *messenger*, but without the “my” ending. The noun was used there for the priests; the priest “is the *messenger* of the LORD of hosts” (Mal. 2:7), at least he was supposed to be. The priests were supposed to teach the ways of God to Israel, including calling the people to repent where repentance was required, and warning them of the curses/penalties for sinning against God and His covenant. Many of the priests of Malachi’s day (as with many other generations) needed to repent themselves.

<sup>66</sup> The NASB translated *malak* the following ways in the Old Testament: ambassadors (2), angel (101), angels (9), envoys (1), messenger (24), messengers (76).

<sup>67</sup> In John 1:21 John the Baptist, when questioned by the Jews, denied that he was Elijah. It is possible that it had not been revealed to him that he was to fulfill that role. Even if John the Baptist did not know it, Jesus did. It is also possible that John was denying that he literally was Elijah the prophet who had returned; it was (and still is) a common view among the Jews that that ancient prophet will return in the last days.

aside (cf., e.g., Matt. 21:33-46; 22:1-14; 23:37-39; and Rom. 11:1-36)—but it is clear (from our new-covenant perspective) that intense judgment of Israel/Judah (but also the salvation of the end-time remnant of that nation) is yet to come at the end of this age (cf., e.g., Matt. 23:39; Rom. 11:25-32; Rev. 7:4-8; 11:19; 12:1-17; 14:20; and 16:19<sup>68</sup>).

Isaiah 40:3-5 are an important prophecy that deals with the prophetic ministry that will prepare/clear the way for the coming of the Lord. This prophecy (or parts of this prophecy) is quoted in the New Testament and applied to John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; and John 1:23). However, as the prophecies concerning “My messenger/Elijah” in Malachi chapters 3, 4 are only partially fulfilled by the ministry of John the Baptist, so too for the prophetic ministry spoken of in Isa. 40:3-5. The primary fulfillment is yet to come at the end of this age, *before* the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I’ll quote Isa. 40:3-5, “A voice is calling, ‘Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. (4) Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain; and the rugged terrain a broad valley; (5) Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.’ ” The *glory of the LORD* was revealed/manifested in the *first* coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it will be manifested in a much more spectacular way in His *second* coming (cf., e.g., Isa. 66:18; Matt. 16:27; and 2 Thess. 1:6-10). His glory will be manifested, for one thing, in His end-time work of saving and judging.

It was not at all clear in the Old Testament that there would be two totally different comings of the Lord Jesus Christ to the world (the Old Testament prophets would often combine the two comings without seeming to recognize that there would be two very different comings), and the people of Israel/Judah were not looking for two comings. Nevertheless, it is quite clear from our New Testament perspective that the Lord Jesus Christ will come again at the end of the age to save His own and to judge the world. And it is also clear, I believe, that just like the Lord used “My messenger/Elijah” (John the Baptist) to help clear/prepare the way for His first coming, He is going to send another “My messenger/Elijah” to help clear/prepare the way for His second coming.

I believe the book of Revelation is of crucial significance to understand the last days (many details regarding the last days were not revealed until the book of Revelation was given by God the Father [Rev. 1:1]; the book of Revelation, which was written about AD 95, was God’s last word on eschatology contained in the Bible). I consider Revelation chapters 11-13 to be three of the most important chapters in the book of Revelation. Those three chapters are discussed in some detail in chapters 20-22 of my book, *Mid-Week Rapture*.

Revelation 11:3-13, which deal with the ministry of the two end-time prophets of the book of Revelation, build on the prophecy regarding the coming of “My messenger/Elijah” of Malachi chapters 3, 4. With great power these witnesses/prophets will warn Israel/Judah (and the entire world) that the day of judgment is super imminent and that the time to repent is now (if not sooner). These verses in the book of Revelation do not mention the name *Elijah* (or *My messenger*), but some of the things that these

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<sup>68</sup> Romans chapters 9-11 are discussed verse-by-verse in my paper dated March 2001. These verses from the book of Revelation are all discussed to some extent in *Mid-Week Rapture*, and most of them are discussed further in my subsequent eschatological writings.

two prophets do build on things that the prophet Elijah did when he ministered before God in Old Testament days:

Revelation 11:5 says, “And if anyone wants to harm them [and many will want to harm them], fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.” (Regarding Elijah the prophet of Old Testament days, see 2 Kings 1:9-16, cf. Jer. 5:14.) Revelation 11:6a says, “These [the two prophets] have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying....” Revelation 11:3 mentions that “they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days [which is three years and six months]....” (Regarding Elijah of Old Testament days, see 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; Luke 4:25 [“But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land.”]; and James 5:17 [which also mentions “three years and six months”].)

Many Christians believe that Elijah the prophet of Old Testament days, who was taken up into heaven in a flaming chariot, will return (along with Moses or Enoch) to minister in the last days. That would prove to be an attention-getter (assuming that God would establish the identity of those men), but I believe it is far more probable that the two prophets will be Christian prophets who live on the earth in the last days. These two prophets (or possibly just one of these prophets) will fulfill the prophecy of Malachi chapters 3, 4 in a fuller way and in a much more dramatic way than John the Baptist did. Revelation chapter 11 shows that the ministry of these two prophets will have a worldwide scope, but also that it will be focused, at least to some extent, on Israel/Judah. For one thing, “their dead bodies *will* lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem, where presumably they will be killed]...” (Rev. 11:7, 8). After three and a half days they will be resurrected and caught up “into heaven in the cloud” while their enemies watch (Rev. 11:12).

The resurrection and rapture of the two prophets will be part of the resurrection and rapture of God’s people (believers of Old Testament days and Christians) that will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to save His people and to judge the world in the middle of the seven-year period known as Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.<sup>69</sup> It is quite possible though that they will be resurrected and raptured shortly before (maybe a few hours before) the resurrection and rapture of the rest of the believers/saints. The three year and six month ministry of the two prophets will cover the first half of the seven-year period. (The three year and six month periods mentioned in Rev. 11:2 and 3 refer to the first half of the seven-year period.<sup>70</sup> The three year and six month periods mentioned in Rev. 12:6, 14; and 13:5 refer to the second half of the seven-year period.)

This fits perfectly with the prophecy of the coming of “My messenger/Elijah” of Malachi chapters 3, 4. The Lord Jesus Christ will return and the day of judgment will begin in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. The ministry of the two prophets, including the *warning judgments* that will flow through their ministry, which will powerfully

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<sup>69</sup> Revelation 12:5 is a key verse dealing with the resurrection and rapture of the believers/saints. It is the most important verse in the Bible to show *when* the resurrection and rapture will take place (right in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, at the time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation). This verse is discussed in some detail in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>70</sup> As is typical, see *Mid-Week Rapture* for the details.

warn mankind that the day of judgment is at hand,<sup>71</sup> will help put the fear of God in the hearts of many Israelites (and many Gentiles too) and will help wake them up and motivate them to repent and prepare their hearts to be ready to receive the Lord Jesus when He comes to them in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week (cf., e.g., Zech. 12:10; Mic. 5:3; and Rev. 11:13<sup>72</sup>).

"The notion that the great day of the Lord will be preceded by a 'forerunner' is found only here [Mal. 3:1] and in 3:23, 24 (English 4:5, 6). In a somewhat different context the idea of the preparation of the way of the Lord is also found in Isa. 40:3 (cf. Isa. 57:14; 62:10). The notion rests upon an eastern custom of sending messengers ahead of a visiting king to inform the inhabitants of his coming and to pave the way, to make it passable, literally to remove all the obstacles. ...."<sup>73</sup> **And** ["Then"; the NIV has, "Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple."] **the Lord** [Hebrew *adon*], **whom you seek** [These words build on the complaint of the Jews in Mal. 2:17; they were criticizing Yahweh for not establishing and maintaining justice and *seeking* for Him to come and make things right (establish justice) for them.], **will suddenly come to His temple; and** [In the margin the NASB says, "Or *even*," instead of "and." I believe the translation "even" is correct. We will get into the details as we continue.] **the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.** [There is widespread agreement that "the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight" is the same Person as "the Lord whom you seek," that is, Yahweh (here, God the Son). It would probably be better to translate "the Angel of the covenant" (instead of "the messenger of the covenant"). The same Hebrew noun *malak* is used here that was used earlier in this verse; as I noted, this noun is frequently translated angel. The Angel of the covenant is the Angel of Yahweh, who appears quite often in the Old Testament. He is God the Son in His preincarnate state, who is referred to as *Yahweh* quite a few times in the Old Testament.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> I have already mentioned part of what Rev. 11:5, 6 say about the attention-getting power that will flow through the ministry of the two prophets. I'll quote the rest of Rev. 11:6, "and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood [reminiscent of Moses in the days preceding the exodus from Egypt], and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire [also reminiscent of Moses in the days preceding the exodus from Egypt]." I consider it probable that the two prophets will announce the sounding of each of the first six trumpets (or maybe all seven trumpets) of the book of Revelation (even as Moses announced the coming of each of the ten plagues in Egypt before the exodus), which will make the sounding of the trumpets much more effective in getting the attention of Israel/Judah and the world, warning with persuasive power that the day of judgment is definitely at hand. The seven trumpets will announce the coming of the Lord and His day of judgment (including the mid-week rapture); He will return and the day of judgment will begin, I believe, at the time of the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet, right in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.

Revelation 11:4 says of the two prophets, "These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth." This verse builds on Zechariah chapter 4 (which is discussed verse-by-verse in this paper). These two prophets give much (spiritual) *light* from God and minister powerfully by the Holy Spirit. The olive trees give olive oil (a symbol of the Holy Spirit); this oil was burned in ancient lamps.

<sup>72</sup> See *Mid-Week Rapture* on these verses (in the chapter on Zechariah chapters 12-14, the chapter on Mic. 4:9-5:6, and the chapter on Revelation chapter 11). I believe we can see the (mid-week) conversion of the repentant end-time remnant of Israel/Judah in all three verses cited, but that remnant will not be converted in time to be taken in the mid-week rapture.

<sup>73</sup> Peter A. Verhoef, *Books of Haggai and Malachi* (Eerdmans, 1987), page 287.

<sup>74</sup> This glorious Person, the Angel of the LORD (of Yahweh), is discussed in some detail in my verse-by-verse discussion of Zechariah chapters 1-3 (earlier in this paper). Start with Zech. 1:8. There is a



In agreement with the NKJV and the translations given in several commentaries, I believe we should have a period after the word *delight* and start a new sentence with the word *Behold*. The NKJV, however, follows the period with the words, “Behold He is coming....” I don’t believe we should have a capital “H” for the word “He” in that I believe this “he” refers to “My messenger” (a prophet) sent by Yahweh to clear the way for His coming.

There is some symmetry here, “Behold, I am going to send My messenger...” (the words at the beginning of Mal. 3:1) and “Behold, he [“My messenger”] is coming, says the LORD of hosts.” (I believe God the Son is the speaker throughout Mal. 3:1-6 and 4:1-6, as He is throughout the rest of the verses in chapter 3, with the exception of verse 16.) Malachi 4:5<sup>75</sup> goes on to say, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.”<sup>76</sup> All three of these sentences that begin with the word *Behold* speak, I believe, of the sending of “My messenger/Elijah” before the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the emphasis on His second coming.

This translation and understanding of Mal. 3:1 flows perfectly if “he” (of “Behold he is coming”) refers to “My messenger,” where “the LORD [Yahweh] of hosts,” God the Son, is speaking. I am quite confident that this is the meaning intended by God, but most commentators disagree with this view; they understand the words “He [he] is coming” near the end of 3:1 to refer to the coming of “the messenger [Angel] of the covenant” (God the Son), not “My [His] messenger.”<sup>77</sup> I should point out that the content of this study of Mal. 2:17-4:6 would not change very much if the one who comes at the end of 3:1 were “the messenger of the covenant,” instead of “My messenger.” We cannot avoid the fact, however, that the book of Malachi makes it very clear that “My messenger/Elijah” is going to come *before* the Lord comes to judge. In agreement with a large number of commentators, I believe “My messenger/Elijah” comes *before* the first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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reference there to my lengthy discussion of the Angel of the LORD in *Mid-Week Rapture*. In that the Angel of the LORD is deity with God the Father and is sometimes called *Yahweh* (“the LORD”) or *Yahweh of hosts* (“the LORD of hosts” [cf. Zech. 2:8]), and in that He was so involved with the covenant with Israel, it fits perfectly for Him to be called “the Angel of the covenant” here in Mal. 3:1. In Jud. 2:1 “the Angel of the LORD” said to Israel, “I will never break My covenant with you.”

<sup>75</sup> This is Mal. 3:23 in the Hebrew.

<sup>76</sup> The word “behold” is used two other places in the book of Malachi (2:3; 4:1).

<sup>77</sup> I looked at more than fifty commentaries on Mal. 3:1-5. I found one commentator who agrees that the one who comes at the end of 3:1 and in 3:2-4 is the forerunner (“My messenger”), not Yahweh who comes to judge, and a few others that are open to this viewpoint, but none of those commentators takes a clear stand for the viewpoints that the forerunner (“My messenger”) is a prophet, that “My messenger” must be distinguished from “the messenger of the covenant,” and that “the messenger of the covenant” is God the Son/the Angel of the Lord, who comes to judge.

Having studied eschatology for many years, I am no longer surprised when I find that most commentators (or even all of the commentators that I look at) are (from my point of view) wrong when it comes to some of the details regarding eschatology. (See pages 6, 7 of *Mid-Week Rapture* for some examples.) For one thing, it seems that God has waited to the end of the age to open up some of the details regarding the interpretation of eschatology, very much including the detail that the Lord Jesus Christ will return in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.

I agree, of course, that the coming of the Lord Himself is the most important coming by far,<sup>78</sup> *but there is a very strong emphasis in the book of Malachi on the fact that Yahweh sends His “messenger/Elijah” to prepare the way for His coming before He comes to judge.*<sup>79</sup> In Matt. 17:11 Jesus spoke in exalted terms (even over-stated terms) regarding what is accomplished through the ministry of Elijah (which clearly includes the ministry of John the Baptist, but could also include the ministry of the Elijah who will come just before His second coming<sup>80</sup>) when He said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things.”

In His mercy God warns Israel/Judah of impending judgment through these messengers, so that all who have a heart that can be persuaded to repent will repent and get ready for His coming. Malachi the prophet fits into this category as a forerunner (and there were many other Old Testament prophets with this kind of ministry). Then John the Baptist (“My messenger/Elijah”) helps prepare/clear the way for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, finally, “My messenger/Elijah” will come at the end of the age to help prepare/clear the way for the all-important second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes to save His own and to judge the world.

Significantly, the coming of the Lord for judgment (at both His first and second comings) takes place *after* the ministry of “My messenger/Elijah.” In Mal. 3:1 we read of the coming of “My messenger/Elijah,” then of the coming of the Lord to His temple (to Israel/Judah<sup>81</sup>); it is understood that He is coming to judge and make things right (to establish justice, for one thing). Then, starting with the last few words of Mal. 3:1 on through verse 4, we read of the same coming of “My messenger/Elijah” (but with some details about his coming supplied) to get the people of Israel/Judah ready for His coming (not that all the people will repent). In the following verse (3:5) we read that the Lord then comes to judge His people. (This is the same coming as His suddenly coming to His temple spoken of in Mal. 3:1.) This same sequence of comings (the coming of Elijah *before* the coming of the Lord to judge) is also clear in Mal. 4:5, 6. (The first and second comings of the Lord Jesus Christ are included in His *coming* mentioned in Mal. 3:1, 5; and 4:5, 6. Malachi 4:5 does not specifically mention the coming of Yahweh, but “the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD [Yahweh]”; it is to be understood, however, that the day of the Yahweh begins when Yahweh comes.) (2)

**“But who can endure the day of His [Since I believe these words speak of the coming**

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<sup>78</sup> I also agree that much purifying/refining of the repentant end-time remnant of Israel/Judah will take place during the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, *after* the Lord Jesus has returned in the middle of that seven-year period (cf., e.g., Dan. 12:10; Zech. 13:1-6, 9; and Rom. 11:25-27).

<sup>79</sup> It must be understood, of course, that the ministry of God’s faithful prophets (very much including “My messenger/Elijah” of Malachi chapters 3, 4) is accomplished in accordance with His plan, by His anointing/power, and for His glory. All the repentance, purifying, etc that is accomplished through such ministers is accomplished by God. Many prophets have had very significant ministries. Moses, for example, or consider the words that God spoke to Jeremiah when He called him to be a prophet (Jer. 1:4-10). I’ll quote Jer. 1:10, “See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To pluck up and to break down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant.” An important feature of the ministry of most of the prophets that God sent to Israel/Judah was to call the people to repent.

<sup>80</sup> Quite a few commentators on the book of Malachi (and some on the book of Matthew) argue for the view that Matt. 17:11 includes a reference to the Elijah who is to come before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. See the excerpt from E. B. Pusey at the end of this study of Mal. 2:17-4:6.

<sup>81</sup> For one thing, His coming to the temple fits the emphasis in the book of Malachi on His dealing with the priests.

of “My messenger/Elijah,” I would translate “his,” not “His.” The NIV has “his,” but such words are never capitalized for deity in that translation.] **coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He [he] is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap** [“a launderer’s soap” NIV]. **(3) He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He [he] will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness.** [It is true, of course, that the Lord Jesus Christ has been purifying believers (Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles) from the time of His first coming. But Mal. 3:2-4 (in context with Mal. 3:1-6; 4:1-6) are dealing, in large part, with “My messenger/Elijah’s” getting the people of Israel/Judah ready for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (those who will respond to that ministry with true repentance). Those who do respond will be ready for the coming of the Lord, and His coming will mean salvation for them, instead of being removed by judgment. Romans 11:25-27 show that Israel/Judah *as a nation* (the end-time remnant of the nation) will not be ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ until the time of His (mid-week) second coming. As I have discussed in my eschatological writings, I believe the end-time remnant of Israel will be ready to receive Christ when He comes, but not in time to be taken in the (mid-week) rapture.

Malachi 4:5, 6 show that God will use the ministry of “My messenger/Elijah” to help purify the sons of Israel/Judah (those who will respond to that ministry) to prepare them for the second coming of the Lord, so they will not be removed by God’s judgment along with the unrepentant who will be found living in sin when the day of judgment comes (cf. Mal. 3:5).<sup>82</sup> I’ll quote Mal. 4:5, 6, “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the

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<sup>82</sup> Israel/Judah will experience intense shaking (a shaking that will, for one thing, help bring about the repentance of many Jews) in the days preceding the mid-week return of the Lord to judge Israel/Judah and the world. Most of the end-time shaking that will help separate the repentant, end-time remnant of Israel/Judah from the unrepentant Jews will take place in the one-month period (during which the short great tribulation will take place) that will begin with the abomination of desolation. Daniel 12:1 is a key verse on the short great tribulation. On that verse, see chapter 10 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. Daniel 12:11 is the key verse to show that the abomination of desolation will be initiated by Antichrist one month before the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (see pages 182-184 of *Mid-Week Rapture*).

Zechariah 13:8 seems to indicate that some two-thirds of the people of Israel/Judah will be cut off in the last days and perish. Zechariah 14:1, 2 are verses of key importance. The shaking of Jerusalem (Israel/Judah) that these verses speak of will begin about the time of the abomination of desolation. Jerusalem will be taken by the nations; “half of the city [will be] exiled, but the rest [the remnant] will not be cut off from the city” (Zech 14:2). That repentant (elect) remnant left in Jerusalem will be ready to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to them in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week (cf. Zech. 12:10; Mic. 5:3; Matt. 23:39; and Rev. 11:13). Zechariah 14:3-5 prophesy regarding the (mid-week) coming of the Lord to Israel/Judah (He will be accompanied by the saints who were just raptured from the earth); His feet will stand on the Mt. of Olives; the day of judgment will begin when He comes in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. Zechariah 14:6, 7 speak of the end-time day of judgment. Zechariah 14:8 speaks of what it will be like when the day of judgment is over, when the millennial kingdom begins. All of the verses mentioned in this paragraph are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.

Isaiah 66:6 prophesies of great shaking coming to Israel/Judah in the last days, centering in the temple; that shaking/judgment will start about the time of the abomination of desolation, which will be initiated in the temple. Isaiah 66:7 goes on to prophesy of the (mid-week) birth into the fullness of eternal life (cf. Rev. 12:5), and Isa. 66:8 prophesies of the glorification of the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah, which will apparently take place about the time the millennial kingdom begins. 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4 are key verses on the abomination of desolation. (These verses are discussed in the chapters on Isaiah 66:1-8 and on 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 in *Mid-Week Rapture*.) *This footnote continues on the next page.*

prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. (6) He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse [“smite the land with a ban (i.e. utterly destroy it)”].” Malachi 4:5, 6 with 4:1-4 (and Malachi chapter 3) make it clear that the primary judgment in view here is God’s end-time judgment of the world, in which the unrepentant wicked will be removed by judgment. It is clear that the ministry of “My messenger/Elijah” will help bring about the repentance of the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah *before* the Lord comes to judge them.

Malachi 3:2-4, in a way that is typical for the Old Testament prophets, speak in terms of the religious rituals and worship of the old covenant. (Verses 3, 4 mention presenting old-covenant ritual offerings.) The last part of verse 3 and verse 4 speak of the end result (after the purifying/refining work of “My messenger/Elijah” is accomplished) of Israel/Judah’s presenting offerings in righteousness that will be acceptable to God, and pleasing to Him. From our perspective, we know that old-covenant ritual offerings are not appropriate now that the new covenant has been ratified in the blood of Christ. The ministry of “My messenger/Elijah” will help bring about a genuine repentance that will, for one thing, help prepare their hearts to be ready to submit in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ and His righteousness when He comes to them.<sup>83</sup>

The sons of Levi (especially the priests) are the only ones mentioned in verse 3—they played a key role as the representatives of the people of Israel/Judah before God and as spiritual leaders and teachers and as the ones who presented the ritual offerings to God; furthermore, the book of Malachi deals at length with the priests, especially dealing with their sinful state in the days of Malachi—but there can be no doubting that “My

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This scenario fits perfectly with Matthew chapter 24, where we read of the abomination of desolation (Matt. 24:15), which is followed by the short great tribulation that will be centered in that part of the world that includes Israel (Matt. 24:16-28). (Significantly, the judgments associated with the short great tribulation are to be equated with the judgments associated with the sixth trumpet of the book of Revelation [Rev. 9:12-21].) Israel/Judah will experience intense shaking that will result in a separation between the repentant (the elect) and the unrepentant during the time of the short great tribulation, which will last about one month. Then, Matt. 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days,” and verses 30, 31 go on to speak of the (mid-week) return of Christ, the rapture, the beginning of the gathering and saving of the end-time remnant of Israel on the earth, and the beginning of the day of judgment, at the sounding of a “great trumpet” (Matt. 24:31), which is to be equated with the “great trumpet” of Isa. 27:13 (Isaiah 27:12, 13 prophesy about the Lord’s gathering the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah on the earth); the “last trumpet” of 1 Cor. 15:52; the “trumpet of God” of 1 Thess 4:16; and the seventh and last trumpet of Rev. 11:15. These verses (with the exception of Isa. 27:12, 13) are discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*, and many of them are discussed further in my subsequent eschatological writings. Isaiah 27:12, 13 are discussed in my paper dealing with selected eschatological passages from Isaiah, dated August 2000.

Romans 9:27-29 are key verses dealing with the end-time shaking of Israel/Judah that will lead to a repentant remnant. Those verses are discussed in my verse-by-verse study of Romans chapters 9-11, dated March 2001. Romans 11:25-27 are discussed there too.

<sup>83</sup> “...we must not infer from vers. 3 and 4, that Malachi imagined that the Old Testament worship would be continued during the Messianic times [I don’t believe we know how much Malachi knew or imagined about worship in Messianic times; the important thing is that God knew, and He eventually revealed that many forms of worship under the old covenant are superceded by better forms under the new covenant]; but his words are to be explained from the custom of the prophets, of using the forms of the Old Testament worship to depict the reverence for God which would characterize the new covenant” (C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 10 [Eerdmans 1978 reprint], pages 460, 461).

messenger/Elijah” will be sent to the entire nation (and to the world), powerfully calling those with ears to hear of their great need to fear God and repent, and all the more so, and with great haste, in the light of the fact that the day of judgment is super imminent.] **(4) Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. (5) Then I will draw near** [There is no difference in meaning between the Lord’s *drawing near* for judgment and His *coming* to judge.<sup>84</sup>] **to you for judgment** [The first word of this sentence (verse 5) could be translated other ways than “Then” (the NKJV translates “And,” for example, and the NIV has “So”), but I believe the translation “Then” communicates the intended meaning.<sup>85</sup> God, in His mercy, sends “My messenger/Elijah” to help those with hearts that can be persuaded to repent and get ready for His second coming *before* He comes to judge. This sequence of God’s sending “My messenger/Elijah” *before* He comes to judge is of crucial significance in the book of Malachi.]; **and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me** [Those who do not fear God (they do not fear sinning against Him/breaking His commandments; they do not fear His judgment, at least they do not fear to an extent sufficient to bring about much in the way of genuine repentance) and who remain in that category in the face of “God’s messenger/Elijah” will be removed by the judgment of God.],” **says the LORD of hosts.** [The “I” and “Me” here in verse 5 (and other verses) refer to the same Person as the “I” in verse 1, namely the “LORD [Yahweh] of hosts”; the “LORD of hosts” is specifically mentioned in verses 1 and 5 (and other verses of Malachi). (As we discussed under verse 1, the LORD of hosts here apparently refers to God the Son, who is also called the “the Lord” and “the messenger/Angel of the covenant” in verse 1, who will suddenly come to Israel/Judah.) Verse 1 starts with the prophetic message that the Lord will send “My messenger [Elijah]” to clear the way and prepare the sons of Israel/Judah (all those who will repent) *before* He comes in judgment (referring, as chapter 4 shows, to His judgment of them in His end-time judgment of the world).<sup>86</sup> Then it mentions that the Lord will suddenly come to His temple (to Israel/Judah). At the end of verse 1 on through verse 4 we read of the same coming (having been sent by the Lord) of “My messenger/Elijah,” but giving more detail about his coming. Then, in verse 5, *after* “My messenger/Elijah” has fulfilled his ministry, the Lord comes to judge the unrepentant wicked in Israel/Judah. In Mal. 4:5, 6, we read of the Lord sending Elijah the prophet to bring about the repentance of those who can be persuaded to repent *before* He comes to judge Israel/Judah (and the world) in the great and terrible day of the Lord.] **(6) “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.** [This verse is a very important; the message of this verse is a dominant theme of the book of Malachi, and it teaches us a lot about God. The fact that God hates sin and has committed Himself to judge and remove all unrepentant sinners from His kingdom is one way that God doesn’t change. That fact is understood

<sup>84</sup> Douglas Stuart discusses this point (*Minor Prophets*, Vol. 3 [Baker Books, 1998], pages 1355, 1356).

<sup>85</sup> The RSV; NRSV both translate “Then.”

<sup>86</sup> As we have discussed, this prophecy also includes the coming of John the Baptist to help clear/prepare the way for the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Intense judgment came to Israel/Judah at that time too.

in this verse, but that isn't the dominant idea here. The dominant idea here is that God loves Israel/Jacob/Judah (true Israel), and He is faithful to His covenant promises. He, in His mercy, often mitigated the extent to which He judged them throughout their history, but the emphasis here regards the point that He will send "My messenger/Elijah the prophet" *before* the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and, even more importantly, that He will send "My messenger/Elijah the prophet" to help bring about the repentance of those who can be persuaded to repent *before* His intense end-time judgment falls on them.

Also included is the idea that God frequently sent prophets in Old Testament days to exhort Israel/Judah to repent. Malachi was one of those prophets. Much of the content of the book of Malachi consists of God's exhorting (through Malachi) the people of Israel/Judah of that day to repent. As the book of Malachi (and much other scripture) shows, God strongly desired the repentance of Israel/Judah, so that He would not have to pour out judgment on them.

Being a Gentile, I am thankful that I can say that God is also quite generous with Gentiles and wanting their repentance rather than their being removed by His judgments (cf., e.g., 1 Tim. 2:4-6; Titus 2:11-3:8; and Act 17:30, 31).] **(7) From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept *them*. Return to Me [Repent!], and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts.** [I'll quote Jer. 7:25, 26, "Since the day your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets, daily rising early and sending *them*. (26) Yet they [speaking of the majority] did not listen to Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck; they did more evil than their fathers." Compare Zech. 1:3.] **But you say, 'How shall we return?'** [These verses, like so many of the verses in the book of Malachi, deal with sins that were taking place in the days of Malachi. This verse (7) shows that that generation was sinful, just like most of the other generations were sinful.] **(8) [Verses 8-12 deal with one of the many sins that were common in the days of Malachi.] "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings.** [For one thing, according to the Mosaic Law, the tithes and offerings went to support the priests and Levites and their families. When the Israelites failed to bring the whole tithe and required offerings to God, and that was a common problem throughout much of the history of Israel/Judah (cf., e.g., Neh. 13:11, 12), it greatly affected the proper functioning of the priesthood and the temple, which was the center of the worship of God in Old Testament days.] **(9) You are cursed with a curse [cf. Mal. 2:2], for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!** [They were "cursed with a curse"; they were experiencing some judgments from God, but it is clear that He had been lenient with them. As we discussed under 2:17, He doesn't have to make things balance out with perfect justice until the end. If He had judged them in full accordance with their sin and the Mosaic Law, the nation would have pretty much disappeared (cf., e.g., Mal. 3:1-6; 4:5, 6; and Luke 13:1-5).] **(10) Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house [Cf. Lev. 27:30; Num. 18:21-24; Deut. 12:5-7; 14:22-29; and Neh. 13:12.], and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. (11) Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*," says the LORD of hosts. (12) "All the nations will call you blessed, for you**

**shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.** [From our new-covenant perspective, we know that the nations will not call Israel/Judah blessed in any substantial way until after Israel/Judah is saved (the remnant of the nation) in the last days through submitting to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in faith.] **(13) “Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says the LORD. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’ (14) You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge, and that we have walked in mourning before the LORD of hosts?** [These complaining words of verses 14, 15 cover much of the same ground as the words of 2:17. One problem was, as it so often happened with the people of Israel/Judah (and as it has so often has happened with Christians), much of this serving God was limited to external things, without really loving and serving Him from the heart and repenting of their sinful state (cf., e.g., Isa. 1:1-31; 58:1-14; and Mal. 2:10-16).] **(15) So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.’” (16) Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard *it* and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.** [Their names will be found written in God’s (the Lamb’s) book of life.] **(17) “They will be Mine [cf. Isa. 43:1],” says the LORD of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession [cf. Deut. 7:6; 1 Pet. 2:9], and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”** [The word “then” (Hebrew *az*) at the beginning of verse 16 helps demonstrate that “those who feared the LORD” were responding (including responding with repentance where repentance was required) to the ministry of Malachi (to the word of God spoken through Malachi).<sup>87</sup> This same truth applies to the faithful remnant in the days of many other prophets, very much including John the Baptist and the days of the end-time Elijah(s).<sup>88</sup> In line with the theme of Malachi chapters 3, 4, the ones who fear God and repent will be spared being removed in God’s end-time judgment of the world: They will inherit a place in God’s eternal kingdom, whereas the unrepentant will be removed by judgment.] **(18) So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.** [Some of the Jews of Malachi’s day were accusing God of not distinguishing between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves Him and the one who does not serve Him (see Mal. 2:17; 3:13-15). As I mentioned, I’m sure that God hated such blasphemous charges. Here in verse 18, God makes it known that when He has completed His work of saving and judging it will be obvious that He always did (cf. Gen. 18:25), and always will, distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. (You never really get by with sin.) The unrepentant wicked will find their eternal destiny to be quite different from the glorious destiny of those who fear God and repent and submit to Him in faith, to whom God (through the Lamb of God) imparts His

<sup>87</sup> “As a result of the Lord’s rebuke, a faithful remnant were drawn together in Israel...” (Paul R. Fink, *Liberty Bible Commentary*, Vol. 1 [Old-Time Gospel Hour, 1982], page 1861).

<sup>88</sup> Undoubtedly there were individual Israelites who did not need to do much repenting in the days of Malachi, but such people would have been the first to respond to God’s message through Malachi. Similarly, in the days of John the Baptist, the most righteous Jews came running when John, and then Jesus, called them to repentance. They knew that they needed all the saving grace that God makes available. Such people were typically quick to see their need for the Lamb of God, to whom John the Baptist pointed them. The “righteous” knew that they needed the Righteousness of God in Christ.

righteousness and full salvation. God always did, and He always will, require His people to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked. Such distinctions are part of the moral, righteous character of God.]



## MALACHI CHAPTER 4

[This is 3:19-24 in the Hebrew. These verses are very closely connected with those that went before.] **“For behold, the day is coming** [This is the often-spoken-of day of God’s judgment of the world at the end of this age. That judgment will be worldwide, but the spotlight here in Malachi chapter 4 is on God’s end-time judgment of Israel/Judah.], **burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer** [those that do not repent, not even in response to the powerful ministry of God’s end-time minister(s) “My messenger/Elijah”] **will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”** [The unrepentant will be removed by God’s judgment; they will not have a place in His eternal kingdom. Compare, for example, Mal. 3:5; Psalm 21:8-10; Nah. 1:5, 6; Matt. 3:12; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:7; and Rev. 20:11-15.] **(2) But for you who fear My name** [See Mal. 3:16-18.], **the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings** [Compare Isa. 30:26; Jer. 30:17; 33:6; Luke 1:78, 79; and Rev. 7:2.<sup>89</sup> The “wings” refer to the rays coming from the “sun of righteousness.” The rays from this sun will have the power, through Christ Jesus, to bring full salvation to those who fear God—the repentant will be ready for His coming. Those glorious rays will make them fully righteous with the Righteousness of God (in and through Christ Jesus) and it will make all things righteous (with all the attendant blessings) for those that will have a place in God’s kingdom.<sup>90</sup>]; **and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. (3) You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.** [Quite a few prophetic verses speak of the people of (true) Israel having a role in the overthrow of the wicked at the end of this age. The most important such verses speak of the glorified and raptured saints reigning with the Lord Jesus Christ as He judges the world, including the devil and his hosts in the spiritual dimension. We will begin to reign with Him at the time of the mid-week resurrection, glorification, and rapture (cf., e.g., Psalms 2; 110:3; Rom. 16:20; Rev. 2:26, 27; 12:5; 17:14; 19:8, 14, 19).<sup>91</sup> Verses like Zech. 12:6-9; 14:12 show that the saved (but not yet glorified) end-time remnant of Israel/Judah will also be involved to some extent in subduing God’s enemies during the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week.<sup>92</sup>

What I said in the preceding paragraph is important and biblical, and many commentators understand Mal. 4:3 that way, but I believe the idea intended here is that God will have already overthrown the unrepentant wicked and turned them to *ashes* (cf. Ezek. 28:18) before the end-time remnant of Israel/Judah tread on those ashes. (This picture of the righteous treading on the ashes of the wicked effectively demonstrates that God will distinguish between the righteous and the wicked.) Malachi 4:1 has

<sup>89</sup> Revelation 7:2 is discussed on pages 178, 179 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. As discussed there, it is quite possible that the “sun of righteousness” represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>90</sup> For those Jews (and Gentiles) who will have become Christians (I mean true Christians, Christians who are faithful to God and the new covenant) in the days before Christ’s (mid-week) second coming, His second coming will mean glorification and the rapture.

<sup>91</sup> These verses are discussed, most of them in some detail, in *Mid-Week Rapture*. Also see 1 Cor. 6:2, 3.

<sup>92</sup> Zechariah chapters 12 and 14 are discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in *Mid-Week Rapture* (chapter 15).

already informed us that the evildoers/wicked “will be chaff” and that “the day that is coming will set them ablaze.”<sup>93</sup>] **(4) “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb [Mt. Sinai] for all Israel** [very much including the Jews of Malachi’s generation]. [God, through Malachi, called Israel/Judah to be faithful to the Mosaic Law, which was the foundation of the covenant He had made with them at Mt. Sinai. That covenant, according to promise (e.g., Jer. 31:31-34), has now been superseded by the new covenant in the blood of Christ.] **(5) Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD** [see Joel 2:31; cf. Joel 2:11]. [The last two verses of the book of Malachi cover the same ground as Mal. 3:1-6. As I mentioned, the fact that God sends prophets before He sends judgment, and especially before He sends His end-time judgment of Israel/Judah (and the world), is a dominant theme of the book of Malachi, with Malachi himself fulfilling this same role as a forerunner for “My messenger/Elijah.” As I mentioned, the name *Malachi* means “My messenger.”

Verses like the following confirm that the ministry of John the Baptist must be included as a preliminary, partial fulfillment of this prophecy: Matt. 11:14, “And if you are willing to accept *it*, John [the Baptist] himself is Elijah who was to come”; Matt. 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; and Luke 1:16, 17, “And he [John the Baptist] will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God. (17) It is he who will go *as a forerunner* before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN [cf. Mal. 4:6], and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” The words of Luke 1:16, 17 were part of the words that the angel Gabriel spoke to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when he announced John’s birth and ministry.

We can see John the Baptist here in Mal. 4:5, 6, but the emphasis here (because of the emphasis throughout Malachi chapter 4 on “the great and terrible day of the LORD”) is on Elijah the prophet who will minister at the end of the age, just before the Lord Jesus Christ returns and the end-time day of judgment begins. (See under Mal. 3:1.) **(6) And he will restore** [“or, *turn*”] **the hearts of the fathers to their children** [See Luke 1:16, 17 (quoted above on this page). The Hebrew noun *ben* (the plural is used here in verse 6) that is translated “children” here and later in this verse is the noun normally translated “son(s).”<sup>94</sup> The KJV, NKJV, and NIV all have “children” here.], **and the children to their fathers** [There is much difference of opinion regarding the meaning of these words at the beginning of verse 6. Fortunately, however, the overall meaning of the verse is quite clear: The ministry of Elijah the prophet (which includes the ministry of John the Baptist and the ministry of the two prophets of the book of Revelation, or at least one of the two prophets) will result in the serious repentance of many of the sons of Israel/Judah *before* the Lord comes to judge Israel/Judah. The first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is included, but the emphasis in Malachi chapter 4 is on His second coming.

<sup>93</sup> The wicked being set ablaze like chaff and their being ashes under the soles of the feet of the righteous is figurative language, powerful figurative language. The Bible doesn’t teach the annihilation of the wicked (cf., e.g., Matt. 25:41, 46; Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:15; 21:8; 22:15).

<sup>94</sup> The NASB translates *ben* as “son” 1,876 times and the plural as “sons” 2,369 times, but this noun can also be translated “children” (including boys and girls); the NASB translates this noun as “children” 111 times.

The most common view on the meaning of the words at the beginning of verse 6 is that the “fathers” refer to the fathers of old, men like Moses, who had been faithful to God and the covenant. Elijah the prophet (mentioned in Mal. 4:6), by bringing about the repentance of many of the Israelites to God, will cause the restoration of the hearts of the faithful fathers to their backsliden offspring, that is, to that part of their backsliden offspring who now become faithful to God. And the repentant children will now have been changed in their hearts and have come back to the faithful fathers of Israel/Judah. (The primary issue, of course, is that they have repented in their hearts and come back to God Himself.) Several verses in the book of Malachi specifically contrast the Jews of Malachi’s generation (the sons/children) with the faithful fathers (see Mal. 2:4-10; 3:4, 7, 17; cf. 4:4).<sup>95</sup> Compare Isa. 63:16, “For You are our Father, though Abraham does not know us And Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD are our Father, Our Redeemer of old is Your name.”

Another common view is that these words speak of a reconciliation of the fathers with their children who live in the days in which Elijah the prophet ministers, and the children with their fathers. The fathers and their children are reconciled to one another as both repent and submit their hearts to God. This view is possible, but there was no specific mention of the sin of strife between the fathers and the children earlier in this book, and this sin, though serious, can hardly be considered a root sin. It would be totally irrelevant, of course, if the fathers and children fully accepted one another in their hearts if their hearts were not first and foremost given to God. Sinners are often united in their sin.

Another view is that it would be better to translate something like, “He will turn the hearts of the fathers together with the hearts of the children and the hearts of the children together with their fathers. With this view their hearts would be turned to God.], **lest I come and smite the land with a curse** [“or *ban of destruction*” (margin of NASB)].” [The BDB Hebrew Lexicon (under *cherem*, the noun translated “curse” by the NASB) says that the meaning here is “*smite the land with a ban*, i.e. utterly destroy it,” and quite a few commentators make this same point. I believe that is the intended meaning here; that is, if God didn’t send Elijah the prophet (who will help bring about the repentance of many of the Israelites—the repentant [elect] remnant) in the last days before He comes to judge Israel/Judah, He would have to remove the entire nation by judgment when He comes (cf., e.g., Luke 13:1-5).

In accordance with God’s merciful plan, the end-time ministry of Elijah the prophet, along with the other things that God will do in the last days to warn Israel/Judah (and the entire world) that the day of judgment is super imminent (including the sounding of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation, which will announce the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the day of judgment) will bring about the repentance of many in Israel/Judah (and will have a major impact on the entire world). As I mentioned, the two prophets will probably announce the sounding of the first six trumpets (or maybe all seven trumpets) of the book of Revelation.]

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<sup>95</sup> Malachi 3:3 speaks of purifying the sons of Levi; Mal. 3:6 mentions the sons of Jacob. The Hebrew noun translated *children* here in Mal. 4:6 is the same noun (*ben*) translated *sons* in 3:3, 5. (See the preceding footnote.) If *ben* were translated *sons* here in Mal. 4:6, it would be easier to see a possible connection between the faithful *fathers* of old and the unfaithful *sons* who need to repent here in 4:6.

Excerpt from E. B. Pusey under Malachi 4:5<sup>96</sup>

“... When [Jesus] says, *Elias shall truly first come and restore all things*,<sup>97</sup> He implies a coming of Elias, other than that of S. John Baptist, since *he* was already martyred, and *all things* were not yet *restored*. [It is important to see that all things will not be restored in the full sense *before* the Lord Jesus returns. It is His work of judging, saving, etc. that He will do after He returns that will *restore all things*, at least He will restore all things that can be restored. The rest will be removed from God’s kingdom by judgment.] This [the end-time coming of Elijah] must also be the fullest fulfillment. For *the great and terrible Day of the Lord* is the Day of judgment, of which all earthly judgments, however desolating, (as the destruction of Jerusalem [in AD 70]) are but shadows and earnest. ...

Our Lord’s words, *Elias truly shall first come and restore all things*, seem to me to leave no question, that, as S. John Baptist came, in the spirit and power of Elias, before His First Coming, so, before the Second Coming, Elias should come in person, as Jews and Christians have alike expected. This has been the Christian expectation from the first. ....”

Quite a few commentators on Malachi (and some commentators on Matthew, including Henry Alford) agree with Pusey’s interpretation of Matt. 17:11. Pusey goes on for some four pages with small type quoting from early Christian writers (starting with Justin Martyr) showing that they believed that, even though John the Baptist fulfilled in part the prophecy of Elijah of Malachi chapters 3, 4, Elijah the prophet must yet come before the second coming of Christ. They often referred the words of Christ about *Elijah’s coming to restore all things* (Matt. 17:11) to Elijah’s still future coming at the end of this age. They typically held the view that Elijah the prophet of Old Testament days will be one of the two prophets of Revelation chapter 11.

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<sup>96</sup> *The Minor Prophets*, Vol. 1 (Baker Book House, 1985 reprint of the 1885 edition), pages 499-502.

<sup>97</sup> Matthew 17:11.