

The Book of Zechariah – Part 1

The Night Visions

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotes are from the King James Version [KJV].

These Zechariah studies supplement the author's book *Daniel's Fourth Kingdom*, which reviews end-time prophecies. It is available at www.redatedkings.com along with two other books: *Exposition of Daniel's Final Vision* and *Redating the Hebrew Kings*.

This is Part 1 of a series examining the enigmatic book of Zechariah. It covers 1:1 to 6:8, a section characterized by the night vision sequence. The guiding principle behind all the studies in this series is Jesus' statement in John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

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Three consecutive visions—the third, fourth, and fifth—incorporate poetic oracles: 2:6–13; 3:8–10; 4:6–10. Oracles are set-apart divine utterances. They underscore, amplify, and celebrate, the message of the related vision.

Zechariah's Background

Personal History

Zechariah was born in Babylonia and was among those who returned to Judah in 537 BC during the so-called "first return." He was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (Zech 1:1, 7). The book of Ezra, though, identifies him simply as the "son of Iddo" (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Based on this notice, many commentators conclude that Zechariah's father died when he was young.

If his grandfather was the same Iddo mentioned in Nehemiah 12:4 and 12:16 as one of the priests who returned in 537 BC (which seems likely), then Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest, like Ezekiel and Jeremiah before him.

Haggai and Zechariah

Not long after the Persians defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC, exiled Jews began to return to Judah. An important early objective for them was the rebuilding of the temple. The work initially prospered, and the temple foundation was laid in 536 BC. However, neighbouring peoples continually frustrated the rebuilding effort. After a period of no temple construction at all, Haggai and Zechariah began to prophesy to the Jews in 520 BC. As a result of their messages, work on the temple recommenced, and was completed in 515 BC. Assisting the two prophets were Zerubbabel and Joshua, their civil and religious leaders.

Haggai's short ministry began and ended in 520 BC. His messages were mainly about temple rebuilding. Zechariah began to prophesy shortly after Haggai's final message. His work was more extensive, and focussed on Jerusalem's welfare and long-term future.

Outline

The name Zechariah means "Yahweh remembers." The Lord certainly remembers His covenantal promises, and the book of Zechariah records many prophecies anticipating their New Testament fulfillment. In fact, the book contains more allusions to the Messiah than all the other Minor Prophets combined. Many are found in the so-called "night visions," which occupy the first six chapters of the book. Zechariah saw eight night visions in total. Although not immediately apparent, they unfold in an orderly manner:

1) THE HORSEMAN AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES (1:7–17)

In this opening vision, the condition of the earth has been assessed and the Lord is "sore displeased." Consequently, He promises to restore Jerusalem and its temple.

2) FOUR HORNS AND FOUR CRAFTSMEN (1:18–21)

Worldly powers will not stop the rebuilders of Jerusalem and its temple.

3) A MAN WITH A MEASURING LINE (CH. 2)

Ultimately, the restoration effort in Jerusalem is *spiritual* in nature.

4) CLEAN GARMENTS FOR JOSHUA (CH. 3)

Spiritual restoration refers to the salvation of individuals, as symbolized by the transformation of the high priest, Joshua.

5) A LAMPSTAND WITH TWO OLIVE TREES (CH. 4)

This vision anticipates the multiplicity of New Testament congregations (the many lamps) that will extend from the Jewish root (the lampstand) to witness the Gospel.

6) THE FLYING SCROLL (5:1–4)

The Gospel message is crucial because God’s Law condemns the unsaved of the world. A flying scroll displays, for all to see, the penalty for breaking two specific commandments.

7) AN EPHAH OF WICKEDNESS (5:5–11)

Attention turns from the unsaved in the world to the unsaved in the church. In this vision, two winged women carry an ephah containing Wickedness to Shinar. This is a prophecy of the end-time church embracing worldliness.

8) THE FOUR CHARIOTS (6:1–8)

This final vision brings closure to the problem identified in the first vision about the state of the nations. It is a prophecy about the coming triumph of the Holy Spirit in the world. The triumph allows the Lord to declare that His Spirit is now “quieted.”

When gauged by their New Testament meanings, the night visions divide into five thematic sections, shown below. The first section (vision 1) is the introduction. The fifth section (vision 8) is the conclusion. The six visions in between (2 to 7) serve to “tell the story,” and they divide into three thematic sections of two visions each. In all three sections, the first vision relates generally to individuals, while the second is more corporately oriented. The central section (“Salvation / The Church”) elaborates, symbolically, on the core theme of Zechariah’s night visions: the coming Messianic era.

1. The Lord is “Sore Displeased”	1) The Horseman among the Myrtle Trees
2. Promises of Rebuilding	2) Four Horns and Four Craftsmen 3) A Man with a Measuring Line
3. Salvation / The Church	4) Clean Garments for Joshua 5) A Lampstand with Two Olive Trees
4. Judgment / Worldliness	6) The Flying Scroll 7) An Ephah of Wickedness
5. The Lord’s Spirit is “Quietied”	8) The Four Chariots

Superimposed on the above scheme is a chiasmic structure (one of many throughout the book). See Appendix 1 for the arrangement.

Introduction: A Call to Repentance (1:1–6)

Zech 1:1-4. In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.

Zechariah's ministry began in the eighth month (Oct/Nov) of the second year of Darius. This was the Persian king Darius I, son of Hystaspes. His second year was from spring 520 to spring 519 BC.

Key dates in the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah are as follows:

1	Haggai's first message (Hag 1:1–11)	Aug 29, 520 BC
2	Work on the temple restarted (Hag 1:12–15)	Sept 21, 520 BC
3	Haggai's second message (Hag 2:1–9)	Oct 17, 520 BC
4	Start of Zechariah's ministry (Zech 1:1–6)	Oct/Nov, 520 BC
5	Haggai's third and fourth messages (Hag 2:10–19; 20–23)	Dec 18, 520 BC
6	Zechariah's eight night visions (Zech 1:7–6:8)	Feb 15, 519 BC
7	Dedication of the temple (Ezra 6:14–18)	Mar 12, 515 BC

Haggai's short ministry (520 BC) began seventeen years after the first contingent of Jews returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile (537 BC). Despite those elapsed years, the temple was still unfinished. This is because continual heathen opposition to its construction had frustrated the Jews. Abandoning the temple in the belief that "the time is not come" (Hag 1:2), the Jews concentrated instead on their own personal affairs. This had been the case for at least a decade. Two events, though, caused the rebuilding effort to recommence and proceed in earnest:

- Following Haggai's first message on Aug 29, 520 BC, work on the temple restarted a few weeks later, on Sept 21. Were it not for Haggai's message, the Jews would have continued to ignore temple building in favor of their own self-interest.
- Not long after work on the temple restarted, Darius confirmed the earlier decree of Cyrus (in 538/37 BC) to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4:24–6:15). The Jews now had royal assent and assistance for the project. This helped to quell any opposition from outside forces.

In Haggai's second message (Oct 17, 520 BC), the Lord said, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former" (Hag 2:9). Zechariah's ministry began soon after (8th month = Oct 27–Nov 24). His first message recalled the Lord's anger at preceding generations: "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers." Following this was

a directive to repent, to secure His favor again: “Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you.” While reassuring, this promise was nevertheless conditional and had a clear corollary: if the people continued on a wayward and self-centered course, God would punish them, as He had their fathers.

The Lord then recalled how the Jewish fathers ignored His warnings through the prophets: “Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried . . . but they did not hear.” The Bible records that Israel repeatedly ignored those warnings throughout her history, prompting God’s judgment again and again. Most recently, this judgment fell in devastating fashion with Jerusalem’s destruction and the exile to Babylon.

Contemporary application. The call to repentance in Zechariah 1:1–6 also applies to the New Testament church (cf. Rev 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19). Many people in the church claim to be Christians. However, if they have not truly repented of their sins, they are storing wrath for themselves as their spiritual fathers did (the Old Testament Jews). Moreover, if a person or congregation is serving their own interest and being neglectful of temple-building (witnessing the Gospel), they are likewise incurring divine disfavor.

Zech 1:5–6. *Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of [overtake] your fathers? and they returned [repented] and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.*

To emphasize the transitory nature of human life, the Lord asked rhetorical questions about the fathers and the prophets they ignored: “Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?” The Lord then contrasted the short-term nature of human life with the enduring words through His prophets: “But my words and my statutes . . . did they not take hold of your fathers?” Those words judged the fathers who ignored them, as evidenced by the events of the recent past. Given their immutability, the Lord’s words stand poised to judge all future transgressors.

The Lord then recalled the defining trait of Israel’s history. Only after it was too late, only after judgment had fallen, did the people turn and repent: “and they returned and said . . . according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.” Sadly, the nation had to experience judgment before she expressed repentance. The Lord reminded the post-exilic Jews of this trait, lest their recent inattention to Him (and the temple) be counted as rebellion.

Contemporary application. If professing Christians ignore their work for the Lord (in faithfully witnessing the Gospel), His unchanging Word will judge them (cf. Rev 2:1–3:22).

The book of Zechariah begins with a core truth: *repentance is the means by which we can escape God’s wrath.* This is a fitting start to the night visions, which contain many allusions to Jesus Christ, who is the author of our salvation. Without personal repentance of sin and belief in Jesus as our only escape from the penalty of sin, there can be no deliverance from eternal hell.

Eight Night Visions (1:7–6:8)

Zechariah's second revelatory message comprised eight visions. Evidently, he saw them all during the course of a single night. While the visions would have encouraged the Jews in their rebuilding efforts, they also served another purpose: to reveal truths about the coming Gospel era, in terms of both salvation and judgment.

1: The Horseman among the Myrtle Trees (1:7–17)

Zech 1:7–10. *Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom [ravine]; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.*

The night visions came in the second year of Darius, on the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is Feb 15, 519 BC. This date relates to preceding ones as follows:

- it was exactly five months after work on the temple had resumed (Hag 1:15)
- it was about three months after the Lord's first message to Zechariah (Zech 1:1)
- it was exactly two months after Haggai's final two messages (Hag 2:10–19, 20–23)

Haggai's final two messages contained an initial rebuke followed by encouragement regarding the rebuilding of the temple and future prosperity for the land. It is in this setting of renewal, coupled with the call to repentance in Zechariah's first message, that the night visions begin.

A man on a red horse. In this opening vision, Zechariah saw a man on a red horse standing among myrtle trees in a ravine. It is unclear whether he "stood" in the sense of mounted or dismounted. Behind him were groups of red, speckled (possibly sorrel), and white horses; their numbers are not revealed. These three "patrol" groups had just returned from walking back and forth through the earth. They were about to report their findings to the first horseman (so confirming that the red, speckled, and white horses also had riders).

As revealed in verse 11, the identity of the first (chief) horseman was the "angel of the Lord." Based on Zechariah 12:8 ("and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them"), we can conclude that this angel was an appearance of God. However, He is also called a "man," indicating that God had chosen to appear in preincarnate form as the second person of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. Tellingly, He rode a red (*adom*) horse. In the Bible, red underscores *sinfulness* and *blood sacrifice* (Num 19:2; Isa 1:18; 63:2), both of which anticipate Jesus' atonement.

The horseman stood in a “ravine,” which is the word *metsullah*. Used only here in the Hebrew text, *metsullah* denotes “be or grow dark,” as in a deep ravine or heavily shadowed place. Apart from the fact that such a spot would provide a natural hideout for a reconnaissance debriefing, the darkened location suggests at least two meanings. First, it reflects this *sin-darkened world* into which Jesus came to secure our salvation. Second, it suggests that the horseman was *intentionally obscured from sight*, confirming that God’s purposes through the Messiah were kept secret from the Old Testament world (cf. Rom 16:25–26).

The chief horseman “stood among the myrtle trees.” This phrase is mentioned three times (v. 8, 10, 11) signifying its importance. In Isaiah 55:13, the myrtle tree indicates *renewal*: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree.” The same meaning fits here, especially from a Gospel viewpoint. Coming to a deep ravine with myrtle trees signifies that Jesus will come to this sin-darkened world to effect spiritual renewal among His people.

Walk to and fro through the earth. Another angel was also on the scene. He was “the angel that talked with me,” hereafter called *the interpreting angel* (his identity is not revealed). Zechariah asked him about the three horse groups: “O my lord, what are these?” The interpreting angel said, “I will show thee what these be.” Evidently, he then escorted Zechariah to a closer position to the horses (so demonstrating the interactive nature of the visions). Now within talking range, the chief horseman himself answered Zechariah’s question: “These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.” What do these horse groups represent, and why did the Lord send them to patrol the earth?

In the concluding night vision, *The Four Chariots*, Zechariah again saw colored horse groups (in chariot squads). Explaining their meaning, the angel said, “These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.” (Zech 6:5). The horse groups therefore represent the activities of the Holy Spirit in the world, which are invisible to humanity. In the first vision, the activities center on the Holy Spirit’s assessment of the nations. (Rulers of ancient empires received intelligence from distant provinces through riders on fast horses. Similarly, the Lord received assessments about the nations through the horse groups now returned to Him.)

Zech 1:11–12. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

The finding of the three patrol groups was unanimous: “all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” The book of Isaiah prophesies that this would be the condition of the world (i.e., the Near Eastern world) after the Lord ended the fierce reign of the Babylon empire:

*And it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow . . . thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased . . . The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked . . . **The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet.** (Isa 14:3–7)*

The restoration of Jerusalem could not begin until a more accommodating empire—the Persians—began to rule (cf. Isa 44:28). With the comparative “rest” through the Persians now underway, the chief horseman asked: “O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” The question immediately arises: to which seventy-year period of indignation does this verse refer?

The main seventy-year period in Judah’s history was the servitude of Near Eastern nations to Babylon from 609 to 539 BC (cf. Jer 25:11; Dan 9:2). Now, in 519 BC, twenty years after that servitude had ended, the chief horseman mentions a period of seventy years as if 519 BC was the seventieth year.

Actually, when Zechariah saw the night visions on Feb 15, 519 BC, it was indeed the seventieth year if one counts *from the start of the siege of Jerusalem in Jan 15, 588 BC* (2 Kgs 25:1; Jer 52:4; Ezek 24:1). For the inhabitants of that city, the siege was the unmistakable start of the Lord’s indignation (cf. Ezek 4).

The chief horseman’s mention of seventy years was therefore an accurate count to the present vision (519 BC). However, the very mention of “seventy years”—irrespective of the context—would have recalled to the Jewish mind the Babylonian servitude (which ended in 539 BC). More to the point for the post-exilic community, it would have recalled the Lord’s promises to favor His people again after that servitude was over (Jer 29:10–14; Dan 9:1ff). Gauging by the disrepair of Jerusalem and the temple, *now in its seventieth year of neglect counting from the start of the siege*, those promises were incomplete. Hence, the horseman’s appeal, “how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem.”

The seventy years in Zechariah 7:5. The book of Zechariah records another instance of a seventy-year interval:

And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu . . . saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those [these] seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? (Zech 7:1, 4–5)

This passage mentions two fasts appointed by the Jews (and not the Lord) after the sack of Jerusalem. Every year afterward, they fasted and mourned on two anniversary months: the *fifth* to lament the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (2 Kgs 25:8–10), and the *seventh* to lament Gedaliah’s death (2 Kgs 25:25). The Lord’s message on this occasion came in the fourth year of Darius, in the fourth day of the ninth month, or Dec 7, 518 BC. Since Jerusalem was destroyed in August 587 BC, Zechariah received the message *in the seventieth year after the sack of Jerusalem*. The inclusion “these seventy years” is therefore an accurate count. Like the seventy years of Zechariah 1:12, it recalls (by calculated design) the servitude period.

Nations at rest. The patrol groups had reported that all “all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” This condition of well-being appears to be praiseworthy. However, as the Lord’s reply is about to reveal, it is a lamentable situation.

Zech 1:13–17. And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. The chief horseman had asked the Lord, “how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem.” Oddly, the Lord directed His reply not to the horseman but to Zechariah through the interpreting angel. This is probably because Zechariah was the intended recipient, having made the initial inquiry. The Lord spoke “good words” to the interpreting angel. God wants us to hear the good words that center on deliverance (cf. Jer 29:10). These words are spiritually comforting (cf. Isa 40:1–3).

So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. Zechariah was to declare the Lord’s jealousy for Jerusalem and Zion, confirming that mercy for the city was imminent. The Lord’s *jealously* refers to His strong desire to dwell among His people again, after their decades of bondage to the nations. It echoes the sentiment prophesied by Joel in 2:17–18:

Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Jerusalem: present and future. An important theme in the night visions is the welfare of Jerusalem. History confirms the restoration of the city and temple. However, a number of promises made concerning the city (in Zechariah and other prophetic books) fall short of reality. This is because Jerusalem can also refer, spiritually, to the city of believers. It is variously called *heavenly Jerusalem* (Heb 12:22), the *Jerusalem which is above* (Gal 4:26), and *new Jerusalem* (Rev 3:12; 21:2). Therefore, any Old Testament promises about Jerusalem that exceed the historical outcome are probably referring to heavenly Jerusalem. Physical and heavenly Jerusalem can also be intended *together* in prophecies because Jerusalem’s existence was a prerequisite for the coming Messiah. (The physical city gave way to the spiritual city.) The Lord’s jealousy for Jerusalem is thus multifaceted.

And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. This statement refers to God’s use of the nations as the instrument of His judgment against Judah. The Lord was a “little displeased” with the nations because He was angry at seeing them harm His people, even though it was a decreed punishment. (Hence, the later statement, “for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” – Zech 2:8.) That small measure of anger, though, turned to great anger when the nations overstepped the mark and oppressed the Jews more than was warranted.

Additionally, the nations were “at ease.” This correlates with the report by the horse groups that “all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest” (1:11). The tone of the statement suggests that this is a *negative assessment*. Two likely reasons are:

- The prophets had stated that the Lord would favor Jerusalem again after the captivity was over (e.g. Jer 29:10; 30:3–10; Isa 32:18). It was now 519 BC, some nineteen years after the captivity ended. One would have therefore expected Judah to be “at rest” by this time. However, opposite to expectation, the heathen peoples about her were at rest. Adding insult to injury, some of the heathen were still oppressing Judah (with respect to temple building). The Lord was displeased with this situation.
- The nations were “at ease” (*sha'anan*) in their sinful ways and self-sufficiency (cf. Ps 123:4; Isa 32:9; Amos 6:1). They were also “at rest” or in “idleness” (*shaqat*), which is a word that can be used judgmentally (e.g., Ezek 16:49). Applied here, the state of nations being “at rest” reflects the innate human desire for social stability, carnal ease, and material gain. This displeased the Lord because none of those conditions equates to *peace with Him*, which He desired for the Gentiles. Jesus would later enable this peace, which transcends that between nations. On this, Jesus said in John 14:27: “My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives I give to you” [LITV].

Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Despite the world’s condition, the Lord will favor Jerusalem again. The temple will be built and the city restored (cf. Isa 44:26–28). The Lord’s return contrasts with His departure from the city before its destruction (Ezek 10:18–19). Also evoking a contrast is the statement “a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.” The Lord’s measuring line had earlier been used for purposes of judgment (2 Kgs 21:13; Lam 2:8). Now, it would be used for restoration and renewal. The Lord’s return also anticipates Jerusalem’s spiritual success during the Messianic era. This is when the temple of true believers will be built (cf. Acts 15:16–17; Eph 2:19–22). Peace and prosperity will then be enjoyed in the city “whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10).

Cry out again, saying, So says Jehovah of Hosts: My cities shall again overflow with goodness, and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. [LITV] In closing, the Lord promised prosperity and comfort (as against desolation and sorrow – cf. Lam 1:1ff). Blessed with the Lord’s favor, Zion and Jerusalem—the dwelling place of believers—will flourish, as the prophets proclaimed:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it . . . for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (Isa 2:2–3)

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance. (Joel 2:28, 32)

2: Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18–21)

In the first night vision, *The Horseman among the Myrtle Trees*, the Lord promised restoration for Jerusalem. Although this was a comforting message for the post-exilic community, the recent opposition to temple rebuilding remained a cause for concern. The Lord addressed that concern in the second night vision.

The vision divides into two parts, with each part having the same three elements: (1) what Zechariah saw, (2) his question to the interpreting angel, and (3) the angel's explanation. As in the first vision, the number four is featured, so too the heathen nations. This linkage is appropriate given that the second vision begins the prophetic odyssey about to unfold—in visions two to seven—because of the Lord's jealousy for Jerusalem.

Zech 1:18–21. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the LORD showed me four carpenters [craftsmen]. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray [terrify] them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Zechariah looked up and saw “four horns.” Upon asking what they were, the interpreting angel explained that they were the horns that had scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. In other words, they represented the powers of the Gentiles, especially Assyria then Babylon, that had oppressed and exiled God's people over the last two centuries. They had been exiled from south to north (Judah and Israel = *all* the tribes) and even from God's chosen city, Jerusalem. There being *four* horns signifies that the nations had tyrannized the Jews *from every direction* (cf. Jer 49:36).

In this vision, the Lord promised deliverance from the four horns. The horns are not just past empires, then. They represent worldly powers in general, whether empires, regional states, or neighbouring peoples. Relative to Zechariah's day, the horns represent all the heathen forces opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple. Relative to the Messianic era, they represent all the worldly forces (impelled by Satan) that will oppose the building of the spiritual city and temple.

The Lord then showed Zechariah four “craftsmen,” or *artisans*, being people who work with wood, metal, stone, etc. Observe that Zechariah did not ask, “What be these?” as he did for the four horns. Apparently, he recognized the artisans without difficulty. What probably perplexed him, though, was the connection between a defenceless, non-military group (the four artisans) and a powerful dominating force (the four horns). Hence, his pointed question about the artisans, “What come these to do?”

The interpreting angel began by recalling the impact of the four horns on Judah, the present focus of attention. He said, “no man did lift up his head,” to remind the Jews of how utterly

their overlords had subdued them (cf. Judg 8:28). Having reemphasized the power of the four horns, the angel promised deliverance through four craftsmen. They would cast out the horns of the Gentiles.

Historical meaning. The artisans represent all the Jews involved in Jerusalem's restoration. As the vision prophesies, they will successfully repel Gentile attempts to stop their work. Witness the equal number of horns and craftsmen (four vs. four). This shows that God will provide deliverance to match every kind of threat, no matter how overpowering it may seem at first, and no matter from which direction it comes.

New Testament meaning. The scattered Jews represent the lost sheep of God's flock. They were scattered by the four horns, meaning that they are under worldly dominion. However, four craftsmen will be sent to remedy the problem. The craftsmen are God's "artisans," or believers. Their witness of Jesus will enable the captives to be freed from worldly bondage, thereby building the spiritual city and temple. The work will succeed because the artisans will *strike fear* into the horns (cf. Ezek 30:9), confirming their *superiority* in spiritual warfare. Consequently, the horns of the Gentiles will be "cast out," meaning that their power will count for nothing. On the superiority of believers, Jesus proclaimed to His disciples:

I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:18–19; cf. 1 John 5:4–5; Luke 11:21–23)

God's wisdom versus the world's. The choice of a non-military group in this vision to triumph over the Gentiles conveys other truths. An obvious one is that God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty (1 Cor 1:27; cf. Matt 5:5) thereby making foolish the world's wisdom (1 Cor 1:20). This truth features throughout the Bible. A good example is the Messianic parable of Ecclesiastes 9:14–16:

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.

Solomon spoke about a little city containing few men (being the city of those predestined for salvation, who are a minority in the world). A great king (Satan) besieged the city, and built ramps against it (showing that Satan will muster all the spiritual forces at his disposal to keep people unsaved). Found in that city was a poor wise man (Jesus, who became lowly and poor for us). Rather than trying to save the city by matching strength for strength—the expected response—the poor man delivered it through an act of his own wisdom (a reference to the cross). Sadly, he was not remembered, his wisdom was despised, and his words were not heard (the work of Jesus' atonement is ignored by the world). Nevertheless, Solomon recorded the outcome of the confrontation, so etching it in history: *the poor man's wisdom prevailed over strength, allowing him to deliver the city*. Similarly, the "lowly" artisans of Zechariah's vision will prevail over the spiritual forces arrayed against them.

3: A Man with a Measuring Line (Ch. 2)

In this third vision, the Lord reveals more details about the rebuilding effort discussed in the first two visions. It concludes with an oracle that reflects on the prophetic journey so far.

Zech 2:1–5. *I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.*

Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line, who appeared to be fulfilling the promise of the first night vision (“a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem” – Zech 1:16). Understanding now the interactive nature of the visions, Zechariah himself asked the man where he was going. He replied, “to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.” The man intended to measure Jerusalem much as a surveyor would. Presumably, this was in preparation for the rebuilding of its walls, to keep the enemy out (a logical step before work on other city assets could continue).

The surveyor’s reply prompted the interpreting angel to go forth and meet another angel, who was the Lord. The Lord told the interpreting angel to “run,” or to prophesy with zeal and haste (cf. Jer 23:21). The angel was to run and tell the “young man” (i.e., the surveyor) that “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about.” Clearly, the Lord wanted the young man to understand that He was not thinking about a *physical* wall. Rather, He Himself would be the wall. (It is ironic that the young man, standing in the rubble of the old walls, was taking measurements for new walls, which could fall again.) The Lord’s disavowal of the man’s actions must have puzzled Zechariah.

Gospel meaning. Telling the man not to measure Jerusalem by physical means shows that the restoration of God’s people (the Holy City) is beyond human capability. It would require God Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, to effect its renewal. Therefore, the young surveyor was not to labor over measurements because no one can work to achieve his or her salvation. Rather, God Himself would be “unto her a wall of fire round about.” The “wall of fire” symbolizes the fires of hell that Jesus would experience for His people; it is a metaphor for the protection afforded by salvation (cf. Isa 26:1–2). As a result, Jerusalem will be inhabited as “towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein.” Such will be the coming growth of believers and their multiplied blessings—as represented by cattle—that physical walls could not hold their expanding number.

The man’s identity. Given the man’s misguided response with respect to measuring Jerusalem, it is likely that he represents the post-exilic Jews. Not knowing the mind of God, their attention was on the city’s material well-being. Such thinking was characteristic of the Jews

(cf. John 2:19–21.) Perhaps this is why the man was depicted as being *young*, suggesting a lack of wisdom in his mistaken idea of appeasing the Lord through works. Sadly, many congregations today think the same way.

First Oracle, Part One – A Call to Escape (Zech 2:6–9)

Concluding this message is an oracle that summarizes and augments the visionary sequence so far. (This is the first of three oracles in the night vision series.) The oracle divides into two parts. The first part has three sections:

CALL FOR ZION TO DELIVER HERSELF (2:6–7)

Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

ZION IS THE APPLE OF THE LORD’S EYE (2:8)

For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.

A REVERSAL OF FORTUNE FOR THE NATIONS (2:9)

For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

Historically, this passage applied to the Jews still in exile (many had not yet returned). They had been exiled not only to Babylon (the *land of the north*, the chief country of exile – cf. Jer 16:14–15) but also to Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Egypt (Jer 40:11–12; 43:7). Thus, they had been spread abroad “as the four winds of the heaven” (cf. Zech 1:18–21). Having just given a promise of protection for Jerusalem, it was appropriate now for the Lord to call for the remaining Jews to return home. Hence, the command, “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon” (Babylon here represents the universal Diaspora).

Note that the Jews, by their own devices, could not redeem themselves from captivity. It would require God’s hand to achieve (cf. Isa 48:20; Isa 52:10–11). In the Gospel context, Babylon is figurative for captivity to this world. Calling for Zion to flee from Babylon is equivalent to the command, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found . . . Let the wicked forsake his way . . . and let him return unto the LORD” (Isa 55:6–7).

Elaborating on His liberty call to Zion, the Lord explained, “After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you.” The “glory” is what God desires to receive for freeing His people, whether it be the post-exilic Jews or New Testament believers. Regarding believers, God will send Himself in the person of Jesus (cf. Isa 48:16; 59:16) to deliver the scattered “Jews” (those in the world who are destined for salvation), thereby receiving glory (cf. Isa 44:22–23; 61:1–3; John 13:31–32; 17:4). The Lord will do this because He views His people as *precious*. Hence, the statement: “for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple [or pupil] of his eye” (cf. Deut 32:9–10; Ps 17:8). The eye and its pupil are precious and to

be protected. God's elected ones are like His own eye, so He is sensitive to any harm that might come their way, and He will protect them accordingly.

God will protect His people by subduing their enemies: "For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them." While the Lord did "shake His hand" to protect the post-exilic Jews, it is Jesus who is ultimately the Lord's hand (specifically, His *right hand* – cf. Ps 118:15–16). Through Jesus, the Lord will thwart any plans against His agenda (cf. Ps 138:7). Jesus demonstrated this when He said to Peter, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). As a result, Judah's enemies "shall be a spoil to their servants," meaning that the house of Jacob will acquire the possessions of their former captors (cf. Hab 2:7–8). This reversal shows that those who were formerly in captivity to the world (Satan's kingdom) will render the world's booty (human souls) to the Lord (cf. Isa 45:14; 49:21–23; 60:5–6).

At that time when the enemy is defeated and plundered by their former slaves, "ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me" (cf. Zech 2:11; 4:9). The antecedent of "me" is the same person sent by the Lord in verse 8, who is the Messiah. Because He and the Father are one (John 10:30), He is both the Sent and the Sender. This statement looks forward to the New Testament era, when God's people will know that the Lord's salvation program is underway and succeeding through the promised One sent by the Father.

First Oracle, Part Two – A Call to Rejoice (Zech 2:10–13)

The first part of the oracle centered on *liberation*. In this second part, God addresses the returned exiles to expand on His restoration agenda. The theme therefore changes from *escape* to *rejoice*, which is the expected response from a liberated nation. This part of the oracle divides into five sections, structured chiasmically. The analysis below focuses on the Gospel meaning:

A] *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD*

B] *And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people*

C] *and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee*

B¹] *And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again*

A¹] *Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation*

Attention turns from the "daughter of Babylon" (2:7) to the "daughter of Zion," who represents the elect of God, who are saved from captivity to the world. She is to "sing and rejoice." In the prophecy of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Zechariah 9:9 exults: "Rejoice

greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (cf. Matt 21:5). We are to rejoice because God will send Jesus to pay for our sins.

The Lord will also send the Holy Spirit to dwell with us (cf. Matt 18:20; Rom 8:9–11). This promise of reconciliation in A (“I will dwell in the midst of thee”) is so important that it is restated in the central section C. Also restated in C is the crucial truth from Zechariah 2:9 that the Lord is both the Sent One (Jesus) and the Sender (the Father): “and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.”

The B–B¹ comparison is as follows:

B *And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day
and shall be my people*

B¹ *And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land
and shall choose Jerusalem again*

The joining of *many nations* to the Lord equates to His inheriting the *single tribal land of Judah* (cf. Isa 65:9). The *people* delivered from the nations equates to *Jerusalem*, which is the bride of Christ (cf. Rev 20:2). Both statements anticipate the inclusion of Gentiles as spiritual Jews, to be a unified people. This is in agreement with Paul’s teaching:

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed . . . There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Gal 3:7–8, 28–29)

The A–A¹ comparison is as follows:

A *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion
for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD*

A¹ *Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD
for he is raised up out of his holy habitation*

The daughter of Zion—believers—were told to “sing and rejoice” because the Lord would come to dwell with them (implying reconciliation). By contrast, all flesh—the unsaved—were told to “be silent” because the Lord is raised out of His holy habitation (implying redress). The call to silence shows that the nations should be filled with awe and astonishment at the works of God (cf. Hab 2:20). In addition, it shows that no one can argue against God, nor prevent Him, when He rises from His holy habitation to perform His will (as prompted by His anger over the nations being “at ease” – Zech 1:15–16). In this case, God wills to be the glory in the midst of Jerusalem (2:5, 8) by dwelling with His people (2:10–11; 8:3, 8; cf. 2 Cor 6:16).

4: Clean Garments for Joshua (Ch. 3)

The first three night visions dealt with national matters such as Jerusalem's restoration and future prosperity. Now, in the fourth vision, the focus turns to an individual, as the interpreting angel shows Zechariah a vision of Joshua the high priest.

Joshua's lineage. Israel's first high priest was Aaron, a descendant of Levi and brother to Moses. Subsequent priests were descendants of either *Eleazar* or *Ithamar*, who were Aaron's third and fourth sons, respectively. (Aaron's first two sons, Nadab and Abihu, died because of sacrilege: Lev 10:1–2; Num 26:60–61.) The Joshua of this vision was the son of Jehozadak (or Josedech), who was descended from *Eleazar*. In the telescoped reckoning of 1 Chronicles 6:4–14, he would be the twenty-fourth priestly descendant (counting Aaron as the first).

Joshua was a Zadokite. A key high priest of the Eleazarite lineage was Zadok, who held the office along with Abiathar in king David's day. (Abiathar was a descendant of Eli, of the lineage of *Ithamar*.) However, after David's death, his son Solomon removed Abiathar from office after he sided with Adonijah (Solomon's older brother) in a plot to gain the throne (1 Kgs 2:26–27; 2:35). Given this history, it is not surprising that the Zadokite lineage features in Ezekiel for its faithfulness (Ezek 44:15; 48:11). Moreover, it is God's preferred line for future temple service (Ezek 40:46; 43:19). In the Zadokite priest Joshua, we therefore see a Levite whose lineage faithfully served both David and the Lord.

Structure of the vision. As discussed in the introduction to this study ("Zechariah's Background"), the fourth and fifth visions comprise the central section of the visionary sequence. They elaborate, symbolically, on the core theme of Zechariah's night visions: the coming Messianic era. Both visions, especially the fourth, stand apart from the others in terms of presentation and subject matter. Regarding the fourth vision, it demonstrates a theological progression that divides into four parts:

1. Joshua stands accused by "the Adversary" (3:1–2)
2. Joshua's sins are acquitted (3:3–5)
3. Call to obedience and subsequent rewards (3:6–7)
4. An Oracle – The Messiah's Mysterious Work (3:8–10)

Part 1: Joshua Stands Accused by "the Adversary"

Zech 3:1–2. *And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan THE ADVERSARY standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto THE ADVERSARY, The LORD rebuke thee, O ADVERSARY; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?*

The context suggests that the vision is set in a type of heavenly courtroom. Joshua stood before the "angel of the Lord," who is a preincarnate appearance of Jesus, our advocate before the judgment throne of God. Standing at Joshua's right hand was *the Adversary*, to

resist him (the Hebrew includes the definite article). “Adversary” and “resist” are forms of the same word, *satan*. In other words, *the satan* was standing at Joshua’s right hand to *satan* him. The word *satan* basically means enemy or adversary but with the added nuance of verbal accusation (cf. Ps 109:20). The word play here emphasizes that the Devil himself, Satan, is standing beside Joshua. He is the accuser of those chosen for salvation, to deny them eternal life (Rev 12:10). He therefore resisted Joshua by accusing him of his innate sinfulness (cf. Job 1:6–12), which was actually a valid accusation (cf. Ps 14:2–3).

The Adversary stood at Joshua’s *right hand*, which suggests the following:

- that Joshua, typifying a sinner, is presently doing the will of Satan (hand = will)
- that Joshua is a condemned man, as was Judas Iscariot: “Let Satan stand at his right hand. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned” (Ps 109:6–7; cf. Acts 1:20)

Although the Angel of the Lord did not deny Satan’s accusations, He nevertheless asked that God Himself, “even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem,” rebuke him for his resistance (cf. Jude 9). The rebuke was called for *twice*, to emphasize the reprimand. Plans were in store for Joshua that no adversary could oppose. (The word for rebuke is *ga’ar*. Applied to the Lord, *ga’ar* conveys the idea of stopping an otherwise unstoppable force – cf. Ps 9:5; Isa 17:13; Nah 1:4.) Satan stood rebuked because the Lord who had chosen Jerusalem (the city of believers) was going to forgive and acquit Joshua, thereby freeing him from Satan’s clutch. Hence, the reply, “is not this a brand [or piece of charred wood] plucked out of the fire?” Historically, this refers to Joshua’s rescue from the fire of Babylonian captivity (cf. Amos 4:11). Spiritually, it shows that the Lord had pre-elected Joshua for removal from the fires of hell.

The remainder of the vision elaborates, symbolically, on the salvific workings of being “plucked out of the fire.”

Part 2: Joshua’s Sins are Acquitted

Zech 3:3–5. *Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment [lit. costly apparel]. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.*

Clothed with filthy garments, Joshua stood before the Angel of the Lord, probably in humiliation (the word “filthy,” *tsow’*, implies excrement-laden). Also present were “those that stood before him.” While their identity is not disclosed, a reasonable conclusion is that they collectively represent the Holy Spirit (see 3:7 below). We know from the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is a vital sanctifying force (cf. 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2).

Joshua’s filthy attire depicts the stain of the recent Babylonian captivity, brought about by the sinfulness of the southern kingdom of Judah. The cleansing to follow shows that God

will restore the priesthood to its former sanctified state, allowing the Jews a new start, in a new temple. From the spiritual viewpoint, Joshua's odious clothing reflects how God sees us. We are all sinners, dressed in unrighteousness, unable to serve and worship Him. Of this unclean condition, which is our natural state, Isaiah 64:6 declares:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

People are incapable of freeing themselves from this hopeless condition. Only Jesus can rescue us. By suffering the fires of hell for our sins, He removed all legal redress by Satan to accuse Joshua or any other believer before God (cf. 1 John 2:1–2). To illustrate this, the angel commanded those that stood before him (the Holy Spirit) to remove Joshua's filthy garments, to make way for new clothing. The change of clothing signifies that Jesus replaces our sinfulness with the precious garments of salvation (cf. Isa 61:10). Hence, the statement, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with costly apparel." (During Joshua's clothing change, it is likely that he stood *naked* before the Lord. This shows that we cannot hide our sins from the One to whom we must give account – Heb 4:13.)

It should be noted that while the cross was not yet a reality, the acquittal of Joshua's iniquity could be granted right there and then because Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8).

The analogy concerning Joshua (of standing condemned then being acquitted) finds a parallel in Isaiah:

*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up . . . Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: **And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.** (Isa 6:1, 5–7)*

A fair mitre. The Angel of the Lord had just pardoned Joshua's iniquity and allowed him to receive new garments. Inspired by that outcome, Zechariah interacted with the vision by making the following request: "And I said, Let them set a fair [clean] mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments."

Zechariah asked "them" (the Holy Spirit) to place a clean mitre, or ornamental turban, on Joshua's head. High priests wore a linen mitre during their ordination and on the Day of Atonement (Exod 28 & 39; Lev 16:4). By his request, Zechariah was seeking ritual confirmation that the office of high priest had been "re-ordained" after the tarnish of the exile.

But Joshua's mitre was special. Unlike the mitre worn by high priests on their ordination—being the *mitsnepheth*—the mitre of this vision was a *tsaniyph*, which is better translated "diadem." This was a cloth turban made of silk, linen, or wool, usually white, and often embroidered with precious metals or stones. Kings wore it as a badge of royalty. *Tsaniyph* appears in passages such as Isaiah 62, which predicts God's coming salvation for Zion (the city of true believers – cf. Zech 3:9–10):

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness . . . Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem [tsaniyph] in the hand of thy God. (Isa 62:1–3)

When God's salvation comes forth, Zion—synonymous with Jerusalem—will be a thing of great beauty. She will be as a “crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a *royal diadem* in the hand of thy God,” reflecting her regal status in heaven. Joshua receiving a diadem shows that believers receive the rank of kings and priests in God's heavenly economy (cf. Rev 1:6; 5:10).

The Angel of the LORD “stood by” while the diadem was being placed on Joshua's head. The context suggests that He stood by *having agreed to Zechariah's request*. This reflects a Gospel truth. Just as Zechariah made requests on behalf of Joshua subject to the Lord's approval, so believers pray for the salvation of others, knowing that it can only occur through the good pleasure of His will (Eph 1:5).

Part 3: Call to Obedience and Subsequent Rewards

Zech 3:6–7. *And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua [or charged or admonished him], saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.*

After the optimistic change-of-raiment scene, words of duty and responsibility followed. Through His Angel (the preincarnate Jesus), the Lord of Hosts (God Himself) charged Joshua to “walk in my ways” and to “keep my charge.”

“Walk in my ways” refers to covenantal obedience (Deut 8:6), which was the responsibility of every Hebrew. “Keep my charge” was a corporate directive. It applied to the nation's leaders (kings and priests), who were to observe the Lord's requirements for their respective offices, to the benefit of all (1 Kgs 2:3; Ezek 48:11). Both commands are relevant to New Testament believers, who are kings and priests (Rev 1:6). Believers should strive to obey God's will (“walk in my ways”). Additionally, they should be mindful of the Lord's mandate (or “charge”) for churches to witness the Gospel (cf. Mark 16:15).

Walking in the Lord's ways and keeping His charge would yield three positive outcomes for Joshua. The first two relate to priestly duties: “thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts.” Priests exercised a judicial function, thereby judging in the Lord's house (Deut 17:8–13; Ezek 44:24). They also ministered in the temple courtyard, so keeping the Lord's courts (cf. Ezek 44:17). Assignment of these two responsibilities confirmed, as did the mitre on Joshua's head, the re-investiture of the priesthood for the post-exilic community. These responsibilities also apply to pastors and elders in the New Testament church. They are to “judge my house” and “keep my courts” by ensuring proper oversight of the flock

and the keeping of good order in the assembly. This charge is reflected in several New Testament passages (e.g., 1 Tim 3:2–5; 1 Pet 5:1–3; Acts 20:28).

Thirdly, the Lord will give Joshua “places to walk among these that stand by.” Those standing by Joshua represent, collectively, the Holy Spirit. (Similarly, the separate horse groups of the first and eighth visions collectively represent the Holy Spirit.) Earlier, they had removed Joshua’s filthy garments, enabling him to receive a royal headdress and change of raiment. Therefore, to give “places to walk among these that stand by” is to give *places to walk with the Holy Spirit*. This statement looks forward to the Christian era when believers will be led by the Spirit to walk righteously, no longer being condemned by the Law (cf. Gal 5:16–18).

Part 4: Second Oracle – The Messiah’s Mysterious Work

The vision concludes with an oracle about the Messiah (the Branch). It explains His work through strange symbols (the stone and its seven eyes). Intentionally enigmatic, these symbols call attention to the mystery of the Messiah’s work, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom 16:25). Thankfully, our New Testament vantage point facilitates interpretation of this oracle. (This is the second of three oracles in the night vision sequence.)

Zech 3:8–10. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at [lit., men of symbol]: The command to “Hear now” is a call to understand the oracle, much like deciphering a parable (cf. Matt 13:13, 16). It was addressed to Joshua “and thy fellows that sit before thee.” Presumably, these were fellow priests under his jurisdiction. They are called “men of symbol.” In this context, “symbol” (*mowpheth*) means “sign,” as in a symbol or token (cf. Isa 8:18). The priests are therefore *symbolic of things to come during the Messianic age*. This agrees with Paul’s statement in Hebrews 8:4–5: “seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.”

for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. The Lord then revealed the person around whom the activities of the priests centered: “behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.” The Lord’s servant is Jesus the Messiah (Matt 12:18; cf. Isa 42:1; 52:13). He is the *righteous branch* (Jer 23:5; 33:15) from the *stem [or bloodline] of Jesse* (Isa 11:1). In effect, God was saying, “Listen, Joshua and fellow priests, all the functions that you perform in the temple point to the coming Messiah, who will be the architect of a more perfect, spiritual temple.” On this point, Zechariah 6:12 adds:

Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.

Observe that the BRANCH “shall grow up out of his place.” The word branch in this verse, *tsemach*, implies a budding “shoot” emerging from the soil. It reflects the humble circumstances of Jesus’ birth, upbringing, and ministry, in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:

For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed . . . He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter . . . by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:2–11).

As noted above, the *stem of Jesse* points to Jesus’ human origin through the Davidic bloodline (i.e., He is the Son of man). However, Isaiah 4:2 also reveals that He is “the branch [*tsemach*] of the LORD,” signifying His divine origin (i.e., He is also the Son of God). He is therefore both David’s Lord and David’s son (cf. Matt 22:41–46). This is why Jesus said that He was both “the root and the offspring of David” (Rev 22:16). Interestingly, Isaiah 4 relates to Joshua’s circumstance inasmuch as filth is removed by a cleansing associated with the Branch:

*In that day shall the **branch of the LORD** be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord **shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion**, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. (Isa 4:2–4)*

For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes. Having introduced the BRANCH (with the exclamatory “behold”), the Lord now draws Joshua’s attention (with another “behold”) to a single stone placed before him, either just then or earlier. Mention of the stone is sudden, and there is no explanation of its meaning. The interpretation, though, seems clear. Observe that the stone will have “seven eyes.” Since the New Testament portrays Jesus as having seven eyes (Rev 5:6), the stone must refer to Him. He is the stone that the builders refused, who became the head stone of the corner (Ps 118:22; Matt 21:42; cf. Isa 28:16).

Regarding the two “behold” statements so far, Jesus and His atoning work is described in four symbolic ways, each different, but with a logical progression:

1. behold . . . my SERVANT
2. the Branch (or SHOOT)
3. behold the STONE that I have laid before Joshua
4. upon one stone shall be SEVEN EYES

The progression of SERVANT, SHOOT, STONE, and SEVEN EYES is as follows:

1. Jesus came to do the will of the Father (Luke 22:42; Gal 1:4). Since He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev 13:8), his position as **SERVANT** was established in eternity past.
2. At the preordained time in history, God implanted Jesus in the world to emerge as a humble **SHOOT**, though of royal origin.
3. The defining work of His ministry was His crucifixion, through which Jesus became the **STONE**, or chief cornerstone of the temple (Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:4–8). The stone was “laid before,” or gifted, to Joshua, indicating that eternity in heaven with Jesus is a gift to humanity from God Himself, freely given (cf. Rom 6:23).
4. The stone would have **SEVEN EYES**, which looks forward to the ministry of the Holy Spirit for the elect subsequent to the cross (see below).

Upon one stone. The seven eyes are on “one” stone, which calls attention to Jesus’ unique work. The following passages illustrate Jesus’ pre-eminence and exceptionality:

This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:11–12)

Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Jesus] the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Rom 5:18)

behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts. The Lord’s engraving of something in stone alludes to the Law, which condemns us. It is “the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” by the finger of God (2 Cor 3:7; cf. Exod 31:18). On the other hand, the engraving of *seven eyes* in stone by the Lord—where the seven eyes represent the Holy Spirit (Rev 5:6)—points to a better way, to a new covenant. Regarding this, Paul said:

*but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: **for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.** (2 Cor 3:5–6).*

Therefore, the engraving of seven eyes in the stone laid before Joshua foreshadows a change of covenant from Law-based to Spirit-based, in accordance with Hebrews 10:16–17:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. (cf. 2 Cor 3:3)

Additionally, as with the Tablets of the Law, engraving in stone signifies *permanence*. The Holy Spirit will enable sinners to be born again (John 3:3–8), thereby leading to the permanence of eternal life (Gal 6:8).

and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. This marvellous statement is the spiritual wellspring from which all the night visions draw. The “one day” recalls the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:21–30; 23:28), which was an annual reminder of sin (Heb 9:7–8). On that day, the high priest made atonement for himself, for other priests, and for the entire nation through animal sacrifice. Observance of this day did not save anyone, but it foreshadowed Jesus. On a single day (at the cross), Jesus made atonement for sin permanently for all the land (the entire world). In this way, God effected redemption through *one* man, on *one* day, forever. (Using a high priest as the human participant in this vision underscores the difference between the Old and New Testament covenants. Whereas Joshua needed salvation himself and could only make atonement for his people in a representative way, Jesus our High Priest made enduring atonement – cf. Heb 9:8–12. Significantly, the name Joshua in Hebrew, *Yehowshuwa*, corresponds to Jesus in Greek, *Iesous*.)

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree. In those days, each man—as represented by Joshua and the fellows before him—will call to his neighbour “to sit under the vine and under the fig tree.” This is a metaphor for prosperity and safety under a faithful king (1 Kgs 4:25). It applies to the nations in the New Testament era, as Micah 4:1–4 predicts:

*But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it . . . nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. **But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.***

To call one’s neighbour to sit under the vine and fig tree portrays the sending forth of the Gospel, as people from all nations are invited to partake of spiritual prosperity and safety.

On first reading, this oracle seems somewhat disjointed (e.g., the abrupt change of metaphor from branch to stone). However, when arranged in chiasmic fashion, and interpreted Christologically, the passage shows complexity and synthesis. It can be summarized thus:

- A – HEAR: Joshua and his fellows listen to how salvation will be achieved
- B – behold, my servant (Jesus will come to do the Father’s will)
- C – the BRANCH (Jesus, born of the Davidic root as the Son of God and man)
- D – behold the stone (Jesus to become the cornerstone of the temple)
- D¹ – upon it seven eyes (the Holy Spirit will facilitate the temple’s completion)
- C¹ – behold, I will engrave (promise of being born of the Spirit, to be an heir of God)
- B¹ – and remove the iniquity of that land (the pinnacle of the Father’s will achieved)
- A¹ – SPEAK: Joshua and his associates (believers) are to proclaim God’s salvation agenda

Observe in this chiasmus the structuring of the three exclamations of “behold” (underlined). Each “behold” introduces a key teaching about the Lord’s salvific mission, with two aspects described for each teaching: [B–C], [D–D¹], and [C¹–B¹].

5: A Lampstand with Two Olive Trees (Ch. 4)

In this fifth vision, Zechariah sees a lampstand whose oil comes unaided from two olive trees. The vision anticipates the building of God's New Testament temple.

Zech 4:1–3. *And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.*

Having witnessed four visions without pause, Zechariah fell “asleep.” Apparently, the angel then left him for a time but “came again” to awaken him. Zechariah awoke “as a man that is wakened out of his sleep.” The conjunction “as” implies arousal from a *sleep-like state*. Perhaps it was a state of exhaustion induced by the visionary journey thus far (this is the halfway point). Significantly, being *wakened from sleep* is a metaphor for salvation (cf. John 11:11), which is a key theme of this vision.

The interpreting angel then asked “What seest thou?” This question would have prompted Zechariah to focus more intently on the scene before him, which was a golden lampstand whose lamps received oil from two olive trees.

The Hebrew description of the lampstand is ambiguous, and scholars debate its meaning. Literally, the text reads:

A lampstand of gold, all of it, and a bowl on its top, and its seven lamps [are] on it, seven and seven channels to the lamps which [are] on its top.

The lampstand that Zechariah saw was unlike any other in the Old Testament. This study offers the following reconstruction, which is based partly on archaeological evidence. (For archaeological aspects, see Robert North, “Zechariah’s Seven-Spout Lampstand,” *Biblica* 51 [1970]:183–206.)

PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION OF ZECHARIAH’S LAMPSTAND

The lampstand comprised a flared circular base, thick stem, and flared upper section with a wide, circular, flat top. Spaced evenly along the circumference of that top, and sitting in recesses, were seven bowl-shaped lamps. Their upper halves sat proud of the top. Each of the seven lamps had seven channels (pinched spouts) on their rims, all with wicks. The wicks submerged into their lamp bowls to draw oil from them. In total, then, there were forty-nine sources of light.

At the center of the flat top stood a bowl, which was the oil reservoir. Its top was the highest part of the lampstand. Like the lamps, the bowl was partly embedded in a recess. A marvel of this lampstand was the hidden oil flow-path from bowl to lamp. Oil from the bowl flowed radially from its recessed base to the recesses of the seven

lamps through seven channels, or conduits, crafted into the flat top. Strips of gold, flush with the top, covered the conduits (the strips shielded and hid the oil).

Given this arrangement, the peculiar statement “seven and seven channels to the lamps” makes sense because it defines *the two stages of the oil flow-path*: (1) from the reservoir’s base to the lamp recesses through seven covered channels, then (2) to the seven channels (or spouts) on each lamp rim from which the wicks protruded.

Two olive trees stood by the lampstand. Their branches provided a constant supply of oil to the reservoir bowl through two golden pipes, one per tree (4:12). This means that no human effort was required to keep all forty-nine wicks burning.

Objects of impractical dimensions appear in the night visions, e.g., the *Flying Scroll*. This is likely the case here. The olive trees, undoubtedly mature, would have been around fifteen to twenty feet tall (their nearside branches projected over the lampstand). If the lampstand was proportional in size to the trees, it was abnormally large. Zechariah would have therefore seen a dazzling spectacle of light, illuminating a wide area.

The New Testament temple. No clear explanation of the lampstand is given in this vision. Instead, the interpreting angel proclaims an oracle addressed to Zerubbabel. Its subject is the construction of the temple. Before examining this oracle, it will be helpful to review the relationship between Zechariah’s lampstand and the New Testament temple.

Revelation 1:20 shows that golden lampstands represent churches: “and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” In the Old Testament, the church was a single congregation comprising the children of Israel. This corresponds to the single lampstand of the vision. However, the lampstand also supported seven lamps, each with seven wicks. This multiplicity of lights (7 x 7) predicts the many congregations of the New Testament church that will grow from the Jewish root (cf. Rom 11:18). From their faithful witness, the temple of believers founded in Christ (= Zerubbabel) will be built.

Olive trees stood on either side of the lampstand to supply oil to its reservoir. Oil is a widely accepted symbol for the Holy Spirit (e.g., 1 Sam 16:13). Just as the lampstand seen by Zechariah used oil for fuel, so the congregations of the elect (believers) are indwelt by the Spirit to anoint and empower them for service. Zechariah saw *two* olive trees. Based on Paul’s discussion in Romans 11, the two trees most likely represent Jewish and Gentile believers. The chapter begins with Paul’s assertion that God will not totally abandon the Jews during the New Testament age:

*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. **God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.** Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? **I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.** (Rom 11:1–5)*

A Jewish remnant existed in Elijah’s day. Similarly, there will always be a Jewish remnant saved by grace throughout the New Testament era. To reinforce his point, Paul then spoke about the salvation of Jews and Gentiles in terms of *two olive trees*. The saved Jews were

like the good branches of an olive tree whose bad branches had been broken off. The saved Gentiles were like the branches of a wild olive tree engrafted in place of the bad:

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office . . . if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. (Rom 11:13, 17–21)

Paul used two olive trees in his analogy: (1) the cultivated tree for national Israel (whose broken branches represent God’s rejection of Israel at the cross), and (2) the wild tree for the Gentiles. Applying this to Zechariah 4, the two olive trees represent the two New Testament sources of Gospel witness: Jew and Gentile. However, whereas in Romans 11 the first tree had some broken branches and the second tree had some good branches, in Zechariah 4 both olive trees are good. This suggests that God is focussing purely on believers in each group. From their combined number, the Gospel will be proclaimed to all nations.

Zech 4:4–5. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Not understanding the meaning of the lampstand and its olive trees, Zechariah asked, “What are these, my lord?” The angel replied, “Knowest thou not what these be?” Zechariah’s lack of knowledge was not due to willful ignorance. Rather, it confirmed that the workings of the Gospel through Jesus Christ were still a mystery in those days (cf. Rom 16:25; Col 1:26–27). The angel then explained the vision in a way that Zechariah probably did not expect: through an *oracle addressed to Zerubbabel*, the person overseeing the temple’s construction. (This is the third and final oracle in the night vision sequence.)

Third Oracle – Message to Zerubbabel

Zech 4:6–7. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.

In what appears to be an abrupt change of context, the interpreting angel relayed a divine oracle concerning Zerubbabel and the temple. The statement “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit” confirms that the temple’s completion can only come about through God’s enablement. Human effort, no matter how zealous, will not suffice. The oracle adds, “Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” Here, God was

promising that any obstacles in the way will be removed. Consequently, Zerubbabel “shall bring forth the headstone thereof,” or set in place the temple’s final stone. When that last stone is laid, the bystanders will be full of praise and thanksgiving (cf. Ezra 3:11). They will shout “Grace, grace unto it,” to acclaim the headstone, the beauty of the temple, and the Lord’s mercy in overseeing the temple’s completion.

The link between the lampstand vision and temple construction becomes evident when examined in light of the Gospel:

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit. We noted earlier that golden lampstands represent the congregations of the New Testament church (Rev 1:20). Through their witness of Christ, the temple of believers will be built (Eph 2:19–22). The statement “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit” shows that God will build this temple not by human strength but by the invigoration, or oil, of the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 15:19). Recall that oil from the two olive trees fed the multiplicity of lamps seen by Zechariah. Similarly, the Holy Spirit will work through Jewish and Gentile believers in congregations everywhere (the many lamps) to build the temple of God.

Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof. Mountains represent kingdoms (cf. Isa 2:2; 13:4), in this case, the kingdom of Satan. Before Zerubbabel, who represents Jesus, this mountain will become a plain (cf. Isa 40:4; 41:15; Matt 17:20). In other words, the gates of hell will not prevail over the building of God’s New Testament temple. The first-laid stone of that temple, the chief cornerstone, is Jesus Himself (Acts 4:10–11; Eph 2:20). He will see the work through to completion. Just as the final stone was laid by Zerubbabel, so the temple will be finished by Jesus when the last person—the last “lively stone” of the building (1 Pet 2:5)—is converted, and the number of God’s elect is complete.

with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it. There will be great celebration by believers on the day of the temple’s completion (i.e., the last day at Jesus’ return). Their shoutings of “grace, grace” underscore that their salvation, from the first saint to the last, only happened because of God’s grace through Jesus Christ. It was not due to any human merit or labor. The shoutings will be especially joyous because eternity with Jesus is about to follow (cf. Isa 65:17–18; Rev 19:1, 6).

Zech 4:8–10. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

The Lord had more to say in the oracle. Through the interpreting angel, He told Zechariah that “The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it.” This is a marvellous promise for both the post-exilic Jews and New Testament believers. Just as Zerubbabel would finish the physical temple whose foundation he laid earlier, so Jesus will finish the temple of believers founded by Him. This building effort, from

cornerstone to completion, will prove that God was sent among men (“thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you” – cf. 1 John 4:14).

The Lord added, “For who hath despised the day of small things?” With only little progress made on the temple’s construction so far (cf. Hag 2:3), God rebuked those who were discouraged by the meagre results. On the contrary, God was in charge of the building effort and, by His Spirit, He would enable Zerubbabel to finish it. The same is true for Jesus’ New Testament temple. Although we may become despondent in our work of witnessing, especially when the gains appear minimal or reversals occur, the building of God’s temple will proceed to completion.

for they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet stone in the hand of Zerubbabel. These seven are the eyes of Jehovah [LITV]. In contrast to those who “despised the day of small things,” there will be rejoicing from “they,” who are identified as the seven eyes of Jehovah. As in the preceding vision, *Clean Garments for Joshua*, the seven eyes represent the Holy Spirit (Zech 3:9; cf. Rev 5:6). They correspond to the seven lamp bowls of the lampstand vision (cf. Rev 4:5). These eyes can see what human eyes cannot. Knowing the end from the beginning, they will rejoice to see the plummet stone or plumb line (lit. “stone of tin”) in the hand of Zerubbabel. This depicts the rejoicing of the Holy Spirit to see the temple, comprising the elect from all nations, being built under Jesus’ supervision.

which run to and fro through the whole earth. The seven eyes of Jehovah “run to and fro through the whole earth.” This brings to mind the reconnaissance report of the horse groups (the Holy Spirit) in the opening vision: “We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest” (Zech 1:11). Angered by that report, the Lord promised to restore Jerusalem (1:15–17). In the present vision, the Holy Spirit (as seven eyes) is again running back and forth through the earth. Most likely, this is in support of the promises made in the first vision. As 2 Chronicles 16:9 reveals, the seven eyes of the Lord sustain His people everywhere:

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. (cf. Ps 34:15–16; Prov 15:3)

Zech 4:11–14. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

While Zechariah may have understood, partially, the link between the lampstand and the temple, the olive trees still puzzled him. He therefore asked, “What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?” Without waiting for an answer, he rephrased his question to be more specific: “What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?” For a second time, the angel replied, “Knowest thou not what these be (cf. 4:5)?” Again, Zechariah

confessed, “No, my lord.” The coming Christian era was truly a mystery, even to righteous Jews such as Zechariah.

The angel explained: “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” Being *anointed* means being set apart for service, as were kings and priests (cf. 1 Chr 29:22). *Standing by the Lord* implies divine commissioning. The Jews in Zechariah’s day probably thought that these two anointed ones were Zerubbabel (the governor = “king”) and Joshua (the high priest). A Gospel meaning, though, appears intended. As discussed earlier, the two olive trees represent New Testament believers, both Jew and Gentile. We read about them again in Revelation 11, also in the context of a temple:

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein . . . And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks [or lampstands] standing before the God of the earth. (Rev 11:1, 3–4)

While exegesis of Revelation 11 is outside the scope of this study, the two olive trees (or two witnesses) are clearly central to that chapter. This explains their importance in the fifth night vision, placed as they are at the end: “These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth” (Zech 4:14).

6: The Flying Scroll (5:1–4)

So far, the night visions have dealt with glorious prophecies of restoration, prosperity, and salvation. However, God’s Word is a two-edged sword inasmuch as it speaks about *judgment* as well as salvation (cf. Heb 4:12; 2 Cor 2:15–16). In this sixth vision, judgment comes to the fore through the visualization of a flying scroll. The dimensions of this scroll derive from the Jewish temple, which is tied to the old covenant. This stands in contrast to the spiritual temple of the preceding vision, which is tied to the new covenant.

Zech 5:1–3. Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

Zechariah lifted his eyes and saw a large flying roll, or scroll. An unnamed voice, being the interpreting angel (cf. Zech 4:1–2), asked what he saw. Zechariah answered, “I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.” The angel identified it as “the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth.” People who stole or swore false oaths would be punished by it.

The logical conclusion here is that the scroll represents the verdict, or “curse,” that God has decreed for breaking His Law. The curse applies to all the unsaved, whether in the world or among God’s people, as exemplified by the following passages:

APPLICATION OF THE CURSE TO THE WORLD: *The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate. (Isa 24:5–6)*

APPLICATION OF THE CURSE TO GOD’S PEOPLE: *Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. (Dan 9:11; cf. Deut 29:20)*

The scroll was huge and oddly proportioned. More like a billboard, it was twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide, or about thirty feet by fifteen feet. This is in marked contrast to a normal scroll, which was only about eight to ten inches in width and rarely exceeded twenty feet in length (long scrolls were awkward to handle).

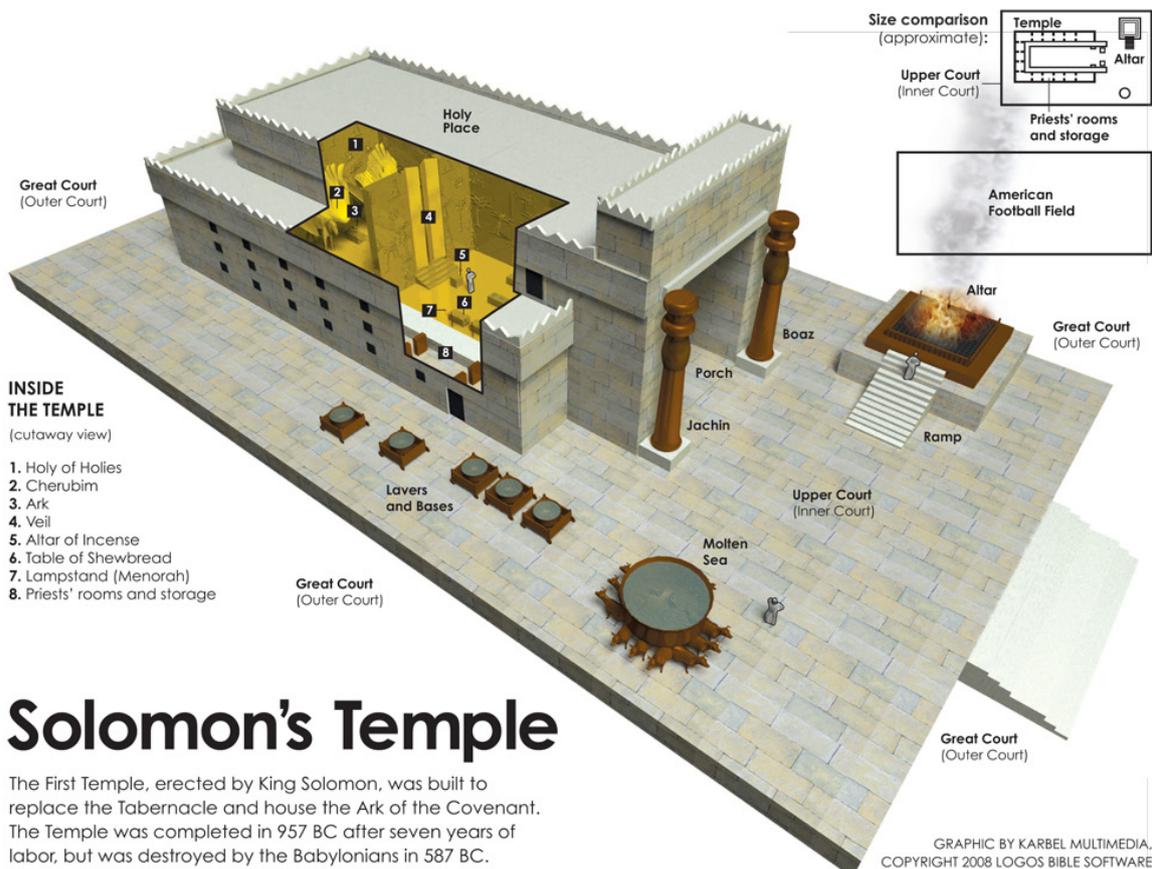
There are four other instances of the scroll’s dimensions in the Bible (twenty by ten cubits). All four relate to the *sanctuary*, which was the place of God’s manifest presence among His people. Evidently, then, the scroll’s dimensions derive from these locations, which are:

1. the bronze altar in the court of Solomon's temple
2. the floorplan area of the porch in Solomon's temple
3. the floorplan area of the Holy Place in the wilderness tabernacle
4. the vertical space occupied by the two cherubim on either side of the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place in Solomon's temple

Significantly, all four instances relate to the flying scroll by a common theme, being *our separation from God through sin*. The discussion below demonstrates this theme for the four locations. They have been ordered from "outside to inside," as if tracing the walk of the high priest through the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement.

1. The bronze altar in Solomon's temple. Animal sacrifices were made daily on the bronze altar, also called the altar of burnt offering. It was located in the inner courtyard near the porch. (See diagram below for a speculation on the appearance of Solomon's temple.) All four sides of the altar were twenty cubits wide and ten cubits high (2 Chr 4:1). Given its large size, the altar was presumably accessed by a ramp (steps were not permitted for altars – cf. Exod 20:26).

The daily burning of sacrifices on the altar reminded the Jews constantly of their separation from God through sin. This is because the shedding of innocent blood was required to atone for sin (cf. Heb 9:22).



Solomon's Temple

The First Temple, erected by King Solomon, was built to replace the Tabernacle and house the Ark of the Covenant. The Temple was completed in 957 BC after seven years of labor, but was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC.

2. The porch of Solomon's temple. The porch was the vestibule before the doorway to the temple proper. It measured twenty cubits in length (along the temple's width) and it projected ten cubits out from the doorway (1 Kgs 6:3). No one could proceed beyond the porch through the doorway to the Holy Place except for priests (2 Chr 29:16; 23:6).

There was a platform in the temple complex where kings spoke publically (cf. 2 Kgs 11:14). Opinions vary on the location of this platform (it may have shifted over the centuries). It is likely, however, that its final position was the temple porch. If so, it was where Josiah stood to confirm the covenant before ordering the removal of idolatrous items from the temple:

And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him . . . And the king stood by a pillar [platform], and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant. And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal. (2 Kgs 23:2–4)

Josiah's public covenant to keep God's statutes positions the Law symbolically between people outside the porch (representing humanity) and entry into the Holy Place (signifying reconciliation with God). Reconciliation is necessary because of our separation from God through sin.

3. The Holy Place in the wilderness tabernacle. The tabernacle of Moses' day was thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide, and ten cubits high (inferred from Exodus 25–40). A veil divided the tabernacle into two sections: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (or Holy of Holies). The Holy Place was the outer room where priests performed their normal duties; it was twenty cubits long and ten cubits wide. The Most Holy Place was a separate room measuring ten cubits in length, width, and height (a cube).

Our focus here is the Holy Place, whose floorspace measured twenty by ten cubits. Being in that space in sight of the Most Holy Place reminded the priest of the nation's separation from God, and of the need for sacrificial atonement to achieve reconciliation. (Observe that the ratio of the scroll's dimensions was 2:1 or $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ – cf. Zech 13:8–9. This is the same ratio that the Holy Place was to the Most Holy Place in plan area.)

4. The cherubim and the ark. The final location featuring a measurement of twenty by ten cubits was the Most Holy Place of Solomon's temple. This was the place of God's presence, and no one could enter it except the high priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement. On that day—the tenth day of the seventh month—the high priest performed elaborate rituals, including the sprinkling of atoning blood on the mercy seat, which was the lid to the Ark of the Covenant (Lev 16:1–2, 12–17).

Conspicuous in the Most Holy Place were the two cherubim made of olivewood and plated with gold. Each had a height of ten cubits and a wingspan of ten cubits. They stood wingtip to wingtip on either side of the Ark of the Covenant, hence their total lengthwise span of twenty cubits. Their outer wings touched the walls of the room while their inner wings

stretched out over the ark (1 Kgs 6:23–27; 8:6–7; 2 Chr 3:10–13). The vertical space of twenty by ten cubits included cherubim and ark together.

Cherubim are composite heavenly creatures, generally associated with the presence of God. One of their roles was that of *guardian*, as first reported in Genesis 3:24:

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

The cherubim and flaming sword stood as a graphic reminder to Adam and Eve of their separation from God. This relates to the present vision. Being twenty by ten cubits, the flying scroll occupied the same space as the cherubim and ark in Solomon’s temple. The flying scroll contained words of judgment for breaking two commandments. The cherubim stood over the ark that contained all Ten Commandments. Together, the cherubim and ark remind us of our separation from God through disobedience to His word, so evoking the cherubim and flaming sword that guarded the way to the Tree of Life.

Remedy for the curse. The flying scroll measured twenty by ten cubits. On it was written the “curse” that God had decreed for breaking His Law. The same measurement appears in four consecutive places in the sanctuary, *from the outermost altar to the innermost sanctum*. The implication here is that the Law was inseparably tied to the temple-based covenant. For those bound to the dictates of the Law, no amount of animal sacrifices or substitutionary rites could eliminate the curse of the flying scroll. What is true then is still true today: those under the Law will die by the Law.

The post-exilic Jews would have found this vision puzzling because it implied that every single person who breaks the Law will be punished (“for *every one* that stealeth . . . and *every one* that sweareth” – 5:3). How can the curse apply to those who worship in the Lord’s temple, offer sacrifices there, and whose transgressions have been atoned for every year by the high priest? Those acts surely provided remission of sins for God’s chosen people. As we know from our New Testament vantage point, though, there is only one way to annul the curse. It can only be annulled by a high priest who is able to offer himself as a sinless sacrifice in a more perfect tabernacle. On this, Paul explained in the book of Hebrews:

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. (Heb 9:11–12)

Other aspects of the scroll. In addition to its exact dimensions, which reflect the exactness of the Law, the scroll had the following characteristics:

- It was *flying*, which implies that an unseen hand, evidently of divine origin, had unrolled the scroll (the corollary being that no human hand could touch it). Flying also suggests that any judgments written therein applied universally, they could be carried out quickly, and were inescapable. In addition, the scroll stood above all earthly edicts; it represented the word of God proclaimed to all humanity.

- Being unrolled and *disproportionally large*, the scroll was big enough for all to see and read. Consequently, no one could claim ignorance of its contents. (Contrast this with Jewish religious scrolls, which were stored in archives and accessible only to a few, i.e., priests and scribes.)
- It had writing *on both sides*. This alludes not only to the scroll's comprehensiveness but also to the Tables of the Law (Exod 32:15). The word for "scroll," *megillah*, reinforces this connection. *Megillah* is often used in relation to the Law or its contravention (cf. Ps 40:7; Jer 36:2; Ezek 2:9–10).

God said that the scroll (or curse) "goeth forth over the face of the whole earth." In the Bible, the term "face of the whole earth" can be used either in the context of *all the earth* (e.g., Gen 7:3) or *within Israel only* (e.g., 2 Sam 18:8). In this vision, which speaks about judgment, both meanings appear intended (cf. 1 Pet 4:17).

for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. One side of the scroll contained judgments for stealing. The other contained judgments for swearing falsely, which is to use the Lord's name irreverently (e.g., a false oath, sworn on His name). These sins relate to the eighth and third commandments, respectively. Since offence on one point of the Law is sufficient to be guilty of all (James 2:10), one may assume that these two commandments represent *all* the Law.

Specifically, the third commandment ("Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain" – Exod 20:7) represents the *first four laws*, which govern the way humans are to respond to God. The eighth commandment ("Thou shalt not steal" – Exod 20:15) represents the *final six laws*, which describe how humans are to respond to each other. This "distilling" of the Law down to two representative commandments (i.e., man's duty to God and to his neighbour) is not unique to this passage. Jesus did a similar thing in Matthew 22:36–40:

Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

How does the curse apply to the Gentiles? Recall that the scroll was large and highly visible, confirming that the nations cannot claim ignorance of God's laws. Not only has He written them in their hearts (Rom 2:14–15) but the creation itself reveals Him:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse. (Rom 1:18–20)

How does the curse apply to God's people? In this vision, God chose two specific sins—stealing and swearing falsely by His name—to represent the full volume of offence. If we

equate stealing to *spiritual theft* (as in false prophets taking God’s Word and expounding on it corruptly) coupled with the prevalence of swearing falsely, then these specific sins are telling markers of apostasy, as confirmed by Israel’s history (e.g., Jer 23:30, Isa 48:1). Those two sins have prompted tumultuous effects of judgment in the past (to national Israel) and will again in the future (when God judges the end-time church for her love of false prophets and blasphemers – cf. Matt 24:24; 2 Tim 4:3; 2 Thess 2:11–12). The next night vision, *An Ephah of Wickedness*, reveals aspects of this judgment.

Effect of the curse. Whoever steals or swears falsely will be “cut off.” The usual word for “cut off” is *karath*, which means *to cut, eradicate, set aside, exclude, kill, or expel*. The word used here, though, is *naqah*, whose basic meaning is *be empty, clean*. It is mostly used in positive contexts, such as legal acquittal (i.e., *cleansed of guilt*; cf. Exod 21:19; Num 5:31). However, it is used negatively in Isaiah 3:26, which prophesies about the coming desolation of Jerusalem:

“And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being *desolate* [*naqah* in the sense of *empty* or *cleaned out*] shall sit upon the ground.”

Given the curse’s consuming desolation of the house in the next verse, the negative sense of *naqah*—as in *cleaned out*—best fits the meaning of “cut off” in Zechariah 5:3.

Zech 5:4. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Elaborating on the curse, the Lord said, “I will bring it forth.” God Himself will deliver the punishment for breaking His Law. Consequently, the curse “shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name.” Being sent into the house shows that no matter how protected a sinner thinks he is, He will not escape God’s wrath. Proverbs 3:33 reveals that “The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but he blesseth the habitation of the just.”

God’s judgment will reside in the house until it accomplishes its purpose, which is to destroy the house and, by implication, sinners therein: “and it [the curse] shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.” This agrees with Proverbs 15:25: “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud.” Tearing down the house is symbolic for *cleaning out the infection of sin*. A similar tearing down of timber and stones applied to houses that had “leprosy” (i.e., rot or mildew):

Then the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean. And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place. (Lev 14:44–45; cf. Ezra 6:11)

The destruction wrought by the curse foreshadows the eternal ruin that will occur to the unsaved on Judgment Day.

SOME SPECULATIONS ON THE THIRD AND EIGHTH COMMANDMENTS

The Ten Commandments were inscribed by the finger of God on both sides of two stone tablets (Exod 31:18; 32:15–16). Many scholars uphold that the second tablet was a duplicate of the first, since each party required a copy (see, for example, Josiah Derby, “The Two Tablets of the Covenant,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 21.2 [1993]: 73–79). Contrary to popular belief, it is unlikely that each tablet had five commandments written per side. The total number of words in the Decalogue in Exodus is 172. The first five commandments consist of 146 words and the second five total only 26 words. For practical reasons, such as the tablet’s size and weight, it is more likely that each tablet had about *the same number of lines per side*. This suggests that the Fourth Commandment, which is the longest at 55 words (“Remember the Sabbath Day ...”), took up the bottom lines of the first side and top lines of the reverse side. (This is appropriate given that the Fourth Commandment acts as a bridge between the first three commandments, which deal with God, and the final six that deal with humanity.) If this arrangement is correct, then it is possible that the third and eighth commandments appeared opposite each other on either side of the tablet. Moreover, these may have been the only two commandments whose last (or first) lines ended (or began) at the same vertical position on each side. Such uniqueness would help to explain their selection for the *Flying Scroll* vision.

The third and eighth commandments stand out for another reason. Proverbs 7:2–3 declares:

Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart.

In this proverb, the ten fingers correspond to the Ten Commandments. This means that the middle fingers of each hand, which are normally the longest, correspond to the third and eighth commandments. This applies whether counting fingers left-to-right or right-to-left.

7: An Ephah of Wickedness (5:5–11)

The preceding vision, *The Flying Scroll*, dealt with God’s Law and personal judgment. A flying object likewise features in this next vision, which again involves judgment but in a corporate way. It reveals a woman inside an ephah-sized vessel that two winged women carry to Babylonia. The vision demonstrates a chiasmic structure (shown at the end of the commentary).

Zech 5:5–6. *Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.*

The interpreting angel “went forth,” implying that he was repositioning himself to present a new vision. He then directed Zechariah’s gaze to it (“Lift up now thine eyes”). Not understanding the flying object that he saw, Zechariah asked, “What is it?” The angel replied, “This is an ephah that goeth forth.” Presumably, it flew to a stop before them.

The *ephah* was a unit of dry measure (used for flour, barley, etc.). The liquid counterpart was the *bath* (used for oil, wine, etc.). By the post-exilic period, it appears that the ephah and bath were equivalent (cf. Ezek 45:11). Estimates for the ephah vary from 22 to 36 liters (it varied with time and place). Vessels holding an ephah were typically made of pottery or straw. They were usually bushel or barrel-shaped.

Because the ephah contained a woman, Zechariah most likely saw an oversized vessel. The angel said of it, “This is their resemblance through all the earth.” Literally, this reads, “This is their eye [*ayin*] through all the earth.” The meaning of “their eye” is unclear. However, the KJV translation “resemblance”—as in outward appearance—suits the vision and has Scriptural precedent (e.g., Lev 13:5; Num 11:7). The plural “*their* resemblance” evidently refers to the ephah plus the woman inside, revealed shortly to be *wickedness*.

What does the ephah represent? The ephah was a common domestic measure. However, it was also an important business measure used for buying and selling goods (cf. Amos 8:5). The angel made mention of the ephah’s appearance “through all the earth.” In the night visions, the terms “through the earth” or “the whole earth” appear in negative contexts. They apply either to the nations (1:11, 15) or to the cursed state of humanity (5:3). Putting these two thoughts together—humanity’s wickedness and buying and selling—the ephah becomes a metaphor for *people’s engagement with the material abundance of this world*.

The ephah had a *uniform appearance* across the earth. Therefore, all who lift their eyes up to view it see the same thing. This shows that people everywhere share a common attribute: to desire the things of this world (which they look up to instead of God). Hidden from view, though, is the wickedness inside the ephah, confirming that people do not perceive the innate carnality of their desires.

Zech 5:7–8. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman [lit. one woman] that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is [the] wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

An important development (“behold”) took place. A lead cover weighing a talent was lifted to reveal a solitary woman inside (in contrast to the two women, later). There being “one” woman implies personal dominion, as does her posture of sitting, as if enthroned. The angel identified her as “the wickedness.” (The definite article here strengthens the noun, hereafter capitalized.) Comparison with other prophecies in the Bible suggests that she, Wickedness, is the harlot woman Babylon, who personifies the world’s subjection to Satan. We see this personification especially in Revelation 17:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. (Rev 17:1–5)

John saw the woman in the “wilderness,” which symbolizes spiritual barrenness. She sat on a scarlet coloured beast with seven heads and ten horns. The beast represents Satan’s kingdom (cf. Rev 12:3). The harlot sitting on the beast shows that worldly allurements are the principal means by which Satan’s rule is perpetuated.

Reflecting the abundance of her goods, the woman was clothed in expensive apparel, and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls (cf. Rev 18:11–17). This is the appearance of the world to the unsaved. It is a glamorous place, and all the treasures that one could desire are found there. But the world is really a harlot who causes people, through their love of her seductive wares, to be unfaithful to God. This is why she holds a cup of beautiful outside appearance but inside it is filled with the filth of her fornication. In similar fashion, the ephah of Zechariah’s vision has an appearance of value to the world—through commerce—but on the inside (hidden from view) stands Wickedness.

Written on the woman’s forehead was “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth.” Babylon is a mystery because the unsaved do not understand her detrimental effects. They do not see that the nations have been spiritually seduced and drawn into her bed of delights.

More than a harlot, Babylon is “the Mother of Harlots.” The merchant cities of Nineveh and Tyre were likewise called harlots (Nah 3:4, 16; Isa 23:17; Ezek 27:3). However, their regional influence pales in comparison to how spiritual Babylon has seduced all nations with her goods. She is indeed the mother of merchant cities, and her treasures of mammon, while highly esteemed by men, are an abomination to God (cf. Luke 16:13–15).

The merchandise of Babylon and the flying ephah reflect the same truth: the world's love of mammon. Behind this unholy affair, though, is a harlot woman. Her name is Wickedness, the queen of the ephah (cf. Rev 18:7; cf. Isa 47:8).

The heavy lid. The ephah had a lead cover (or lid), which suggests that the woman cannot move beyond divinely appointed bounds. The lid, presumably circular, weighed one talent (so extending the *units of measure* metaphor of the vision). Its heavy weight reflects both the degree of judgment that rests upon the woman (cf. Exod 15:9–10) as well as the control that God exerts over Wickedness (hence, her inability to escape despite wanting to). The lid also emphasizes the *hidden nature of sin*. Sin is not recognised as such by those who are under its curse. Although people may think that they are acting righteously, it is as filthy rags to the Lord (Isa 64:6). Only God can “lift the lid,” so to speak, for us to see this.

More on lead. The ancients considered lead to be an inferior metal. A lead cover therefore reflects God's negative view of the ephah's cargo (cf. Exod 15:10; Jer 6:29; Ezek 22:18). Additionally, temples usually had talents worth of gold and silver for adornment but not lead. By contrast, the temple in Shinar (the ephah's destination) will have just a single talent of lead to showcase its prize object. This emphasizes the inferior, counterfeit nature of the whole setup. (Interestingly, we know today that lead is a toxic element. The choice of lead to cover the woman, who is spiritually toxic to humanity, is appropriate.)

And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Having displayed the contents of the ephah, the angel pushed the woman back in. He then closed the lid over her. The implication here is that when Wickedness reaches her fullness, as measured by the ephah, an action of divine judgment will occur.

The ephah is certainly versatile. We now see that it can measure quantities in two different but related ways:

- for purposes of commerce by the hand of man, often dishonesty (Amos 8:5; cf. Lev 19:35–36), and
- for purposes of judgment by the hand of God, with Wickedness being accurately measured to gauge the appropriate level of judgment, and its timing

Zech 5:9–11. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

The preceding verse suggested that, by the Lord's reckoning, a time will come when Wickedness will reach her fullness (cf. Dan 8:23; Matt 24:12; 2 Tim 3:13). The outcome is now revealed to Zechariah as he sees the ephah being flown to Shinar by two winged women.

Curiously, Zechariah did not enquire about the identity of the two women. Perhaps he was aware, from the parable in Ezekiel 23, that the Lord had depicted Israel and Judah as two adulterous women, Aholah and Aholibah. Consequently, he may have surmised that the

two women represented the northern and southern kingdoms, whose remnants now comprised the post-exilic community. He possibly thought that the vision was a favorable one. It showed Wickedness being removed from the community because of the Lord's return to Jerusalem (Zech 1:16).

The reality probably differs to what Zechariah thought and what many commentators believe. It seems clear that this is not a happy vision; it has a negative tone, and the fate of the ephah is inglorious. As the discussion below shows, the two women most likely represent the end-time church. The women evoke Aholah and Aholibah, who represented Israel and Judah in their final days. Both those nations embraced materialism, so serving mammon and not God. The New Testament congregations will do the same in their final days.

Stork-like wings. The women had wings like those of storks. The stork is a migratory bird. Its long, wide wings are designed to catch wind currents rising from the heated earth below. Hence, the statement: "the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork." From ancient times, the stork was renowned for taking affectionate care of its young. This trait is reflected in its Hebrew name *chasideh* (from *chesed*, meaning loving, kindness). However, the Bible also identifies the stork as an unclean bird; its flesh was an abomination (Lev 11:19). Combining these characteristics, stork-like wings imply that the New Testament church, through her impurity, will embrace the ephah with affection.

The wind bearing the women has further significance. In the Bible, wind can signify iniquity, as in Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean thing . . . and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The wind transporting the women shows that the end-time church will be propelled to damnation by its own iniquity, as derived from the world's ever-increasing wickedness. The sign of this iniquity will be the proliferation of worldly doctrines in most Christian assemblies (Matt 24:23–27). Normally, the Holy Spirit is the invisible wind that carries the church (cf. John 3:8). However, when God's people turn apostate, He removes His Spirit from them (cf. Rev 2:5; Ps 51:11), so allowing satanic winds to drive their course.

The ephah is lifted up. With their strong wings, Zechariah saw the women "lifting up" the ephah. This is a portrait of the end-time church *embracing* Wickedness. Undoubtedly, it will be a *firm and wholehearted embrace* to lift such a heavy vessel. The women lifted the ephah "between the earth and the heaven." The following two passages, which use the same term, provide instruction on its meaning in Zechariah:

And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. (1 Chr 21:16)

And he put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy. (Ezek 8:3)

Both passages feature faithful men witnessing a supernatural scene. The scene conveys God's displeasure over an earthly event involving His people. Accordingly, when Zechariah saw the women lifting the ephah "between the earth and the heaven," the Lord was showing His displeasure over an earthly event involving the church. The event is the church's embrac-

ing of Wickedness (the women lifting the ephah). The final part of the vision reveals the ensuing punishment, albeit symbolically. It will be to allow the church to sink even deeper into apostasy. The same thing happened to unfaithful Israel and Judah (Aholah and Aholibah).

Taken to Shinar. Zechariah now asked his first question concerning the women, “Whither do these bear the ephah” (i.e., where are they taking it)? The angel replied, “To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established [or made ready], and set there upon her own base.” Four events take place here, each with its own significance:

1. The women will take the ephah to Shinar. Shinar is the area in southern Mesopotamia that later became known as Babylonia or Chaldea. It was the place where the first mighty warrior, Nimrod, began his kingdom (Gen 10:8–10). It was also where men built the tower of Babel, in disregard of God’s wishes (Gen 9:1; 11:2–9). The Bible later uses this term to describe where Nebuchadnezzar hoarded the temple treasures (Dan 1:2). Clearly, Shinar is a place linked to worldliness and man-centered activities, which are satanically driven. The women took the ephah there. This means that the apostate end-time congregations, by their embracing of worldliness, will position themselves into Satan’s kingdom.

2. to build a house for it there. Once the ephah is in Shinar, the women will “build it an house,” meaning a temple (1 Kgs 5:5; Hag 1:2). This depicts the enshrining of worldliness by the end-time church. (It is no coincidence that the woman in the ephah—the idolatrous harlot Babylon—is now in her own land, Shinar, “the land of graven images” – Jer 50:38.)

3. The ephah will be made ready. Building the temple for the ephah will take some time. In the interim, the ephah will be prepared for service. This includes the building of a stand for it (see below). Such fawning over the ephah emphasizes the lavish attention that end-time churchgoers will pay to carnal pursuits. Observe that there will be two phases for the ephah in Shinar: (1) the preparation phase followed by (2) the installation of the ephah in the temple. These correspond to the two phases of Satan’s end-time assault against the church: (1) decades of increasing worldliness in Christian congregations, followed by (2) the “great tribulation” period when Satan rules in the church as the antichrist.

4. and placed in the house on her own base [“her” refers to the ephah and woman inside]. The ephah will be placed “upon her own base” in the completed temple. The word for “base” is *mekunah*. It is used only twice in the Bible (the other instance is Jer 27:19). While this is unhelpful for interpretation, *mekunah* is equivalent to *mekownah*, which occurs 22 times in 17 verses. *Mekownah* is mostly used in reference to the movable bronze stands in the Solomonic temple, of which there were ten (1 Kgs 7:27–37). Resting on each stand was a round bronze basin, or “laver” (1 Kgs 7:38). The laver held water, which was used to clean the meat supplied for burnt offerings (2 Chr 4:6). In the word *mekownah*, we therefore see a connection to *purification activities in the temple*.

Mekunah in Zechariah 5:11 therefore invites a comparison. Being set on “her own base” in Shinar shows that the ephah will be placed on a pedestal in imitation of the Jewish temple. However, whereas the Jewish *mekownah* facilitated purification, the Shinar *mekunah* will support the exact opposite: *spiritual filthiness*. Put simply, the temple is a sham setup. It is designed to trap the souls of the unwary in Shinar (the unsaved of the world) who will not see the Wickedness hidden at its core (cf. Matt 24:24; 2 Tim 4:3–4; 3:1–5; 2 Cor 11:13–15;

2 Thess 2:11–12). This explains the placement of the ephah on “her own base,” meaning that it will stand on a *self-appointed pedestal* and not on a pedestal appointed by God.

The ephah as an “anti-ark.” A noteworthy comment on this vision is made by Michael R. Stead in *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1-8* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009). While his interpretation differs to mine (Stead upholds the standard position that wickedness is being removed from Jerusalem), he nevertheless makes the insightful observation that “Zech 5:5–11 depicts an ‘anti-ark’ borne by ‘anti-cherubs,’ to be put in an ‘anti-temple’ in an ‘anti-Jerusalem’” (p. 197). I would add that this will all be the work of the ‘anti-christ’ (Satan).

Chiastic Structure of the Seventh Night Vision

A – Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. [THE EMERGENCE OF A FLYING OBJECT.]

B – And I said, What is it? [ZECHARIAH’S FIRST QUESTION.]

C – And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. [AN EPHAH IS IN THE SKY. IT IS FLYING UNAIDED.]

D – He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. [PEOPLE ALL OVER THE EARTH DESIRE THE EPHAH.]

.....

E – And, behold, there was lifted up a *talent of lead*:

F – and this is a woman that sitteth in the *midst of the ephah*.

G – And he said, **This is [the] wickedness.**

F¹ – And he cast it into the *midst of the ephah*;

E¹ – and he cast the *weight of lead* upon the mouth thereof.

.....

D¹ – Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: [TWO WINGED WOMEN NOW DESIRE THE EPHAH.]

C¹ – and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. [AN EPHAH IS IN THE SKY. IT IS BEING CARRIED BY TWO WINGED WOMEN.]

B¹ – Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? [ZECHARIAH’S SECOND QUESTION.]

A¹ – And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base. [THE FINAL STOPPING PLACE OF THE OBJECT.]

8: The Four Chariots (6:1–8)

In the first night vision, which is set in a hidden valley, colored horses on patrol represented the Holy Spirit's assessment of the earth's condition. Now, in this final vision, colored horses drawing chariots advance openly into the world. The message is one of hope, in contrast to the preceding two visions about judgment.

Zech 6:1–5. *And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.*

Zechariah looked up to see four chariots emerging from two mountains of brass. He asked, "What are these, my lord?" The angel replied, "These are the four spirits of the heavens." They went forth "from standing before the Lord of all the earth," confirming their divine mandate.

The four spirits undoubtedly represent the global ministry of the Holy Spirit. The chariots, which imply *conquest*, signify the Spirit's triumphant advance during the New Testament era. The question is: do the four spirits refer to the chariots or to the horse groups?

Note that although four chariots emerged, they did so with *five* horse groups, each with their own color and destination. The colors were red, black, white, grisled, and bay. The grisled and bay horses together drew the fourth chariot, at least to begin with. Curiously, there is no elaboration on the first chariot and its red horses. All these anomalies perplex scholars. Careful reading of the text, though, confirms that the *four spirits* refer to the expeditions of the black, white, grisled, and bay horses. The horse groups associated with *triumph* all have chariots (the red, black, white, and grisled horses). The first chariot with its red horses signifies the victory of Jesus Christ on earth. His victory will enable the expeditions of the four horse groups that follow Him (i.e., the black, white, grisled, and bay horses).

Although the vision features chariots and horses, no mention is made of riders. Presumably, the Lord Himself is steering the chariots (cf. Hab 3:8), or riders are present but silently so.

Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2. The chariots emerged from between *two mountains of brass*. In the Bible, mountains symbolize kingdoms (e.g., Isa 2:2; 13:4; Matt 4:8). How do kingdoms and brass interrelate, and what is their connection to the Holy Spirit? The book of Daniel is instructive here. Early in Daniel's exile to Babylon, king Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great statue. It comprised four different metals, each being less precious than the one above. It had a head of gold, a breast and arms of silver, a belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron with feet partly of iron and partly of clay. A stone cut without hands finally collapsed the statue by striking at its feet.

The statue depicted the rise of four consecutive kingdoms in the earth. Daniel revealed that Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, meaning that the Neo-Babylonian empire was the first and pre-eminent kingdom of the statue. Daniel continued, “And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth” (Dan 2:39). The kingdom that arose after the Babylonian empire (by defeating it) was that of the Medes and Persians. In the statue, their joint rule corresponds to the *breast and arms of silver*. The third kingdom, depicted by the *belly and thighs of brass*, was the era of Greek rule (cf. Dan 8:20–22; 10:20; 11:2–4). The fourth kingdom, the one depicted by the *legs of iron*, is the most fearsome of all and relates to the end-times.

The third kingdom, the dominion of the Greeks, is noteworthy. My book, *Daniel’s Fourth Kingdom*, proposes that the Greek era in prophetic Scripture spans the time from Alexander the Great to the modern age (a period of around 23 centuries). This is the “kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth” (Dan 2:39). It will do so through its powerful and enduring societal influence. (Greek culture forms the foundation of Western civilization.)

Zechariah saw four chariots proceeding from two mountains of brass. We can now interpret this scene based on the following logic:

- The brass kingdom in the dream-statue of Daniel 2 portrays the era of the Greeks.
- Mountains represent kingdoms in the Bible.
- Mountains of brass therefore symbolize the kingdom of the Greeks. This is the *belly and thighs of brass* of the dream-statue. But why are there *two* mountains in the vision?
- Observe the consecutive parts of the Greek kingdom: belly then thighs. This suggests consecutive stages of Greek rule, which history supports. The *brass belly* represents the empire itself. The *brass thighs* represent the enduring influence of Greek culture in the Western world after the fall of the empire through to the present age. The *two brass mountains* therefore correspond to the *two brass thighs* of the dream-statue.

Accordingly, chariots emerging from two mountains of brass show that the triumph of Christ and consequent ministry of the Holy Spirit will commence sometime between the end of the Greek empire and the present age. It actually began in AD 33, only a few centuries after Alexander’s death.

Zech 6:6–8. *The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.*

The red horses and their mysterious chariot. No mention is made of where the first chariot goes. Apparently, it came to a stop and ventured no further. This chariot is such a mystery that scholars routinely emend the text to make it fit their interpretation. No emendations are necessary because the first night vision gives the guiding clue. The first thing that Zechariah

saw when the visions began was a rider on a red horse (1:8). We concluded that he was a preincarnate appearance of Jesus. His red horse signified blood sacrifice.

Red is also at the forefront in the closing vision, with red horses pulling the lead chariot. The logical inference here is that the lead chariot signifies the triumph of Jesus Christ through His death, resurrection, and ascension. It does not proceed onward like the others because its mission was fulfilled in AD 33. This explains the vision's silence over it. (The silence also calls to mind the "mystery of the Gospel" sub-theme of the night visions.) Marvellously, Jesus' victory will enable the next phase: the work of the Holy Spirit on behalf of the elect. The activities of the other four horse groups describe that work.

The black horses. Conducting the first assignment are the black horses of the second chariot. They advance into the "north country," which recalls the introductory oracle:

Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. (Zech 2:6)

This statement referred to the Jewish exiles who had not yet returned from the "north land" of Babylon, which represented all the countries of exile. God commanded them to flee and return to Judah. Spiritually, this corresponds to God's command for us to seek salvation, with Babylon being figurative for our bondage to the world.

Of course, no one will seek salvation unless God draws that person first (John 6:44). This is why God Himself will redeem His people. Of this divine rescue, we read in Jeremiah 31:

*For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel. **Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth,** and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together. (Jer 31:7-8)*

The north country of Babylon represents the place of bondage. It is a metaphor for Satan's kingdom. The black horses of the second chariot went into this country. This portrays the Holy Spirit going forth into the world, triumphantly, to free its captives.

The white horses. The white horses of the third chariot followed the black ones into the north country. This is an odd development. Why does the Holy Spirit journey into the north country twice? Perhaps it foreshadows the "early and latter rain" outpouring of God's Spirit, as recorded in James 5:7:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.

The two seasons of rain in this verse suggest that there will be two distinct phases of Gospel enlightenment during the New Testament age. History supports this notion, with the "early rain" referring to the early centuries of Gospel success and the "latter rain" referring to the Gospel re-awakening after the Reformation of the 16th Century.

If this idea is correct, then the black horses of the night vision represent the march of the Holy Spirit during the first few centuries after Pentecost (with *black* reflecting the world's condition at the start of the Gospel age). The white horses would then signify the march of Spirit during the Protestant era (with *white* reflecting the purified doctrines that resulted from the Reformation).

The grisled horses. Initially, the fourth chariot emerged with both grisled and bay horses. However, for its subsequent advance into the world, the fourth chariot used only the grisled horses because the bay horses sought a different duty:

the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth.

With the bay horses separated, the grisled took the fourth chariot into the “south country.” This most likely represents the corporate homeland of God's people. (See *The Parable of the South Field* in Ezek 20:45–21:5.) The message here is one of comfort and encouragement. It shows that the Holy Spirit will enter and reside in the congregations of the New Testament church, to empower and support them (cf. 2 Chr 16:9).

The bay horses. The fifth horse group comprised bay horses. They actually constitute the *fourth* group if counting the colored horses that advance into the world. Now standing apart, the bay horses specifically asked the Lord's permission to undertake a different type of work from the black, white, and grisled horses that preceded them:

And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth.

The bay horses asked to revisit the area patrolled by the horses in the opening vision: “These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth” (Zech 1:10). Once again, they probably wanted to assess the condition of the nations. This explains their uncoupling from the chariots (i.e., they are observing not conquering). Given the preceding vision about sinfulness reaching its fullness in the world—*An Ephah of Wickedness*—it is likely that the bay horses will report to the Lord only “when the transgressors are come to the full” (Dan 8:23). When the Lord receives that report, He will take steps to begin the final judgments that will culminate with the last day and the destruction of the universe.

However, until that time arrives, the concluding words of the final vision confirm that the Lord will have fully addressed the pressing concern of the first vision. Here, the Lord Himself speaks to Zechariah:

Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country [the black and white horses] have quieted my spirit in the north country.

After the horses of the first vision patrolled the earth, their findings displeased the Lord because the nations were “at ease” in their sinful ways (Zech 1:15). Their arrogance angered Him, and He was raised from His holy habitation to deal with the world's spiritual entrapment of its occupants. The final vision brings closure to this problem. It shows the Lord's spirit at rest, having foreseen that the Gospel will be victorious as it frees people from their slavery to the “north country” that represents vassalage to Satan.

Appendix 1: Chiastic Pattern of the Visions

Zechariah's eight night visions appear, at first glance, to be sequenced somewhat randomly. However, as discussed at the beginning of this study ("Zechariah's Background"), the visions unfold in a logical way, and with a thematic structure. The sequencing of the visions gains added depth when analysed through the following chiasmus:

- A – The Horseman among the Myrtle Trees
- B – Four Horns and Four Craftsmen
- C – A Man with a Measuring Line
- D – Clean Garments for Joshua
- D¹ – A Lampstand with Two Olive Trees
- C¹ – The Flying Scroll
- B¹ – An Ephah of Wickedness
- A¹ – The Four Chariots

Assessed by their spiritual messages, the above visions contrast with each other in chiasmic fashion as follows:

- A – PROBLEM: The Lord is displeased with the nations
- B – Forces of the world will not frustrate the builders of the true church
- C – The city of believers will be protected by a "wall of fire" along its expanding breadth and length
- D – The atoning work of Jesus (revealed through Joshua's transformation)
- D¹ – The ministry of Christian churches (olive trees, oil, and lampstand)
- C¹ – The unsaved and their houses will be destroyed by the "curse" that is written on a scroll whose fixed length and breadth is visible to all
- B¹ – Forces of the world will prevail over the corporate end-time church
- A¹ – PROBLEM RESOLVED: The Lord's spirit quieted through Gospel outreach

Appropriately, the core focus of the night visions—the coming Messianic era—features as the central group [D–D¹]. The vision pairs that bracket it [BC and C¹B¹] contain positive and negative messages, respectively. The negative assessment in the opening topic [A] is balanced by the positive outcome in the closing topic [A¹].

Riddles. The visions that "tell the story" (2 to 7) each feature a core riddle that would have puzzled Old Testament readers. Solving the riddles is only possible through our New Testament understanding of salvation and judgment, how the temple is the body of Christ, and the duty of Christian congregations. The table below shows the spiritual riddles.

VISION EXCERPT	THE RIDDLE	COMMENTARY EXCERPT
<p>2) Four Horns and Four Craftsmen <i>these [four craftsmen] are come to fray them [the four horns], to cast out the horns of the Gentiles (1:21)</i></p>	<p>How can mere craftsmen defeat all-conquering horns?</p>	<p><i>The craftsmen are God's "artisans," or believers. Their witness of Jesus will enable the captives to be freed from worldly bondage . . . Consequently, the horns of the Gentiles will be "cast out," meaning that their power will count for nothing.</i></p>
<p>3) A Man with a Measuring Line <i>Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls . . . For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about (2:4)</i></p>	<p>Why abandon the measuring of the city?</p>	<p><i>Telling the man not to measure Jerusalem by physical means shows that the restoration of God's people (the Holy City) is beyond human capability.</i></p>
<p>4) Clean Garments for Joshua <i>For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof (3:9)</i></p>	<p>What do the stone and its seven eyes represent?</p>	<p><i>Intentionally enigmatic, these symbols call attention to the mystery of the Messiah's work, which was kept secret since the world began (Rom 16:25).</i></p>
<p>5) A Lampstand with Two Olive Trees <i>Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be [the lampstand and olive trees]? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel (4:5-6)</i></p>	<p>How does a lampstand fed by oil from two olive trees relate to the building of the temple by Zerubbabel?</p>	<p><i>This multiplicity of lights (7 x 7) predicts the many congregations of the New Testament church that will grow from the Jewish root (cf. Rom 11:18). From their faithful witness, the temple of believers founded in Christ (= Zerubbabel) will be built.</i></p>
<p>6) The Flying Scroll <i>Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. (5:3)</i></p>	<p>How can the curse apply to Jews who faithfully offered sacrifices in the temple?</p>	<p><i>For those bound to the dictates of the Law, no amount of animal sacrifices or substitutionary rites could eliminate the curse of the flying scroll. What is true then is still true today: those under the Law will die by the Law.</i></p>
<p>7) An Ephah of Wickedness <i>And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. (5:6-8)</i></p>	<p>Why does Wickedness sit in an ephah, which was a measuring vessel used in the buying and selling of material goods?</p>	<p><i>The ephah had a uniform appearance across the earth. Therefore, all who lift their eyes up to view it see the same thing. This shows that people everywhere share a common attribute: to desire the things of this world (which they look up to instead of God). Hidden from view, though, is the wickedness inside the ephah, confirming that people do not perceive the innate carnality of their desires.</i></p>