

LESSON 22

Last week we looked at the first half of Chapter 14, and this week we will finish the second half, which will bring our study of Zechariah to a close. The first half of Chapter 14 looked once again at the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, but this time we saw it from the perspective of God's *faithful* people. Those who looked for the warning signs that Jesus described in Matthew 24 were able to escape the city before its destruction. Those who fled proclaimed the gospel as they went, and so the kingdom of Christ grew as a result. In verses 10-11, we saw a beautiful description of that eternal kingdom, the church. With the next verse, God will once again turn his attention back to the enemies of God's people.

Zechariah 14:12

12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

Zechariah 14:12 is famous among the "end-is-near" premillennial commentators. They call it the "Nuclear Prophecy," and the slightly more imaginative among them

call it the “Neutron Bomb Prophecy.” What’s wrong with that view? After all, doesn’t verse 12 look somewhat like what one might experience in a nuclear blast? Perhaps, but to find a nuclear bomb in this verse, one would first have to rip the verse completely out of its context in Chapter 14 and out of its context in the entire book of Zechariah. And, I might add, one would have to toss his or her common sense out the window right along with the word of God.

When read in context, there is no reason to believe that Zechariah has suddenly jumped thousands of years into the future to describe the effects of a nuclear bomb. What would such a prophecy have to do with anything that he has been describing in this book? When someone somehow finds an atomic bomb in these verses, the only thing that has been atomized is the text! There are 211 verses in Zechariah. If our view of Zechariah 14:12 doesn’t make sense when we read the other 210 verses, then our view is wrong. The surest way to misinterpret the Bible is to consider each verse in a vacuum without any thought for the verses that precede it and follow it.

A second problem — at least for the premillennial crowd — is that verse 12 itself describes what is causing these symptoms, and it is a *plague* rather than a bomb. Why is that a particular problem for the premillennial crowd? Because they in particular like to brag that they alone take every word in the Bible literally. What about the word “plague”? Are they taking that word literally when they tell you it’s a neutron bomb?

A third problem is a common problem — arrogance. We’ve talked about this problem before. Every generation of mankind likes to think that they are special and that the end of the world will surely come in their own generation. The signs are here! The end is near! The sky is falling! They did it in AD 1000 as we saw in an earlier class. They did it in the U.S. Civil War as we saw in an earlier class. They are doing it now as we see all around us.

Yes, Jesus could appear again in the next five minutes, but he could also appear again 10,000 years from now — and each is equally likely from our perspective. There are no signs. We cannot tell by looking around us whether Jesus is more likely or less likely to appear again now as opposed to 10,000 years from now. The only thing that causes some people to think that Jesus' appearance is more likely now is their collective arrogance — the view that our own generation is somehow unique and special — along with their flawed understanding of the Bible.

So what is verse 12 talking about? Let's begin with the same two questions that have carried us through this entire book. What is the context? What is the time frame?

The context is that Jerusalem has just been destroyed, and the people of God living in that city have escaped that destruction by heeding the warnings that Jesus gave them in Matthew 24. Rome, which just destroyed Jerusalem, continues to persecute Christians as it had under Nero prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

And the time frame? The context that we just described is all happening in the first century. The Messianic prophecies we have seen in these closing chapters were all fulfilled in the first century. The prophecies about the church that we have seen in these closing chapters were all fulfilled in the first century. Our time frame has not changed. We are looking here at the first century.

So with that context and that time frame, what is verse 12 talking about? Rome. Verse 12 is describing the judgment of Rome, the fourth kingdom made of iron and clay in Daniel 2. Daniel had written in Daniel 2:44 that the church would destroy Rome, and here we see that destruction. Rome is “the people that have fought against Jerusalem” in verse 12. Verse 12 figuratively shows Rome's judgment and destruction using the figure of an unspecified wasting disease that will destroy their armies. The focus on the eyes and on the tongue is particularly apt for the Romans.

They *boasted* loudly of all they could *see* in their surrounding empire, and they *slandered* the people of God.

Verse 12 is a glimpse of what we will see in the New Testament when we study the book of Revelation. The word “plague” occurs twelve times in the book of Revelation. That’s twice more than in any other book of the Bible except for Leviticus and Numbers. Here is one example:

Revelation 18:8-10 — *Therefore shall her **plagues** come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.*

Those verses from Revelation 18 are describing the judgment of Rome (as we will soon see as we begin our study of that book next) as is verse 12 here in Zechariah 14 using the same figure.

Zechariah 14:13

13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of

his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

With verse 13, we are still “in that day,” which means we are still in the first century. That phrase (“in that day”) is found twenty times in the book of Zechariah — sixteen of which occur in these final three chapters, with seven of those sixteen occurrences found here in Chapter 14! Do you think the inspired text is trying to tell us something important with the repetition of the phrase “in that day”? I do. It is almost as if God knew we might be tempted to lift these verses out of their proper context and apply them to situations where they don’t belong! Why else does God keep reminding us that these prophecies pertain to events “in that day” and then repeatedly tell us in the New Testament when that day was — the first century — by referring back to prophecies in this book and telling us when they were fulfilled?

Verse 13 presents yet another problem for the rigid literalist. The “them” in verse 13 are those who just had their flesh, eyes, and tongues rotted away by a plague. If that was a *literal* plague, then how are these same people now creating a great tumult in this verse? Wouldn’t they all just be radioactive dust? Despite many who will loudly proclaim that they take every word of the Bible literally — no one takes every word of the Bible literally. It is impossible to do so, and these two verses are a prime example. The Bible sometimes uses highly figurative language or hyperbole, and we need to rightly divide the word of God so that we know when that is happening and when that is not happening. The next time someone tells you that he takes each word of the Bible literally, ask him when his right eye and his right hand grew back (Matthew 5:29-30)!

So what is going on in verse 13? Verse 13 is describing yet another aspect of God’s judgment against Rome — God would create **internal strife** within Rome. Neigh-

bor would turn against neighbor. We saw this earlier in the judgment of Jerusalem, and we are seeing it here in the judgment of Rome. Was internal strife a problem for Rome? Definitely. In fact, the siege of Jerusalem was an example of internal strife in Rome. In AD 70, Jerusalem was located in a Roman province. Jerusalem's people were under Roman rule. As they themselves had said, they had no king but Caesar. Their rebellion against Rome was an example of internal strife.

But the internal strife did not end there. Perhaps the most famous set of books ever written about the fall of Rome is *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon. (I have the entire four volume set, which I inherited from my grandfather.) In that lengthy history, Gibbon gives four primary reasons for the fall of Rome: external invasion, inner decadence, **inner strife**, and injury of time and nature. Daniel 2 also described the inner weakness of the Roman empire:

Daniel 2:41-43 — *And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, **the kingdom shall be divided**; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, **so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken**. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: **but they shall not cleave one to another**, even as iron is not mixed with clay.*

That description from Daniel 2 agrees with Gibbon's theory as to why Rome fell — the crucial difference being that Gibbon wrote centuries *after* the fall of Rome while Daniel wrote centuries *before* the fall of Rome! Yes, Rome fell in part because of internal strife, just as Daniel and Zechariah had said it would, and we will study more about the history of Rome in our study of the book of Revelation.

Zechariah 14:14-15

14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. 15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

Verse 14 is a bit of a shock. Earlier we were told that Jerusalem would be safely inhabited, but here we see the people of God (Judah) fighting at the city of God (Jerusalem). We already know that we are now looking at spiritual Jerusalem, so what we see here is the people of God in the church fighting those outside the church — those called “the heathen” in verse 14.

Some translations have “*against* Jerusalem” in verse 14 rather than “*at* Jerusalem” as we read in the KJV. The Hebrew word can mean either, but the context here demands “*at*” rather than “*against*.” At this point in the text, Jerusalem is the church and Judah is the people of God. Their fight is being waged while they are *in* the church as they battle those who are outside the church.

Two questions — what fighting is this, and what *kind* of fighting is this? Let’s start with the second question first.

This Jerusalem is spiritual Jerusalem, so we know what kind of fighting this is, and we know what kind of fighting it is not. It is *not* carnal warfare.

2 Corinthians 10:4 — *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.*

Instead, it is the same kind of fighting we have seen before in this book — the fight to remain faithful to God in the face of persecution. It is through that kind of fighting — and only through that kind of fighting — that the child of God can overcome this world and achieve the victory.

1 John 5:4 — *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

So back then to the first question — what fighting is this? The context and the time frame answer that question — this is the struggle between the church and the mighty Roman empire in the first century. Those Christians who remained faithful in the face of that terrible onslaught were the ones who came out of that struggle victorious. And their reward?

Revelation 2:10 — *Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Here is how verse 14 describes that same reward: “the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.” The faithful Christians would reap the spoils of war! Verse 14 reminds us again of Haggai 2, which we quoted earlier.

Haggai 2:7-9 — *And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. **The silver is mine, and the gold is***

mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

We know that Haggai 2 is talking about the church because that is what Hebrews 12:27-28 tells us. Zechariah 14:14 is also talking about the church.

Verse 15 revisits the plague of verse 12. The idea here is to show that whatever wealth does not fall to God's people as spoils of war will all be destroyed. Again, this language is highly figurative. It is describing the victory of faith that the church had over Rome. As a result of that conflict, the Christians were left with everything, and Rome was left with nothing.

Zechariah 14:16

16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

The "nations" that came against Jerusalem is Rome, which came against spiritual Jerusalem, the church. That Rome is called "nations" rather than "nation" reflects the historical reality — Rome was an amalgam of all the nations it had conquered. When Rome came against you it was as if all the nations of the world had come against you.

Verse 16 is directed to those in the Roman empire who were left. That is, verse 16 is directed to those in Rome who did not experience the terrible judgments of the previous verses. Who are those Romans? There can be only one answer to that question, and Jesus gave it in Luke 11:23 — “He that is not with me is against me.” The Romans who are left are those Romans who switched sides! They are those Romans who heard and obeyed the gospel. How do we know that? Verse 16 tells us that when it says that they “shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” They are worshiping God! These Romans are the Romans who saw the errors of their ways and obeyed the gospel. We know there were such people from the many examples that we see in the New Testament.

But why are they keeping the Jewish feast of the tabernacles? Does that mean that the entire old covenant law will be brought back into force in the end times as the premillennialists teach? Of course not. As we have discussed before, we know that the old law cannot be in force with Jesus as our King and High Priest (Hebrews 7:12). And we know that the old law was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14) and has been replaced with the new law of Christ (Hebrews 8:13; Galatians 6:2).

So what is meant here? The language continues to be highly figurative, so we need to ask what is meant by the *symbol* of the feast of the tabernacles. Why would the converted Romans be shown keeping that particular feast? The feast of tabernacles commemorated the exodus from Egypt when the Israelites dwelt in tents and tabernacles. On the first day of the feast thirteen bulls were offered, twelve on the next day, eleven on the third, and so on until seven were offered on the seventh day — making a total of seventy offerings. The rabbis taught that the number seventy depicted the number of nations in the world, which meant that this feast looked forward to a time when both Jew and Gentile would worship God together.

One of the most important rituals of the feast of tabernacles was the pouring of water in the temple. A specially appointed priest was sent to the pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher to bring water from the pool. This water was poured by the high priest into a basin at the foot of the altar amidst the blasting of trumpets and the singing of the Hallel (Psalm 113-118). This pouring of water looked forward toward the outpouring of God's spirit upon all nations as mentioned in Joel 2:28 (I will pour out my spirit on all flesh) and which Peter in Acts 2 says was fulfilled in the first century. So what then would this particular feast figuratively depict? It would depict the escape from bondage, the union of Jew and Gentile, and the outpouring of God's spirit upon the first century church. Each of those events is shown in the conversion to Christ of a Roman citizen. They have escaped bondage and death, and they have joined with Jewish believers in the church.

And doesn't that make perfect sense in the context of this verse? Does it make any sense at all to have this verse teach instead that the entire old covenant law will be brought back into force at the end of time? And if that were the case, don't we think we would read something about it in the New Testament somewhere? Do we really think God's description of such an unusual event would be found only in just seven words here at the end of verse 16? And how could we square such a view with what the New Testament teaches on the subject of the old law and the end of time? Instead, let's keep it simple. And verse 16 simply tells us that some Romans would be converted, would escape the judgment of Rome, and would enjoy the blessings of those in the church.

Zechariah 14:17-19

17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to

worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. 18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. 19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

What about the Romans who are not converted? We have already seen what happens to them, but these verses tell us again. The message of verses 17-19 is simple: those who reject Christ will not receive the blessings promised for the people of God but will instead receive wrath and indignation. Here that wrath and indignation is described as a lack of rain and a plague.

Who receives that judgment? Those who do not come to Jerusalem to worship God and who do not keep the feast of the tabernacles. In short, the judgment will come upon those Romans who are not among the converted Romans described in verse 16. Romans, just as with everyone, fell into two categories: those for Christ and those against Christ. Verse 16 describes the first group. Verses 17-19 describe the second group.

But these people aren't Romans — they are Egyptians. Isn't that what verse 18 says? No. Egypt is being used here as a symbol, just as the plague and the rain are being used here as symbols. Egypt is used frequently in the Bible as a symbol for death,

oppression, persecution, and captivity. And that is how Egypt is used here to describe Rome. Revelation 11:8 likewise uses Egypt as a symbol for Rome.

And with verse 19, Rome is finished. Nothing more needs to be said. Rome has fulfilled its role in God's plan, and Rome has been judged and found wanting. Every Roman has been dealt with — the many who fought against Christ as well as the few who were converted to Christ. As Revelation 18:2 would later say, "Babylon the great is fallen!"

So how then does the book of Zechariah end? How else? The book ends with a beautiful description of the church.

Zechariah 14:20-21

20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. 21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

What is the time frame of these closing verses? Verse 20 begins with a phrase that we recognize, “in that day,” and verse 21 repeats it. Our time frame remains the first century.

Verses 20 and 21 tell us that the new Jerusalem, the church, is very different from the old Jerusalem. As we saw earlier, old Jerusalem was full of people who cared nothing for God or the things of God, but instead were concerned only about themselves. Their infighting led to the desecration of the temple and the deaths of thousands. Eventually the Romans broke through the wall and destroyed the city and the temple.

And the church? Everything in the church is consecrated to God and to his service, even the smallest things. And there is nothing unclean in the church. In short, the new Jerusalem is the opposite of what old Jerusalem had become at its end. Verses 20 and 21 makes these points with a series of illustrations.

First, the bells of the horses in spiritual Jerusalem would have inscribed upon them the phrase “holiness unto the Lord.” These “bells” were small pieces of metal that were hung around the necks of horses as ornaments, and they often had the owner’s name inscribed on them. Here they have a phrase that under the old law appeared on the headdress of the high priest (Exodus 28:36). The point here is that the smallest and seemingly most inconsequential thing in the church would be as consecrated to God as was the headdress of the high priest.

A second illustration points to the ordinary pots that were used in the temple, for example, to remove ashes (Exodus 27:3). Under the old law, such pots were treated very differently from the bowls that were maintained before the altar to hold the sacrificial offering. In the new Jerusalem, there would no longer be any such distinction. Every pot in the church would be as holy and consecrated to God as were the sacrificial bowls in the old covenant.

Verse 21 expands upon this illustration: “Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein.” Under the old law, there were *secular* pots and there were *holy* pots. Not so in the church. In the church, there is no longer a distinction between secular and holy. Everything is holy — from the smallest bell on a horse and from the most ordinary looking pot. They are all dedicated to God.

The phrase “seethe therein” means to boil therein. These pots may have been used to cook the meat for the fellowship offering in Leviticus 3 and 7. The fellowship offering was a time for thanksgiving to God, which harmonizes well with the feast of tabernacles mentioned earlier.

The idea here is that old Levitical distinctions in degrees of holiness in society (priests, Levites, people), in the temple (outer court, holy place, holy of holies), and in animals (clean, unclean) would disappear. Instead, everything would now be equally holy.

Now, with that description, does it sound to you as if Zechariah was anticipating the return of the old Mosaic system? Many say that he was, but what do you think? Would these closing verses make any sense if the old Mosaic system was ever going to be revived? Zechariah’s message here is that everything will be different in the church. In that respect, these comparisons remind us of the numerous similar comparisons we see in the book of Hebrews. The new covenant replaced the old covenant because the new covenant is better than the old covenant. Why would the old law ever come back once we have the new?

The final illustration in this book is that “in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.” The term “Canaanite” is used symbolically here to depict an unclean person. Such will have no place in the new Jerusalem. Revelation makes the same point, also near the close of that book.

Revelation 21:27 — *And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

The church is the body of the saved. Everyone who is saved is in the church. Everyone who is lost is outside the church.

And with that we conclude our study of the wonderful book of Zechariah! This book may be neglected elsewhere, but it is not neglected here, and I am thankful to the elders here for the opportunity I have had to teach it.

Ten Lessons for Today from our Study of Zechariah

Lesson #1: The Bible can be understood.

The book of Zechariah has a reputation as a difficult book. And that reputation likely explains why the book has so often been neglected. But common sense goes a long way in the study of the Scriptures. By zooming in to study each verse and each word, but then zooming out to make sure we are keeping the context and the time frame in mind, we were able to navigate and understand this book. As always, the Bible is its own best commentary, and so we always turned there first to understand a difficult verse in Zechariah. But the Bible has a historical setting, as do the prophecies in the Bible, and so we also needed to study history to understand what was being said. The tools we used here will be valuable to us as we begin our study of Revelation.

But the main point here is that the Bible is meant to be understood, and we should never be scared off by something that seems difficult or that has a reputation for being difficult. We can understand God's word, and that is a great blessing.

Lesson #2: The people of God can become the enemies of God.

This sad truth is on display in the book of Zechariah. The people of God who were listening to Zechariah and rebuilding the temple would, by the time of Christ, largely have become the enemies of God and enemies of the cross. It was for that reason that the great judgment of AD 70 occurred.

We, as the people of God, should always remember that warning. If we stray from the right path, even slightly, that departure may create ripples that cause later generations to stray far from the right path. The people of God do not become the enemies of God in a single step. It is a gradual process, and one that we must constantly guard against.

Lesson #3: The enemies of God can become the people of God.

We see a wonderful truth throughout Zechariah that is the opposite of the sad truth we just looked at. Instead of the people of God becoming the enemies of God, the enemies of God can become the people of God. All throughout this book we see that the eternal kingdom would include both Jew and Gentile. That was God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12, and it was fulfilled in Christ and his eternal kingdom.

Lesson #4: If God will punish Jerusalem, God will punish anyone.

This is a sobering truth — eventually the second chances ran out for Jerusalem. We may be tempted to think that we will be saved by our heritage, but no one had a better heritage than Jerusalem, and that heritage did not save it.

We may have been raised in the church, and we may have parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and on and on who were faithful members of the church, and who were elders and preachers. But that godly heritage will not save us if we are not faithful ourselves to God. In fact, that godly heritage may have the opposite effect if we are unfaithful despite all of those spiritual advantages (2 Peter 2:20-22).

Lesson #5: If God will punish Rome, God will punish anyone.

Well, if our heritage won't save us, how about our usefulness? What if we do many wonderful works? What if we send Bibles all over the world to spread the gospel? What if God can use us to do many wonderful things?

Our usefulness will serve us no better than our heritage, if we ourselves are not faithful to God. And Rome is a perfect example of that. Few nations were more useful to God in spreading the gospel than was Rome. The Roman peace of that time allowed the word to spread to the corners of the known world. And God used Rome to fulfill his promises to judge Jerusalem. And even the Roman persecution played a part in God's plan — it helped the church to remain pure and focused in its early period of growth. Intense persecution has a way of weeding out the half-hearted! But did Rome's usefulness to God save it from judgment? Hardly. In fact, we are about to study a book (Revelation) that is devoted to describing the judgment of Rome. Yes, Rome played a vital role in the plan of God — but that did not save it. Both Rome and Jerusalem serve as good examples of the old adage that "it could be that the purpose of your life is only to serve as a warning to others!" We should heed those warnings.

Lesson #6: If God can punish Rome, God can punish anyone.

Some may think that they are beyond the reach of God. Some may think that they are secure apart from God, and that God's judgment will never reach them. If so, they are sadly mistaken.

Obadiah 1:3-4 — *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle,*

and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord.

That was both Rome's attitude and Rome's fate. In fact, Daniel 2 tells us that it was the church that swept Rome away along with the other kingdoms of this world. But Rome was the mightiest kingdom on earth, some would say the mightiest kingdom that had ever been on earth. If anyone could ever escape the judgment of God by relying on their own power, it would have been Rome. But Rome could not, and neither can anyone else. If mighty Rome could be brought down to the ground by God, then God can bring anyone and anything down to the ground. We will not be saved by our own might and power.

Lesson #7: God will be faithful to all of his promises.

Why do I emphasize the word "all"? Because God's faithfulness to his promises is something that should be remembered by both his *faithful* people and by *unfaithful* people. We often sing "standing on the promises," which is a wonderful song, but the wicked are also standing on the promises! The difference is that the wicked are standing with their fists raised up in defiance to God. But God has promises for the wicked just as God has promises for the faithful. And God will be faithful to *all* of his promises. That is a message of Zechariah.

Lesson #8: There is one church, and it is a royal priesthood.

We mentioned a moment ago the blessings for the Gentiles that were promised to Abraham and that are a major theme of Zechariah. A related theme is that God's people are one — they are a unified people. The kingdom would include both Jew and Gentile, and the enmity between them would cease in the church; there would be peace. There is one church. And that one church is a royal priesthood. We also see that throughout the book of Zechariah, even to the point that the prophet placed crowns on the head of Joshua, the then-serving high priest. Why is the church a royal priesthood? Because the head of the church is both King and High

Priest — something that could never happen under the old law. There is no clearer indication anywhere in the Old Testament that the old law was never intended to be permanent. It was designed from the start to be replaced, and it was replaced at the cross.

Lesson #9: God loves, protects, and delivers his faithful people.

This wonderful truth is perhaps the central theme of Zechariah, and we will soon see that it is also the theme of Revelation. The special love that God has for his people is on display all throughout the Bible, but it really shines through in these two books.

Over and over in Zechariah God lifts the curtain to show his people the wonderful things that he was preparing for them. Few books have more Messianic prophecies than does Zechariah, perhaps Psalms and Isaiah, but those books are much longer than Zechariah. If there is such a thing as Messianic prophecy density, then Zechariah is at the top of that list!

Why? Why so many? Because God loved his people, and he wanted them to know what was coming. He wanted them to know what had been prepared for them. And the same is true today, although we now have the full revelation, unlike the people of Zechariah's day. We don't have to wonder about the coming Messiah and the coming kingdom because both have now already come. If they were blessed in seeing just a glimpse of those things, how much more blessed are we today?

Lesson #10: We were bought with a price.

We have now finished our study of Zechariah. What was your favorite verse? There are many to choose from, but my choice is Zechariah 13:7.

*Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man
that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shep-*

herd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

In 1 Corinthians 6:20, Paul tells us that we were bought with a price. What was that price? Zechariah 13:7 tells us. That price was that God the Father awakened his sword and smote his fellow — God the Son, the good shepherd — and he did so for the sake of the little ones, that is for our sake. It was by his stripes that we are healed, and those stripes were inflicted by God. It was God's will that Christ should suffer and die on our behalf, and that is the price that was paid for our redemption.

What is the book of Zechariah all about? It is all about Jesus. And again, that is something that Zechariah has in common with the book that we will start next week, the book of Revelation.

Eric Hall (2019)