

DECEMBER 23

Zechariah 4-5

This first part of Zechariah has had one main question; that is, how long will it be until the Lord shows mercy to Jerusalem? The book has also had two main men: Zerubbabel and Joshua. God is not only encouraging these men to lead the people and keep their eyes on the future that He has determined for Israel, but God is using them as symbols. In chapter 3 God blessed Joshua and used him as a symbol for the future cleansing of Israel. Now in chapter 4, God does a similar thing with Zerubbabel.

Zechariah 4

Vs. 1-3 There are many ideas of what this all means. To summarize, you have two olive trees through which the oil flows through pipes to a bowl above a lampstand. From the bowl the oil flows through channels to the lamp pods. It seems that the olive trees are Zerubbabel and Joshua through whom the Spirit is "flowing," and the lampstand is the nation and its testimony, giving light to the world. When we get to v. 14 the imagery shifts a little and some think the two anointed ones are the two witnesses of Revelation.

Vs. 4-10 It seems that Zerubbabel is being honored for his leadership in laying the foundation for the temple. God is saying he would finish it. This rebuilding is a shadow of the future temple, and so Zerubbabel's work will carry a lasting honor to it.

Vs. 6-7 This entire vision, with both the trees and the lampstand, is summed up as the Word of the Lord. God uses people, but it is His Word that makes us. This is how the Lord's work is done and Zerubbabel allowed himself to be a conduit for the Spirit's working. This is also a good word to us. Often we give lip-service to faith and following and think that what happens is really because of us. God says that isn't so. Here is something Jesus told His disciples repeatedly. It also has to do with mountains and I can barely wrap my head and heart around this. Matthew 17:20, *He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."*

V. 10 In some people's eyes, the temple foundation was a sad thing, in no way comparable to what Solomon had built; but it was really just a small beginning that will end in the Millennium. Here at least, Zerubbabel will finish it as God's workman. And there would be rejoicing.

Vs. 10-14 *These are the eyes of the Lord* that go into all the earth to give light and see or reveal. The *olive trees* are giving oil to the lampstand, acting as conduits for the Spirit's work. Again, in v. 14, people have seen the ministry of the two witnesses in Revelation 11. Apparently the work of those two witnesses in Revelation 11 will be momentous, but we can't see it yet because it hasn't happened; and because, like Zerubbabel and Joshua, they seem obscure and only occupy a few verses of Scripture. It is God who gives them and their work importance.

That is the same with us and our witness as disciples in the harvest. Our work, as small as it may seem, is momentous in God's hands and His plan of salvation. And, our work is ordained by His Word.

Zechariah 5

In the answer to the question regarding when God will have mercy on Jerusalem, we have seen God preparing Jerusalem and Israel for the Millennial Kingdom. Now the sin of the people needs to be removed.

Vs. 1-4 This *flying scroll* is exactly the size of the tabernacle in the wilderness. It has two sides just as the law was inscribed on two tablets. It is representative of the entire law. God said the people would be cursed if they didn't hold to the laws. Not only that, the entire world will be

judged by the Ten Commandments. Paul says as much in Romans 2. It appears that the sin dealt with here is the sin of our depravity, that is, the sickness in our hearts that rebels against God. This is the innate root of the original sin. The law reveals the sickness within us.

Vs. 5-11 In this judgment on sin, the sin of Israel is being removed and stored in a building in Babylon. As to who the woman is, what the nature of this iniquity is, and why it is stored in Babylon, read Revelation 17. This is the kind of sin that a person would be enticed to enjoy in Walmart or Las Vegas. The judgment on this sin is being kept for Revelation 17. We have no clue who the women with stork wings are. If they are angels, they are a new brand of angel about which we know nothing, since all angels are usually referred to as men.

It is one thing to think of cleansing one person of sin and evil, but God will do it to an entire nation. In fact, those seven years we're reading about in Revelation will be so intense that the physical hardship and spiritual harassment of those times will "cleanse" many people and it will persuade them to be part of God's plan.

Revelation 14

At this point, having described the incredible allowance given to Satan and the two beasts to wreak havoc on the people of God, a bunch of calming, future visions are given. They are future in that God is showing them to John now, but they will be fulfilled in the future chronology of events yet to come in the Tribulation. God is showing them now to give hope that will offset the darkness that has just been revealed.

Notice how many different angels are mentioned in this chapter.

Vs. 1-5 In spite of the power of hell, the 144,000 will win the day. I think these guys were already set into ministry in the first 3.5 years, but are being shown in honor at this point because they will endure to the end.

V. 1 Some people think this is a vision of the day of Christ's return, that all 144,000 will be alive and come to Jerusalem as the antichrist and his army march north to the battle of Armageddon.

V. 3 This song is particular only to them, like a ribbon a soldier gets for fighting in a particular battle.

Vs. 4-5 Since they come to faith in the Tribulation, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7:26, *I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is*, they do remain as they are. You might wonder where God is going to find this many people, but remember that at the beginning of the Tribulation there will be 7+ billion people and 144,000 is only three football stadiums full of people. Also, the seven years of the Tribulation will be pretty intense. Jesus said there would be an end to "normal" life. I doubt that there will be many marriages during that time, or an Olympics or normal seasons of sport competitions.

Notice that their marching orders are to *follow the Lamb*. He will lead them into some very dangerous places. Just think of this wording. They will *follow the Lamb*. That presupposes that the Lamb is there going before them. For us too, this means that as we follow the Lord every day, He is really going before us. When we are mistreated or shunned for Him, they are really doing it to Him. We often feel bad for ourselves, but we should really feel bad for the Lord because we know He's great and doesn't deserve to be ignored or ridiculed. But again, we often feel alone and sorry for ourselves, both of which are the wrong understanding of the situation. We are following Him and experiencing how others are treating Him.

John 12:26 – *If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.*

Luke 10:16 – *The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*

Notice too that their testimony is their faith and their lives lived for Jesus. It doesn't say that any of them are preachers, but they will bear witness to the light. You don't have to be a preacher to tell someone where the exit is in a burning building.

Vs. 6-7 This angel may be the one empowering the 144,000. Important to note is that everyone on earth will hear the gospel. Some people think this is a pretty grim gospel, but you can find instances of John the Baptist and Jesus giving this same message as good news.

V. 8 This, I think, is that nation of commerce and world corruption being judged. Later it will say that it is the beast that destroys Babylon, because apparently, this city's/nation's sinful influence was independent of his. The object of Satan, the antichrist and the false prophet will be to have the worship of every person. They will allow no competition.

The destruction of Babylon will give hope to the people who have to live on earth the final 3.5 years of the Tribulation. This destruction is announced here, but it won't happen until after chapter 16 and the seventh bowl. This is an important event we will read about in chapter 17. I

think it is connected to our reading in Zechariah today, regarding the sin that was removed to Babylon.

Vs. 9-11 This is the judgment on all those who take the *mark* of the beast. This will give hope to those who suffer because they refused to take the mark. Notice that taking the mark is fatal.

V. 12 This is going to be hard for God's people to see those who receive the mark boasting and being privileged during the Tribulation, but their laughter will become wailing. This is the second time we've seen this statement and this call to endurance. It means this will be extremely hard on those believers living through the Tribulation. They will need to read this and hold to it. If we have this written for us now, those who enter into the Tribulation can read this and know beforehand that those who take the mark of the beast will be in real trouble, even if that trouble doesn't come for a couple of years. The life of faith is lived by patient trust in the Word of God.

Matthew 24:9-14 - Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

V. 13 Again, this is an encouragement to the saints. They should not be terrorized by the threat of death, but calmly give up testimony as they die. Read Luke 12:4-11 to see what Jesus said to His disciples. Notice that *blessed* is promised twice in this verse.

Vs. 14-16 Though still future in the Tribulation, the saints are encouraged by this vision of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. How about that, a vision of the future in a vision of the future. Mathematically, that is Hope, to the second power.

Vs. 17-20 Jesus spoke of this harvest in the parable of the wheat and the weeds in Matthew 13:36-43. It sounds a lot like this. Notice that the angel comes from the altar. Under that altar are the martyrs.

V. 20 It doesn't seem that this can be literal since *1600 stadia* is about 185 miles. Whatever this means, something like this will happen and it won't be pretty. But again, who knows. We are about to read about God turning all the waters of the world into blood, as a sign against mankind for killing His followers.

I find it interesting that as God reveals some very difficult things for His people, He also shows them a vision of hope in the not so distant future. I think part of the message for us as disciples in the harvest is that we need to keep a vision of the future, good and bad, before our eyes to inspire our passion and hope. We need to remember why it is important to reach the lost and make disciples, who make disciples.

Psalm 142

The only cave we know of that David ran to was the cave of Adullam. These were hard days for David. David wrote and sang this psalm then. I'll bet no one danced, but they learned what it was to pour their hearts out before the Lord. What is interesting is that as David prayed so naturally and deeply to God, it inspired the people around him. How do I know that? There is a famous event in David's life that takes place in that cave that won the hearts of his men and became a legend. See 2 Samuel 23:13ff.

Vs. 1-4 You can imagine that after years of running and crying out, David wondered if it would ever end, if he would ever be heard. Surely the people of Israel had forgotten him. Had the Lord forgotten him?

Vs. 5-7 David had been anointed by God, and although the road was long and hard, God was still protecting him. David felt like he was in prison, but he never forgot that the Lord was his only refuge and help.

Proverbs 30:21-23

I think we get the drift of all of these except for the *unloved woman*. The word "unloved" literally means "hated." I think the idea here is that she earned the hate or is intensely bitter of heart, and so what she brings into the marriage is an incredible bitterness and unrest. She definitely needs Jesus.