

## DECEMBER 24

Wow, we're almost there, Christmas and the end of the year. This is one of the biggest shopping days of the year for men who have waited until the last minute.

### Zechariah 6-7

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This concludes all the visions that Zechariah had on that one night back in 1:7. What a long night of visions. This will conclude the visions of bringing God's mercy to Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-8 Since these are chariots, fighting appears to be in view, but the Ethiopian official in Acts was in a chariot and he was just crusin' home. It says they are patrolling the earth, keeping watch over it and bringing news back to the Lord. There are only two directions mentioned because invaders only ever came into Israel from the north and the south. Since the horses' colors are the same as those in Revelation, it is thought that this event is the judgment on the earth leading up to the Millennial Kingdom. Who knows? Since no war is mentioned here, it could simply be a symbol of God's watching over the Gentile nations which will eventually lead to peace for Jerusalem and Judah. It is interesting to me that God would use angels like this since He knows and sees everything.

The focus changes now to matters dealing with the completion of the current temple.

Vs. 9-15 This is the actual crowning of Joshua to be the high priest, but it is symbolic of Jesus, the Branch, the Messiah reigning over Israel. We see this crowning of the priest in Exodus 39:30. In Hebrews we read how Jesus is both priest and king. In Israel that would not have worked, but it works with Jesus because he is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Vs. 12-13 These are very interesting verses. The Jews knew that the Messiah, the Branch, would build the temple. Think, then, of the significance of these words: *Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."* (John 2:19) These words of Jesus were not only a part of prophecy, but they were mentioned again and again at His trial; and as He hung on the cross they mocked Him with them.

Apparently the temple will be damaged in the Tribulation and the Messiah will rebuild it. We've already seen what the millennial temple will look like.

V. 14 They were to place that crown in the temple they were building as a reminder of the future glory of the millennial temple and its priest-king.

V.15 The nations will help to build the millennial temple.

#### Zechariah 7

Vs. 1-3 This event took place almost two years after the visions we just read about. The temple was in the middle of its rebuilding. It is a question about fasting, but it is really a question about religious routine. The fasts mentioned here were not prescribed by the Lord, but became traditions of the people. The fast of the fifth month was commemorating the day Babylon burned down the temple and destroyed it. The fast of the seventh month was mourning the murder of Gedaliah, the first governor of Judah after the destruction of the temple.

Vs. 4-7 God says here that He never told them to do this. The fast was for themselves, to commemorate something important to them, but it was not to seek God's will or favor. It was like a patriotic day of mourning.

Vs. 8-14 It was the false religiousness of the former generations that brought judgment upon them. God is trying to show them that in this rebuilt temple, religion without true relationship will only bring them judgment. Religion, without loving God and doing what He says, helps no

one. For an interesting slant on this, read Isaiah 58, which also has to do with useless fasting. God didn't like it.

As disciples, in all our work in the harvest, in our work with people and in our churches, our first love for Christ has to keep growing. Without a deep warm love for Christ, we grow hard and religious. That first love was born out of salvation and stays alive and burning as we follow Him in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

## **Revelation 15**

V. 1 I'm guessing that at least two years have passed since the death of the witnesses and the commencement of the mystery. There are seven more plagues to be poured out. I'm thinking they do not happen right at the end, in the last month, so that there is still a chance for people to decide and so that those to be punished can be punished for a while. Not only that, a great gathering of armies will take place north of Jerusalem and it will take months to get that organized in a wrecked world. While the bowls will be poured out in quick order, it could be six months to a year from the first bowl to the final. Then there will be the mourning over the destruction of the whore of Babylon, and then comes the end. Anyway, I think there will be some time in this.

Vs. 2-4 Notice who is here, those who have conquered the beast. How did they conquer him? That was the mystery. These are martyrs who have conquered the beast and Satan by their testimony and deaths through the blood of the Lamb. God uses the foolishness of the world to shame the wise and the weak of the world to defeat the strong, and He uses things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

I'm not sure what the *song of Moses* is, but it is identical to *the song of the Lamb*. Notice that Christ will be the *King of the nations* and that these things have become a testimony to the nations. Nations will come and worship the Lamb. This "witness to the nations" could be the song of the Lamb, but what about Moses? Glad you asked. Look at what Paul says in Romans 9:17, *For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."*

God has been giving testimony in all of this. The bowls are plagues, so if you'd like to see the full connection to Moses and testimony to God and plagues, read Exodus 9:13-16. It could be that this testimony to the world is a part of the expression of the "song" of Moses. Notice the connection between God's people, the oppressive unbelief of the enemy and the plagues. In the end, God used Pharaoh's sin as a testimony to the world, and nations feared God. The same thing is happening here.

Just for trivia, notice that the central theme of the song is not God's holiness. I think that holiness is an angelic thing. The central theme of this song is about God's harvest and acclaim among the nations. That is the plan of redemption.

Vs. 5-8 If we thought we had seen "solemn" before, this is a new level. As we'll see in chapters 16 and 17, the death of the saints heightens the wrath of God that is about to be poured out. This scene is literally awesome. There is glory and purity and righteousness and power and wrath all gathered together, so intensely, that even in heaven, you couldn't enter the *sanctuary*. As the song "Awesome God" says, when God has rolled up His sleeves, it isn't for show. He means business. He is about to avenge His saints.

And even today, as He gives up His Son's followers in this part of the harvest, by whatever means or circumstances, it has an intentional purpose in His plan. And He's keeping track and taking names. Yet, our business is just to love Him, reach out to the lost and to make disciples, who make disciples. When He thinks we're done and ready for retirement, we'll receive, by whatever means or circumstances, as Paul put it, *the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*. (Philippians 3:14)

## **Psalm 143**

Somehow my heart feels the deep cry of David in this psalm. So much of this sounds like what David says in Psalm 27.

Vs. 1-2 It is hard not to understand God's silence and the hard times we endure as God's anger with us.

Vs. 3-4 Who hasn't felt like this, especially when you've tried to do the right thing and have received criticism?

Vs. 5-6 When all you've got are memories, you still have the Word and you can seek God.

Vs. 7-8 It is natural and necessary for us to want and need assurances of God's love.

Vs. 9-10 We not only need deliverance. We need to learn when God takes us through times like this, so that we can be stronger in faith and more trusting of His care and leading.

Vs. 11-12 What a deep and profound plea to God...*for Your name's sake... for I am Your servant.*

Some people object to a prayer like this for vengeance or justice. Yet we've seen the martyrs in Revelation 6:10 ask the same thing. It is interesting that in the next chapters of Revelation we'll see God avenge His servants. Those who made His servants suffer will suffer, not just because they touched God's people, but because there is a deeper, unseen reality.

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.*

## **Proverbs 30:24-28**

So, if you had to give a devotional on these verses, what would you say God would like to see in us? What is the quality in each of these to which He is drawing our attention?