

Another Look at Yourself

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The book of Zechariah, along with those of Haggai and Malachi, forms a triad that we call the "postexilic" prophets, obviously because they were written after the Exile. The Exile, as I indicated in the first study of this series, was a time of terrible humiliation for the Jews. They had spent seventy long years in Babylon and Persia, and they returned to their land greatly reduced in number. Only about forty-two thousand came back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. They were greeted upon their return by a picture of absolute desolation. The little cities in the heartland of Judah lay in ruins. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed; there was a great deal of rubble in the streets and the walls had been broken down and had not been repaired. And in the middle of Jerusalem stood the burned-out hulk of the temple, which had been left behind by Nebuchadnezzar and his troops when he invaded Judah in the Sixth Century. It was a very difficult time.

There is nothing quite so discouraging as a rebuilding project. It was one thing, I am sure, to have built the temple when the materials were new and fresh, when they had Hiram of Tyre to assist them, and they could not quite envision how it would finally appear. It was exciting, and there was a great deal of momentum to the project. But it is a different matter entirely to have to take soot blackened stones and clean them, to have to salvage lumber which had been used before, and rebuild with these. That is difficult. So God raised up these prophets at this time to encourage them in this very discouraging task.

I am sure that many of us are involved in the process of reconstruction. Our lives, for one reason or another, have been ruined, and are just as blighted and blasted as the nation of Judah was. And now we are going back and picking up the pieces. That is so discouraging, because the materials have been distorted and ruined in some way, and it is difficult to put it all back together again. There is nothing quite so difficult as reconstruction.

If this is your case, then these little books are for you, because these are words of comfort and encouragement. Zechariah describes his message as "good words, comforting words." The particular term he uses finds its root in the Hebrew word for "womb." It is the kind of compassion and comfort a mother gives her child. These books are so different from those of the earlier prophets, the Eighth Century prophets, who were God's lash, whose words stung, who drove the nation in order to get them to return to the Lord. But how different are these postexilic books, because they were delivered to a beaten people, who were depressed and discouraged, who felt their weakness, and who needed to be lifted up out of their gloom, to have their vision renewed, who needed an entirely different perspective on the project that lay ahead. So these are great words of encouragement for all of us.

A brief word of introduction to the book of Zechariah, and then we will look at it in some detail. We do not know much about Zechariah the prophet. Twenty-five or thirty men in the Old Testament bore that name, so it is difficult at times to sort out the various individuals involved. But evidently he was a priest, and came from a long line of distinctive priests. His father Berechiah and grandfather Iddo were well known in Israel. Iddo served at the head of one of the priestly courses, so Zechariah was also revered in Israel, and he had an extensive teaching ministry as a priest, as well as his prophetic ministry as a prophet. There is some indication that his father died when he was quite young, because his father himself never became the head of a priestly course as he was destined to become. We do not know much about Zechariah's life, except that at this time God raised up this man and gave him a message.

The message revolves around the meaning of his name, for Zechariah means "God remembers". That would be important for the returned exiles to know. They felt at times that they were a forgotten people, that God had turned his back on them, and they needed to recall that God remembered. Actually, a number of priests during the exilic period were given this name, so it is evident that this was a thought which pervaded much of the nation of Judah at

this time.

Zechariah's prophecy is divided into four major units. The first six verses of chapter 1 are an introductory section which was delivered between verses 9 and 10 of Haggai 2. Zechariah 1, verse 1, reads, "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet..." Verse 9 of Haggai 2 ends a prophecy delivered "on the twenty-first of the seventh month," and verse 10 begins, "On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Haggai the prophet Zechariah began his ministry just about a month before Haggai delivered his third message. So these two men worked together hand-in-glove to minister to the nation of Judah.

Zechariah's introductory message was given in the eighth month, which would be our month of November. Then a message followed a couple of months later, in the eleventh month, which would be our month of February. This second message is built around a series of eight visions Zechariah saw in the night. As you know, the Hebrew prophets are frequently referred to as "seers," because they saw things no one else saw. This was the case in Zechariah's ministry. The Lord revealed certain truths to him through visions which came to him in the middle of the night. These prophecies are given to us in chapter 1, verse 7, through chapter 6.

The third division is found in chapters 7 and 8. This message was given about two years after the visions of the second message. It is basically a response to the questions of a delegation of men that came to him from Bethel. The final message of Zechariah begins with chapter 9 and continues on to the end of the book in chapter 14. This section is a series of apocalyptic visions, i.e., it takes us way down to the end time, shows us the future of Israel and of the nations surrounding Israel. It is very much like the book of Revelation.

We will look at all of these in successive studies, but now we want to look at the first three chapters of Zechariah--the introductory message, and then the first four visions of the second message.

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying, "The Lord was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Return to Me," declares the Lord of hosts. "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." ' But they did not listen or give heed to Me," declares the Lord. "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, 'As the Lord of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'"

Zechariah begins by taking these exiles back into the pre-exilic period and reminding them of the fate of their fathers, the men who went off into exile in Babylon. He reminds them that, from the very beginning, prophets had called upon them to return. If you go back to the Eighth Century prophets, to Hosea and Amos and Micah and Isaiah, you see that their word to Israel was repeatedly: "Return! Return! Return!" This figure suggests a nation going off in the wrong direction, each step taking them further and further away from the Lord, There is only one direction where they will find release, and that is in returning to the place from which they departed. They are to return. That term occurs over and over again in the prophets, right down to the time of the Exile. But they did not listen.

Zechariah asks rhetorically, "Where are the fathers today?" Well, the answer is: "They are dead in Babylon." The whole generation that was deported perished in Babylon. "Where are the prophets?" Even the prophets did not endure. They also died in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in the other places to which they were deported. But God's word overtook them. God's word did not fail. God did what he had purposed to do. They had to go through this period of discipline.

It was a terrible time, but it was a redemptive time. It was medicinal. It was designed to purify and cleanse and correct the nation. God is so faithful to do that. His word will always catch up to us. Now, Zechariah is not talking

about the sort of sins which grow out of our weakness, which we repent of and desire to put away. He is talking about sins we commit, to use the Old Testament idiom, "with a high hand"--belligerent sins, determined sins. If we determine to go our own way and pursue our own path, the Lord will let us go, and he will cry out to us to return. But if we do not return, his word will overtake us, sooner or later. We simply do not get away. He pursues us because he loves us. That is what happened to the nation. God pursued them into exile, and his word overtook them there. That is why Zechariah said for them to recall what God did for his people, and not to be like their fathers, but to return.

It is significant that this prophecy is dated as it is, because it actually occurred after they had returned to the Lord. You remember from our opening study in Haggai that their first problem was investing time and effort in their own concerns, rather than in God's house. They were rebuked for that by the prophet Haggai, and they returned--prior to the time of Zechariah's message. So Zechariah is not saying, "Now, for the first time, you must return," but "Remember, this is the foundation of everything, of all your reconstruction--to return, and to keep on returning, to God. Because that is where you are going to find the life and the resources with which to build. There is no other source." As God told the people before the Exile, in Jeremiah 2:

"For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns, That can hold no water."

They were looking for help from every source except from the living God of Israel. The result of that search led them into exile. That is why Jeremiah said, "Go back. Return to the fountain of living waters." And this is Zechariah's word: "Return to the Lord, because there is where you find what you need in order to rebuild."

So, if you are in the process of reconstructing your life, what you need is the Lord. He is the only One who can provide the strength to reconstitute your life. You are not going to find it in anything else. Everything else is a broken cistern that leaks, that does not last, that stagnates. There is only one source of living water, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

That message is the foundation of everything which follows in this book. It occurred at the beginning of Zechariah's ministry, and from this point on he begins to develop the specific process of rebuilding, the things that God would do if they returned. "Return to Me," declares the Lord of hosts, "that I may return to you." That is very much like James' word in James 4: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

Then, beginning in verse 7, some two months later, Zechariah sees a series of visions which spell out the results of returning to the Lord. We will not take time to read all of them, because they are very complicated and extensive--you can do that on your own--but I will try to tell you what Zechariah saw. I will comment on each one, and we will read something of the commentary Zechariah himself makes upon each of the visions.

In the first vision, Zechariah saw a man seated upon a horse. The horse was standing in the middle of a grove of myrtle trees-- low, evergreen shrubs native to Palestine and all of the Near East. In this vision, they depict the nation of Israel. The angel who is seated on the horse is called later in the vision "the angel of the Lord," i.e., the angel of Jehovah, or, in Malachi, "the angel of the covenant." There it is clear that he is the One of whom John the Baptist was the forerunner. So it is Messiah himself, seated on a horse, in the midst of the nation of Israel. This is very much like the picture we have in Revelation of the Lord walking in the midst of the candlesticks--the Lord himself, present, active, working behind the scenes in the midst of his church. This is the picture Zechariah sees.

Then, behind the angel of the Lord, seated on red, sorrel, and white horses, he sees other angelic beings. Zechariah asks who these are, and the angel responds, "These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth." And they report, verse 11, "We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet" An alternative reading is "at ease and quiet". Throughout the Old Testament that term is used in a derogatory way to refer to nations that are smug and self-contented, at peace because of their self-reliance. Jeremiah uses the same term to refer to the nation of Moab, Jeremiah 48:11:

Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been undisturbed on his lees, Neither has

he been emptied from vessel to vessel, Nor has he gone into exile. Therefore he retains his flavor, And his aroma has not changed.

So God says that he is going to shake Moab, that Moab is like wine that has settled and needs to be poured out. So that is the picture we have of the nations-smug, self-satisfied, at ease.

You recall from our last study that two years prior to these prophecies, Darius, the Persian emperor, had come to the throne, and unrest and rebellion had broken out all over the empire. Darius spent almost all his energy putting out these fires. But by 520 B.C., he had subdued all of these rebellions, and Persia was again at rest, at ease. And this was the angels' report. This is important, because the Jews thought that the great shaking which took place in the Persian empire prior to 520 was the precursor of the coming of the Lord. The prophets had predicted that there would be a cosmic shaking among the nations before Messiah would come. All the Jews in the land thought, "This is it! Messiah is coming!" But to their consternation, everything settled down. Darius was firmly in control again, and the armies of Persia held in subjection all the conquered nations. And the Jews gave way to discouragement.

But God said, "Listen, I'm in control. I'm the one who is patrolling the earth, and I know things are peaceful." This is a glimpse behind the scenes. One of the fallacies of secular history is that men try to interpret developments only in terms of what is seen and known. But the Scriptures show us that there are forces at work behind the events of history which can be observed, and that this is where ultimate reality lies. God says, "I'm aware of what is happening." Verse 12:

Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years?"

Is it not interesting that the Lord himself, the Messiah, is the one who intercedes for his people, who identifies with them. "How long will this people be submitted to this indignity?" The Lord answers, verse 13--good words, comforting words-

And the Lord answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words. So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.""

The Hebrew word used here for "jealous" means to get "intensely red," which is some indication of God's passion for his people. "I'm jealous for them, intolerant of all rivalry, of anything that would upset the relationship I have with them." That is his attitude toward his people. But in verse 15 he says,

"But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry [i.e., angry with his people, and he set these nations to scourge his people], they furthered the disaster."

So now God says, "I am very angry with the nations." Notice the complete turnabout. Verse 2 says, "The Lord was very angry with your fathers." He was angry because they would not return. But now he says, "I am very angry with the nations [your enemies], and I'm jealous for you." There is only one explanation for that change in the heart of God; it is because the people came back; they returned. Over and over again in the Old Testament you have that picture. God is either for us, or he is against us. When we refuse to go to him, the source of living water, he becomes our enemy-and a formidable enemy he is, indeed!-not because he wants to destroy us; rather, he brings to bear all the weight of his authority in order to bring us back. James tells us in James 4 that if we constitute ourselves the friend of the world, then we become the enemy of God, and God becomes hostile toward us. Is that not strange- that the God of love should become hostile toward us? But again, you see, it is redemptive. He wants to bring us back. And if we repent and lay hold of God, he becomes the enemy of our enemies, a formidable enemy, indeed. He will fight on our behalf. The picture that he gives is one of total deliverance. He is going to destroy every enemy arrayed against us.

Notice verse 16, which gives us a bit more detail as to what is involved in this jealousy:

Therefore, thus says the Lord, "I have returned to Jerusalem with compassion...."

The Revised Standard Version translates this correctly in the past tense. Remember that in verse 3 he said, "Return to Me, that I may return to you." They had returned to him; now he had returned to them. And because he had returned to Jerusalem, he says,

"My house will be built in it," declares the Lord of hosts [And it was, in less than three years after the writing of this book], "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem."

That is, surveying teams will again go forth over Jerusalem to prepare to rebuild. And within eighty years the entire city was restored and the walls rebuilt. Verse 17:

"Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

That is what he will do when he is for us. He will deliver us. He will overthrow every enemy.

Now, this prediction was never completely fulfilled in the history of Israel. It will be fulfilled in the Millennium, when Christ again reigns over his people. But it is fulfilled in the life of every believer who has returned to the Lord, who has gone to him and accepted him as the source of living water, and has begun to live life on the basis of a relationship with him. Then he becomes the adversary of all those who are arrayed against us, and he becomes involved in the process of reconstructing our lives--as he was with these people in Jerusalem.

The next two visions flow out of this first vision and are further explanations of it. Beginning in verse 18, there is a vision of four horns and four "craftsmen," or smiths. This further amplifies the statement that he is angry with the nations, and describes what he is going to do to them. The third vision is that of a man going out to measure Jerusalem. This corresponds to the Lord's statement that he is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion and will see to it that Jerusalem is restored.

Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there were four horns. So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. And I said, "What are these coming to do?" And he said, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man lifts up his head; but these craftsmen have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it."

He sees four animals, each of which has a great horn. The animals are not mentioned here, but later on he is told that the horns are terrified, and you cannot terrify horns; you can only terrify living beings. Then he sees four blacksmiths with great sledgehammers in their hands. Obviously they intend to do something, so he asks, "What are these coming to do?" And the angel who accompanies Zechariah through these visions interprets their intention for him: they are going to smash the horns that have cast down Israel so that no man can lift up his head. Throughout the Old Testament, wherever horns are mentioned, they almost always refer to political entities, national powers. At this point in history there were four great world powers which had humiliated Israel: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. These were the horns which had subjected Israel to such humiliation. What then are the smiths? They also are these nations. God raised up Assyria to punish Egypt, Babylon to punish Assyria, and Persia to punish Babylon. And he would raise up Greece to punish Persia. So at one time in history, these nations are horns; at the next stage in history, they are smiths, to deal out God's judgment on these nations. Notice that Israel does not lift a finger against these enemy nations. It is God who delivers them from all of their enemies.

The next vision, in chapter 2, is an explanation of what is going to happen to Jerusalem. Zechariah sees a man with some kind of tape measure, going out to measure the city, to discover the dimensions of Jerusalem. The

interpreting angel sends another angel after this young man, to tell him there is no need for that, that Jerusalem will be inhabited to such an extent that there will be no walls. All the natural lines of defense that Israel had erected in the past would be gone. People would be able to come and go; there would be freedom. Now, how do you defend a city without walls? Well, the angel goes on to describe how in verses 4 and 5:

[The angel] said to him, "Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls, because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. For I,' declares the Lord, 'Will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.' "

That is a supernatural line of defense—a wall of fire. God would protect his people. And his presence would be felt among them; the glory would return. Ezekiel had seen the Shekinah glory depart from the temple. And though the Shekinah would never be there again in visible form until the Millennium, God would be there, his presence would rule. Every resource that he had in himself would be available to them. They would not need to fear, they would not need to defend themselves, they would not need to act on their own behalf; God would deliver them. This is a picture of deliverance, which is the first stage of reconstruction. Zechariah wants us to know that God, who formerly was our enemy, once we have been reconciled to him, is our friend, and has constituted himself the enemy of every force arrayed against us.

Let me ask you, what are the enemies of your soul? This passage has never been fulfilled in Israel. They did rebuild the walls. These were the walls that Titus, the Roman general, later destroyed. And Jerusalem today is certainly not a city without walls, without perimeters of defense—not in the sense depicted here. This will never be true until the Millennium. So these are words addressed to us, which can be spiritually fulfilled in our lives. We need to ask ourselves, "What are our enemies?" Certainly not political entities, but enemies of the soul—our evil temper, our impatience, our critical spirit, our uncontrolled desires—these are the things that inveigh against our security, that oppress us and attempt to overwhelm us.

Our tendency is to erect natural lines of defense. I do not want to admit my weakness. I do not want people to see through to what I really am. So I will get defensive and erect my own barriers—barriers that separate me from people and separate me from God. I want to build my own walls, but God says, "No, my presence will be in your midst. I am your source of power. I am the fountain of living waters. I will defend you. I will take care of every enemy in your life." Not immediately—there is a process involved—but the outcome is final and certain, and it rests upon his faithfulness. He will deliver us. This is the first fact Zechariah wants us to see.

The second is found in chapter 3. The scene shifts a bit, away from the temple in the city to Joshua the high priest:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

The name "Satan," means "Accuser." So, what Zechariah is saying is that Satan is standing by to "satanize" him, or the Accuser is there to accuse him. That is Satan's role. He is the liar, the murderer, the accuser, the destroyer, and he wants to undermine the ministry of Joshua the high priest, who stands here before the angel of the Lord as a representative of the people.

And the Lord said to Satan, "The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

This is a picture of Joshua's having been snatched out of exile in Persia. His grandfather was slain by Nebuchadnezzar, his father was dragged off into exile, together with his family, including Joshua. And it is from the Exile that Joshua returned. He is like a smoking brand that has been snatched right out of the fire.

Now Joshua was clothed in filthy garments and standing before the angel. [A literal translation would be "garments spattered with dung"; he reeked of it.] And he spoke and said to those who were standing before him saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes." Then I

said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by. And the angel of the Lord admonished Joshua saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among those who are standing here. Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you--indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My Servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it., declares the Lord of hosts, 'and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'

Zechariah sees Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan stands at his right hand as the accuser. Joshua is clothed with filthy garments, and Satan points out the fact that Joshua is filthy. You notice that Joshua does not say a word--because he was filthy; he had no defense. There was nothing he could say on his own behalf. It is the angel of the Lord, the Lord himself, Messiah, who answers, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Then he takes off Joshua's filthy garments, and as he is dressing him, Zechariah cries out, "What about the turban? Have you forgotten the turban?" Why is the turban so important? Well, because the miter of the high priest bore a plaque across the front, on which was written, "Holy to the Lord." And Zechariah knew that the picture would not be complete without that statement, unless Joshua were once again established as holy to the Lord. So Joshua was clothed with the festal garments that the priests wore, and a clean turban was placed on his head.

And the angel says to Zechariah and his friends, the other priests who were seated there, "You men are symbols, because I'm going to bring in my Servant the Branch." This is the explanation of the cleansing process. This is why God is able to take those filthy garments off of Joshua and replace them with clean garments. Joshua stands as a symbol for every believer who has been cleansed, because the Branch is Jesus Christ himself. Isaiah 53 says that the Messiah grew up before the Father like a tender branch out of a dry land, and it goes on to describe how our iniquity was laid on him. Again in the book of Jeremiah, Messiah is described as "Tsemach," the Branch. And it was upon the Branch that the iniquity of us all was laid. The Lord takes off our filthy, dung-spattered garments, as it were, and places them on Jesus Christ. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Then we are clothed with his righteousness. Therefore Joshua could stand with his head high, and know that he was holy to the Lord. He was secure, free from guilt.

And that is true of you today. If you know Jesus Christ, if you have returned to him, you have been cleansed from all your iniquities--on the basis of Christ's death for you. The Branch did it on your behalf. Joshua did not say a word. It was not on the basis of his own defense; it was something the Lord did for him. Satan is still the accuser today. He is the one who makes you feel guilty when you wake up in the morning. Suddenly you are struck by the feeling that you are defiled. You let your mind track back over the things you have done the past week, and you think, "I am filthy. I have blown it!" And a terrible sense of oppression and guilt descends upon you. That is Satan. That is not the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God never condemns; he lifts up. He will put his finger on the sin and lift you out of it. But it is the accuser who has come to satanize you. Do not listen to him. Remember what Zechariah tells us--that we have been clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ--not because of anything we did; it is because of his work. And we share now his righteousness. That is the second thing Zechariah wants his people to know. God is the Deliverer. That is what salvation means. He has set us free from all the forces which oppose us. Sin will not have dominion over us. And he has cleansed us, purified us. Every day is a new beginning, and we are set free from guilt and anxiety and fear regarding the past. We wear on our heads this statement: "Holy to the Lord."

The passage continues with a very enigmatic statement in verse 9 and 10. There are many interpretations of this passage, and I hate to cloud the scene with yet another one, but it seems to me that Zechariah is saying something very important. The angel of the Lord calls Joshua's attention to a stone that is set before him, and describes it as a

stone with seven eyes on it. This is often interpreted as a stone with seven eyes engraved upon it. But I think, on the strength of the next vision, which we will examine in our next study, that it is, rather, God's eyes upon the stone. In the next vision there is reference to the seven eyes of God which run to and fro throughout the earth--a picture of God's attention fastened upon the things on the earth. Seven is the number of completion. God's attention here is wholly given over to this stone; nothing distracts him. And, in verse 9, he says to Joshua,

Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

So this is what I think occurred. The next vision, in chapter 4, tells us that this stone is the "top stone," the stone that went at the top of the temple. The prophets tell us that God said repeatedly, "I have set my name upon Jerusalem." I believe that at the top of the central arch in Solomon's temple, there was a great stone on which was inscribed the name of Jehovah. It was a way of symbolically representing his presence there. That was his temple, his city. When the temple was burned, that stone was among those which were scattered. And as the Jews were searching for stones to rebuild the temple, they found the top stone there among the weeds, waiting to be placed at the top of the temple when it was rebuilt. In the next vision the Lord tells Zerubbabel, the Governor, "You're going to place the top stone up there, and the people are all going to shout 'Grace, grace to it!' " That is what our translations say, but it could just as well be, "Grace, grace to him!" That is, "Grace to the One whose name is inscribed on the stone!"

The Lord is saying, "Joshua, we're going to build that temple, and put that top stone up there. And when you see the name of Jehovah on that stone, you'll say, "Grace to him! He is the One who did it! It was his work; he did it! Grace to him!" "It was accomplished only by grace. That is what the Lord wants us to know. "He who has begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ." Who will? He will. He is the One who delivers us. He is the One who has cleansed us. And he will not let us go until he completes that work. When we stand before him and see the top stone, the conclusion of the work that he is doing in our life, our response will be, "Grace to him!" That is all we will be able to say. He did it. The hymn writer says, "He breaks the power of canceled sin, He sets the prisoner free." That is the first fact--deliverance. "His blood can make the foulest clean; His blood availed for me." That is the second fact--cleansing.

Father we must return again and again to you, because that is the place where it all begins. We thank you that when we do, you respond to us. We thank you for the great facts that have been brought to mind by the words of Zechariah that we have been delivered, and we have been cleansed. Our response is to say, "Grace to you!" Thank you, Father, for doing it, in Christ's name, Amen.

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