

Zechariah

Part 2

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] You weren't here on Saturday. Don't worry too much. We attempted to cover the scope of the first two chapters, but because one of the main lessons in chapter one was that history repeats itself, and that the nation of Israel in particular refused to learn the lesson of history, and in a cycle which repeated itself again and again in the history of their nation, they emphasized the fact that every now and again they came to the point that they started at. And we considered the cycle that because of their disobedience, the prophets warned them, the warnings were disregarded, God disciplined them by way of punishment. This led to a call for repentance by the prophets again, and where there was a measure of repentance, there was blessing again on the line of grace. [00:01:06] And then after enjoying that, the second cycle repeated itself when the people fell into disobedience and idolatry. We considered how that God used and uses the Gentile nations to punish his earthly people, Israel, but that he calls the Gentile nations to account. We are accountable to him as his instruments, and whenever they overstep the mark, as they did every time, that he has to deal with them in a disciplinary way. And this succession of disciplinary governmental punishment upon the nation, the use of the Gentile nations, his restraint upon the nation, restoration after repentance of the nation, was symbolized in the horns on the carpenters. [00:02:02] And we finished in looking at the man with the measuring line, and noticed there again that everything is under the ultimate control of Jehovah God himself. What a consolation it is to suffering saints on earth to know in any present distress that God himself has the ultimate control, the man with the measuring line indicating that. God sets his limit. I was encouraged on Saturday night in the exercise in this way.

There isn't time for all the detail. I'm not afraid of the detail, but time doesn't permit the detail. Hopefully, having set guidelines, we can all be exercised in our private study to follow up the detail. I was therefore delighted after the meeting on Saturday when one came to me after the meeting and said that while he was listening, [00:03:03] while he was looking at the text, he noticed that the man with the measuring line measured the length and the breadth. And he noticed that there was no reference to measuring the height. It was two-dimensional and not three. And it just occurred to him, he said, that perhaps this is confirmation that this is an earthly consideration and the heavens weren't taken account of. Now, I thought that was a good reading of the verse. It was an excellent assumption and certainly confirms what will come out sometime during the week and it may as well come out now, if not again later. And that is, almost exclusively, prophecy in the scripture relates to matters on earth.

Fleetingly, here and there, there may be a reference to the heavenly company. [00:04:03] Fleetingly, there are references to the rapture, there are references to the judgment seat of Christ, the marriage supper of the Lamb, events in heaven, but again, taking account of things on earth and then very,

very brief mentions are made of the eternal state. But the vast majority of prophetic outline is related to God's dealings on earth. And so it was an excellent notice to remark that the man with the measuring line measured the length and the breadth but didn't take account of eternal, heavenly, spiritual things. It was two-dimensional rather than three. Now, that's the kind of detail I hope that we'll all start looking for once we've got the guidelines and the general scope. The other thing, of course, is, if not before Saturday or tonight, [00:05:02] I hope that one of the results of this week's activities is that we'll all do what we should have done years ago and may or may not have done. And that is, scan our bookshelves and get down off the shelves those excellent books that we got with the best of intentions many moons ago and have been gathering dust ever since. I think it was Dr. Oliver of the border country, wasn't it, who said we should not shelve the truth. And that's what we tend to do. So, have a look at your shelves. Take off the Mr. Darby, Mr. Kelly, Mr. Dennett, Mr. Coates, David Barron, the synopsis, Mr. Hull, and all those other excellent books on Zechariah. And I don't think that, in the main, you'll find that what you hear this week is very much in disagreement with what they say between them. [00:06:01] Perhaps in one respect tonight, I noticed in reading through this morning something I hadn't noticed before, and I'll pass it on for your meditation. But let us use the excellent ministry that we have available on our shelves. After all, at this stage in the dispensation, it's most unlikely that by any original thinking of ours that we will come to any new conclusions that haven't been considered by the reliable expositors over the last 150 years or so. What we can do is make it our own and get into the enjoyment and the joy of the truth of these things. Now, that having been said, we must keep pressing on if we are going to get some of the main trends in chapters three to six.

[00:07:01] We considered the first three visions, or groups of visions. We grouped those together because they consider the outward, material side of the blessing and the exercises.

The rest of the visions, which we are looking at tonight, in chapters three, four, five, six, look at the deeper, inner, spiritual implications of the prophecies of Isaiah and the visions that he was permitted to have. And with that, we look straight away at chapter three.

Going straight to it, it tells us that before the long-term view of the blessing that was considered at the end of chapter two, and taking account of the time scale in chapter two, verse eight, [00:08:04] that none of it could arise until after the glory, after the appearing in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, he personally will usher in the blessing. And again, we need to blend this in with the whole context of scripture as a whole. Chapter three tells us, first of all, that the nation of Israel cannot be brought into that purposed blessing for them, here upon earth, unless, nationally speaking, the pollution that's caused by sin has been dealt with once and for all.

It's one thing to say that their sins, nationally, will have been forgiven. It is another matter altogether to say that the state of pollution and defilement [00:09:01] in which they are because of sin has also been dealt with. Now, I would like to pass on something for your consideration, which I hadn't noticed before. I would suggest maybe there's a slight parallel in this chapter with what we know from New Testament truth in the New Testament epistles relative to ourselves as individuals.

Now, I will use three words, not used literally in these senses in scripture, but terms which, over the years, we've settled down to using. Hopefully, we know what we mean. First is standing.

The second is state. And the third is condition.

Now, there tends to be a little difference of judgment, confusion even, between state and condition. For instance, in common English usage, we might say of ourselves or someone else, [00:10:03] I was in a terrible state this afternoon. In theological terms, when we talk like that about our fluctuating condition, let us, for this evening and other times, use the word condition. But apart from that, we are in a settled state of things which can be defined, which continues.

And as to our standing, there is something irrevocable about that. Now, that's a general remark. Now to the New Testament.

We know that we have a standing before God which is irrevocable.

Nothing can change it. Nothing can revoke it.

Because of the work of Christ, because of the shedding of his blood, we have a standing before God which is eternal. [00:11:02] We are right for God. We are ready for heaven. Our standing is secure.

That is because God has dealt with what we've done, our sins.

But we learn from John's epistle that it's not just a question of what we've done that needs to be dealt with, it's what we are that needs to be dealt with. John 3, John's epistle, tell us that not only are we guilty because of the sins that we've committed, but we are riddled through as by a cancer. Our whole state is one of corruption and pollution before God.

And we need to have a new nature imparted to us. What we are is not good enough for God because of the effect of sin. [00:12:03] So we've not only been given a new standing before God, we've been given a new state. And so in John's epistle we learn, again using the theological terms we will recognize, we not only need judicial cleansing by blood, we need moral cleansing by water. And so we learn that Jesus Christ is he who came not only by water but by blood. He dealt with what we are as such and he's dealt with what we did. Now certainly in those respects we have a close parallel here. Not only because we find in verse 1 that Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, yes he had that standing before the Lord, but verse 2, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

[00:13:05] Now the adversary, the devil, is contending with God. But God is saying to him, I've plucked him out of the fire. He's not going back and you can't have him. The matter is settled once and for all. Joshua, we come to him, has a standing that neither man nor Satan can change. Now Joshua here, standing before the Lord, is not standing as an individual representing himself.

First of all, he said in verse 1 to be a high priest. He's standing there ex officio, in virtue of his office, as the high priest representing the people, the nation. Verse 2, the Lord rebuke thee, O Satan, even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem. [00:14:03] It doesn't say the Lord that hath chosen Joshua. He's there representing the city, representing the nation. He's there representatively as a picture, a symbol, a type of how God looks upon the angel. And then in verse 4, take away the filthy garments from him.

But when we get a further comment in verse 9, I will remove the iniquity of that land. Joshua is there representatively as a picture of the nation before God.

Now, as a result of what God has done, the nation will have a standing before God.

But he's not only dealt with what they've done, their iniquities, I will remember no more, [00:15:02] and so on, many scriptures on that line. But he says here, take away the filthy garments and clothe him with change of raiment.

Now, I would suggest that the confirmation is here, that the attack of the devil seems to be, alright, Joshua's plucked from the burning, he's escaped, he's right, he's escaped, but surely you can't have anyone like that officiating in the holy priesthood on his own account or on behalf of the nation. God says, I've not only dealt with everything that he's done, I've dealt with all his state. I've given him a new state, I've given him this righteous state, this righteous robe, and he's not only ready and capable of officiating as high priest, he's in a fit state to do it.

[00:16:11] God had cleaned him up. Yes?

Looks forward to the time when the nation of Israel as such will be a holy priesthood unto God, a holy nation, acting Godward on behalf of the nations of the world, and as we shall see later, dispensing the blessing from God outwards to the nation. Now, in verse 7, there is the inevitable challenge.

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 so on.

The if only comes in at this stage.

[00:17:06] There are plenty ifs about our enjoyment of eternal life.

There's plenty ifs about entering into the whole counsel of God intelligently. There are plenty ifs about the measure of our response in practical godly living. They are matters related to our condition at any moment. But as to standing, as to state, these are settled matters once and for all. And it seems to be a parallel here in the case of the nation of Israel, as to application, as to enjoyment, perhaps that may fluctuate from time to time. But standing and state are settled because of the judicial cleansing and the moral cleansing that have taken place on their behalf. [00:18:05] Now, if that's going to be brought in, necessarily there must be these words at the end of chapter 3, verses 8 and 9 and 10.

If the cleansing is to occur, if Satan is to be defeated, the only sure foundation for the blessing coming to the nation of Israel can only be by the intervention of Messiah on their behalf. And in this sweet way, Messiah is introduced here as my servant, the branch.

Subject in itself needs the whole of the four gospels and many prophecies to go into this.

Look them up, references to the branch, perhaps summing them all up, [00:19:01] we can see in this particular context that here is one in whom is life.

Here is one who can bear the burden. Here is the one who can produce fruit for God. Here is one who won't break down when the fruit is so prolific as to fill the earth through the nation of them that are saved. And so, here we have this introduction of the branch, the one with supreme intelligence, the seven eyes. Again, if you want to develop that, search the scriptures. If you want a shortcut, see what is said in the synopsis about the number of occasions where seven eyes are referred to. On the

basis of the intervention of Jehovah in the person of the branch, in verse 9, we read, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, I will remove the iniquity of that land in what day. [00:20:04] And again, this characteristic phrase in verse 10, in that day, this dramatic climax, that day which will be brought in by the appearing in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, there will be a period of peace, plenty in prosperity brought in, symbolized by every man and his neighbor being under the vine and under the fig tree. And necessarily, we must move on to chapter 4. Again, perhaps, we can group together the candlestick in verses 1 to 7, and the olive trees in verses 11 to 4.

Both cases here, there is that which indicates power for light, [00:21:07] power for illumination, the bearing of light to the world, testimony given to the greatness of their God, and the blessing that he makes available. But we notice, passing quickly through, that in verse 6, not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord, not by any act of power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord, as a result of the work of the Spirit of God, verse 7 tells us, in this rather peculiar language, that what God brings in, ultimately, will not be on the line of meeting any legal requirements in the law, but will be entirely on the ground of grace. And again, we return to that. Another thing to notice in verse 10 is that it certainly seems [00:22:05] that in this much-quoted verse, these words are put into the mouth of the godly remnant, who seem to have a moral appreciation of things as they really are. Now, this is always an exercise, isn't it, to be in sympathy with God, that whether outwardly there seems to be a great tree grown out of the mustard seed, so large that all sorts of evil are contained within its branches, or whether in felt weakness at the apparent smallness of things, outwardly speaking, there needs to be in those who are real and true and faithful a moral appreciation of the spiritual situation before God, as it really is.

Now, here, the remnant are a picture [00:23:05] of what the nation must ultimately come to, if they are to be brought into the blessing. Again, you see, we sweep through again and again the prophetess' constraint to go back and comb through again, repeating these principles, necessarily, no, because the nation as a whole have refused to learn them. And so we have in verse 10 this expression of the remnant entering morally into that which is so obvious to the eyes of the Lord. Everything will be subjected to the scrutiny of Messiah, everything will be noticed, and iniquity will be removed, God's government set up in Jerusalem, peace brought in under the Prince of Peace, [00:24:01] all in line with the all-searching scrutiny of the eyes of the Lord. The remnant enter morally into the truth of that in advance of the nation, and a measure of restoration is granted in that respect. Now, if you look at verse 3, two olive trees, verse 14, two anointed ones, there may just be the suggestion there in the two branches, the two major resources that are drawn upon, the things that will come out again in other verses, there are these twin features which come to light in Messiah. He is not only the king who is going to reign, he is the priest who is enabled to draw near to God. It may well be that the testimony that the nation is ultimately privileged to carry, [00:25:03] the remnant being in early sympathy with the truth of God, are enabled to enter into some appreciation that the one who will settle matters right for God and for the blessing of the nation is he who is both king and priest.

And we must move on with that to chapter 5, remembering, I suppose, that Zerubbabel, the governor, was perhaps on the line, in the royal line, and Joshua was a high priest. Whether there was an historical reference to the fact that the two who were there as leaders of the people at the time needed two of them to combine and set forth things which can only be seen fully in the Messiah is a matter of judgment. We have New Testament authority for that kind of consideration. The people of Israel, they needed Moses. [00:26:03] They needed Aaron.

But when we come to Hebrews, we find that the Lord Jesus Christ is the apostle and high priest of

our confession. As the apostle, he comes out from God, representing God with the people. As the high priest, he represents the people in approach to God. And here, so with Aaron, so with Moses, and maybe, in type and symbol, it's pictured in Zerubbabel and Joshua pointing on to the day when Messiah will come, both king and priest.

And verses 1 to 4, the flying roll.

The remnant, again, later Israel, when the remnant at the time of the return from Babylon had this effect in a small way, [00:27:02] after the church has gone, when things get increasingly difficult for the nation of Israel, there will be those who are true, there will be those who bear testimony, there will be those who carry the light of God and minister the word of God and apply the truth of God, and perhaps this is symbolized in the flying roll. Now, this is borne out, I suppose, in verse 3 by the kind of sin that is drawn attention to. Again, we need to think back to the earlier chapters. The blessing cannot be brought in unless the sin is purged, unless the state is dealt with, proper standing, proper state, as before God, on a proper, righteous basis, otherwise there'd be no peace before God. [00:28:01] And this can only be on the grounds of the word of God. Now, notice in verse 3, there are two kinds of sin which are referred to. Every one that stealeth.

Now, that's a sin against the neighbor, and that's bad. I suppose that's half the law, isn't it? Sinning against one's neighbor. And that's bad.

But in the later part of the verse, every one that sweareth, that's much worse.

That's a sin against God, taking the name of the deity in vain.

The Lord Jesus summed up the law in that respect, didn't he? Giving God his due, and giving man, the neighbor, his due. And again, you have an application to the nation of Israel here, they need to be right with God, right with their neighbor, being dealt with on a righteous basis, [00:29:03] before the nation can be brought finally into blessing. And this will be the testimony that is carried as a flying roll, taken wherever it is needed, and will be given and carried by those who are morally in line with the message that they carry. Verses 5 to 11.

The Ifa.

Another measure.

A measure of capacity.

What is carried?

Well, we read the verses, and we get a talent of lead.

Now, we may well wonder what this symbolizes, but there are two things which make it plain in the light of Scripture as a whole. First of all, in verse 8, there's a plain statement, [00:30:01] this is wickedness.

The second thing that is said, end of verse 10, whither do these bear the Ifa? And he said unto me, to build it a house in the land of Shina, and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

Shinar, not China.

Consistently, sadly, wherever Shinar is mentioned in Scripture, it's used in a bad sense, always involving idolatry and rebellion against God. Look up the Scriptures. Genesis, Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, about five or six cases in all, Shinar indicates it's the root, it's the source of evil expressed in idolatry.

[00:31:01] Things need to be traced back to their source, and recognized for what they are. If we have difficulties individually, in the family, in the assembly, there's no hope of blessing, unless we recognize the wickedness that's at the root cause, and trace it back to its source. No good papering over the cracks needs to be traced to the source. Now again, as a nation, Israel will be brought to this. The evil in falling into idolatry must be traced back to what it is.

The land of Babylon, that plain between the Tigris and the Euphrates, which was the location of the original Tower of Babel, where man abandoned the revelation of God, [00:32:02] sought to reach God in his own way, trying to make for himself a name, a city, and a tower, raised idolatrously in their own construction, and in every case, it's a symbol of the evil of idolatry. Now here, it has to be stated plainly, that the nation that was beginning to rejoice in being released from captivity in Babylon, and the remnant had come back and started, but not quite finished, to build the Temple in Jerusalem again, it has to be confessed by them, and by the whole nation ultimately, that instead of thinking they are superior ecclesiastically and nationally to the nation of Babylon, they're just as bad. The idolatry into which they constantly fell has its root in Shinar, [00:33:03] the origin and source of the evil of idolatry. No hope for blessing, unless it's recognized, confessed, owned as to its source. I'm sure that's why this particular vision is given. Yes, the promises are there. They will be fulfilled, but the nation, as a nation, must be brought to this national repentance because of the sins they have committed. Chapter 6.

Again, we have about five or seven minutes in which to look at that, and we can see what the scripture says. Again, he comes almost to a summary of what's been going on. The four chariots, again symbolizing the activities of the nations under the hand of God, but again, like the man with the measuring line, [00:34:03] God is active through these agencies which he has permitted as an act of discipline, not as an act of destruction, in order that the people might be brought into that spiritual and moral condition where they will ultimately enjoy the blessing that he has in mind for them. And so we have here the government of God through the vehicle, the vessels, of these four nations. And again, we notice in the things that are said something that is not easy to understand. I don't like to use the phrase the end justifies the means. I don't like that phrase, but I would say this.

God's will and its accomplishment [00:35:01] is seen not in the activities of these four nations.

The will of God and its accomplishment is seen in the results of their activities. God's hand of control is upon the end result of what they do. But as to specific detail, they are certainly responsible to God when they go over the traces, go over the bounds which he has set. Again, this is the same lesson which came through in the earlier chapters. And so, when he has allowed them a relatively free reign under his overall control, they accomplish his will as to end.

Their detailed activities are their own responsibility. Now, let us finish on a happy note, verses 9 to 15.

[00:36:02] They tell us, we've read the words, in substance, that the will of God will be established. They will be brought to fruition. So again, the man whose name is the branch filled out, I suppose, in the gospel by Luke. As my servant the branch is an epitome, I suppose, or is epitomized in the gospel of Mark and the perfect servant. Here we have it then, that the man whose name is the branch is the only one who can bring in such a system of national and then universal blessing on behalf of Jehovah God. Notice the emphasis, verse 12. He shall grow up out of his place. He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory. How often in private meditation, in ministry, we've enjoyed together [00:37:03] the wonderful things.

He, bearing his cross, went forth.

The one who bears the names on his shoulder and on his breast and who ultimately shall bear the glory. The same glorious person.

He's fit to bear the glory because he bore their sins.

He shall bear the glory. He shall sit. He shall rule upon his throne. He shall be a priest. The answer to the earlier chapter, he shall rule as king. He shall be a priest. The priest upon his throne.

The council of peace shall be between them both. Marvelous statement. Jehovah and Messiah are peers.

They are fellows.

They are equals as to person. Something we shall be looking at, [00:38:01] if the Lord will, in later chapters. And 13, tell us that as king and priest, he shall bear the glory and regulate things rightly on God's behalf in verse 14.

Perhaps we have a little picture of the 12 tribes in the world to come. Filling out all the promises that have been made to them as being fulfilled when Messiah comes in power and great glory. And then again in verse 15, we see them that are far off. A reference perhaps to the fact that when the Messiah is given his right place, when the nation of Israel are in their right setting, standing in state, both set right before God, that then and only then in this topsy-turvy world will the Gentile nations themselves [00:39:02] be blessed in a proper way. Supply and demand are in imbalance in the world at the moment.

Constant cry.

Why doesn't the supply and demand match? It does.

It's man's sin affecting the balance in creation which disturbs not only the produce but the administration of the bounty.

But when Messiah is in control and via the nation of Israel supply and demand will be in balance, in measure, and the blessing will be seen not only in the pleasant land but throughout the length and breadth of the earth because everything will be in proper perspective because the king and the priest will be upon his throne. Further details will emerge in the later sessions. Let us now sing our closing hymn [00:40:01] which is number 308.

Easy always to see lessons that other people, other companies need to learn. We need to apply the lessons to ourselves. Hymn number 308.

Hast thou heard him? Seen him?

Known him? Is not thine a captured heart? Chief among ten thousand, own him. Joyful choose the better part. Idols once, they won thee, charm thee. Lovely things of time and sense. Gilded thus does sin disarm thee. Honeyed, lest thou turn thee thence. 308. Hast thou heard him?

Seen him?

Known him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

[00:41:04] Chief among ten thousand, own him.

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once, they won thee, charm thee.

Lovely things of time and sense.

Gilded thus does sin disarm thee.

Honeyed, lest thou turn thee thence.

[00:42:01] What has stripped the seeming beauty from the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right or duty, but the sight of careless worth.

Nor the crouching of those idols with its bitter void and smart, but the veiling of its beauty.

[00:43:08] The unveiling of his heart.