

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

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LESSON THIRTY-SIX

ZECHARIAH

The introduction of Haggai, in the last chapter, will serve sufficiently for Zechariah who was contemporary with him.

Zechariah, like Haggai, held really a two-fold mission, to strengthen the hands of Israel in the time being for the rebuilding of the Temple, and to quicken their hope as the earlier prophets had done, by painting in glowing colors the coming time of perpetual blessings and triumph over every foe.

This two-fold mission of the prophet is set before us in a twofold division of the book.

Chapters 1-8 give us a series of prophetic visions bearing primarily, though not entirely, upon the prophet's own time, while chapters 9-14 deal chiefly with the events culminating at the end of the age and the opening of the millennium.

Part one after the introduction, chapter 1:1-6, might be outlined thus:

1. The prophetic visions, chapter; 1-6.

The man among the myrtle trees.

The four horns.

The four smiths.

The measuring line.
The high-priest in the Temple.
The golden candlestick.
The flying roll.
The woman in the ephah.
The four chariots.

2. The symbolic crowning of the high priest, chapter 6.
3. The instruction about fasting, chapters 7, 8.

First Four Visions, Chapters 1, 2

To understand the first vision is to get the key to all the rest.

When was it received by the prophet? (1:7). Describe what he saw (v. 8).

Observe that two persons are referred to here, the man upon the red horse, and the angel that talked with Zechariah, sometimes called the "*interpreting angel*."

The man on the horse seems afterward identified with "**the angel of the Lord**" (vv. 11, 12), which is one of the Old Testament names for CHRIST. It is presumable, of course, and indeed the context makes it necessary to suppose that the other horses had angelic riders also. Who are these described to be (v. 10)? What report gave they of the earth (v. 11)?

Prosperity and peace, in other words, seems to have been characteristic of all the peoples of the earth, while Jerusalem, however, was distressed, the Temple unfinished, and the remnant of the Jews there persecuted by enemies.

- who now intercedes on behalf of Jerusalem and Judah (v. 12)?
- is the answer of the Lord encouraging or the opposite (v. 13)?
- what was His answer in detail (vv. 14-17)?
- was the peace and prosperity of the Gentile nations an evidence necessarily of the Divine blessing upon them (v. 15)?

The Lord had used them to chastise and discipline His people, but what shows their own selfish and wicked intent in the premises (same verse)?

- what does the Lord promise shall be accomplished by the little remnant at this time (v. 16)?
- what of the future (v. 17)?

I need not pause to point out how this was fulfilled in the history of GOD's people at the time, in a measure at least. The Temple was built, the cities were restored, and Jerusalem and Judah were comforted. And yet I am quite in accord with those who believe that there is to be a complete and grander fulfillment in the days to come.

The two following visions, if we shall call them two - the four horns and four smiths are closely connected with the one just considered. The four horns are identified as the four world-powers

(Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman) who are to scatter Israel, but the four smiths are four corresponding powers of some sort, not necessarily nations, which shall overcome them at the last and bring deliverance. We are almost necessarily shut up to the conclusion that this prophecy extends to the latter days by reason of its reference to the whole of the four powers.

The next vision, that of the measuring line, presents no serious difficulty. Its significance explained (2:4, 5), is seen to be the same practically as that of the man among the myrtles. However, it may have had an approximate fulfillment in the prophet's own time, verses 10-13 indicates that it looks toward the future. What declaration in those verses seem to prove that?

High Priest and Satan, Chapter 3

To understand and appreciate the meaning of the vision now reached, one should keep in mind that a cause of dejection on the part of the Jews at this time was their consciousness and conviction of past sin. They felt, as was previously stated, that GOD had forsaken them, and that their present sorrow and numerous calamities were the result of that fact.

We see herein a parallel to the spiritual condition of many a true believer in our own day, whom Satan torments with the belief that he is not saved, and cannot be saved on account of his many and black sins. Indeed this very thing is now set before us in symbol, only that there is a nation in the case here, and not merely an individual, for Joshua the high priest represents the whole of Israel.

- where is the high priest seen to be (3:1)? It is thought by some that he was represented as in the Holy place ministering at the altar.
- who is seen to be with him, and for what malign purpose? We have here in symbol, the idea of Satan's temptation of the saint to doubt GOD's goodness and power to forgive and save.
- how is this goodness and power shown, however, in the next verse?
- on what ground is Jerusalem to be saved, on that of merit or of the divine choice?
- what does verse 3 teach as to the truth of Satan's insinuation against Israel as represented by the high priest?
- does the imagery indicate the holiness or sinfulness of the people?
- yet how is divine grace illustrated in the next recorded command of the Lord (v. 4)?
- what did the removal of his filthy garments signify?
- what did the changed raiment signify? Compare Romans 3:22.
- what next was done (v. 5)? By this act the clothing of the high priest was completed and he was fitted for his official service, as before he was not.
- Who is represented as "standing by" all this time as if interceding for Joshua, and through him for the nation, and to see that these commands were carried out and these benefits conferred?
- with whom have we identified "**the angel of the Lord**"?
- what charge is now laid upon Joshua, and what privilege is connected with it (v. 7)?

I quote here in part from a commentary on *Zechariah*, by A. C. Gaebelein. He applies the prophecy mainly to the last times, and says: "In analyzing this charge, we see clearly what Israel's earthly calling is and wherein her millennial glory and work will consist. (1) Judging in the house of the Lord, and from there ruling and judging the nations. (2) Keeping the Lord's courts. In the new millennial Temple there will be ordinances, and that Temple will be a house of

prayer for all nations. (3) She will have places to walk among the ministering angels."

In explanation of this last remark the author reminds us that Israel's cleansing will take place in that day not in Heaven, but on the earth. The church will be above occupying the many mansions, sitting with CHRIST on the throne, the glorified Head over all. The angels will be ascending and descending upon Him in service both earthly and heavenly (John 1:51), and among these Israel may have a place. Her place being that of ministry to the nations.

- what language in verse 8 would seem to indicate that the restoration and blessing of Israel in that day will be regarded as, miraculous?
- what language in the same verse connects it with the manifestation of the glory of CHRIST?
- what other prophet in particular speaks of Him by the name of the Branch?
- what would lead us to suppose that the following verse (v. 9) also refers to CHRIST?
- can you name any other passages in either Testament that speaks of Him under the figure of a Stone?

The commentary above referred to, however, regards this verse as meaning "Israel restored, and as such, the nucleus of the kingdom of GOD and His CHRIST on this earth." This is so judged because of the closing words "**I will remove the iniquity of that land one day.**"

This whole story of Joshua standing before the Angel of the Lord affords material for a precious Bible-reading or Gospel sermon. As Dr. W. J. Erdman puts it, it gives us a picture of the sinner;- chosen, cleansed, clothed and crowned.

The Golden Candlestick, Chapter 4

The Christian church is doubtless more familiar with the symbol of the golden candlestick than any other in this book, for which reason it will require but little consideration here.

The candlestick was evidently a copy of that in the early Tabernacle, but with what difference (v. 2)?

- from what source was its oil supplied (v. 3)?
- what did this supply of oil from the trees symbolize (v. 6)?

The candlestick itself may be said to represent the Temple which the Jews were now essaying to build, or for that matter, the Jewish nation as a whole which was now sought to be reestablished on its former basis and thus become a light in the world. The difficulties in the way of accomplishing these things seemed insuperable, and were so indeed if the strength of man only should be considered, but GOD would interpose, and His Spirit would do what human agencies could not do.

- how is this difficulty and its removal figuratively expressed (v. 7)?
- how is the figure explained (vv. 8-10)?
- on what particular point did the prophet desire further light (v. 12)?
- what reply was made to him (v. 14).

By these "**two anointed ones**" is sometimes understood Zerubbabel and Joshua, the leaders of Israel at this time, on whom and through whom, in a sense, the HOLY SPIRIT would be poured out for the successful termination of the work.

Of course it is quite proper to use this symbol in an accommodated sense as applying to the church of the present day in its testimony and work; in which case the "**two anointed ones**" may be taken to represent any who, especially "**filled with the Spirit**," are executing the Lord's will in power.

At the same time also it is to be steadily kept in mind that the whole thing applies primarily to Israel, not only in the time of Zechariah, but in the last times when through the blessing of the Spirit, as we have seen, she shall be restored, cleansed, forgiven, and become a joy and rejoicing in the earth. It is proper to add as well that the deeper meaning of verse 14 is probably CHRIST Himself, "**The priest upon his throne**," who will supply Israel as He now supplies the church with His own HOLY SPIRIT!

The Flying Roll and the Ephah, Chapter 5

The two visions in chapter 5 are perhaps as mysterious as any in the book, and like that of the four chariots which follows in chapter 6, they seem to express the idea of judgment. That the "**flying roll**" has that significance would seem plain by a comparison with Ezekiel 2:9, 19, and Revelation, chapters 5 and 10, where similar figures have such meaning.

We have seen hitherto that judgment is certainly coming upon the Gentile nations, and that Israel also is to be purified before she is finally restored, and it may be that to both these facts the present vision applies.

- what is now seen (v. 6)? An ephah or measure may fairly be taken as an emblem of trade or commerce.
- what was seen sitting in the ephah?
- what is the woman said to symbolize (v. 8)? The whole figure then represents wickedness in commerce.
- what is now done with the ephah and whither is it carried?

The land of Shinar at once suggests Babylon again, of whose revival in the latter days mention has already been made.

Everyone knows that commercialism is very prominent in Revelation 18 as the climax of ungodliness. It will be well to read that chapter in connection with Habakkuk 2:12, and James 5. Babylon is real, and the woman is the commercial spirit that will reign there at the end. The same spirit of self that prevailed in the early Babylon of Genesis 11, will build up and prevail in the last Babylon of Revelation 18.

The description of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's day will fit the one to come, Isaiah 14:4; 17:5; 47:12; Jeremiah 50:38; 51:7, 13. It will be the city of "**the prince of this world**," the seat of the Antichrist.

Rome is the offspring of Babylon, but Babylon is the mother of Rome. It is noticeable that certain prophecies concerning Babylon in Isaiah and Jeremiah have not yet been fulfilled, while at the same time these prophecies are closely identified with those in Revelation 17 and 18. The drift of things in our day is in the direction of such a commercial center in the East.

Eastward the course of empire takes its way. Our possession of the Philippines, the awakening of Japan, the "open-door" in China, the railroad planned to India, the quickened interest in the Jews' return to Palestine, known as "Zionism," and many other things point that way. At the same time we must not be too hasty in forming our opinions with reference to unfulfilled prophecy, or uncharitable and dogmatic in asserting them.

Let our attitude be that of prayerful searching of GOD's Word, humble attendance upon those who, taught of the Spirit, are in their turn able to teach us, and only kind and gentle expression of that which we believe to be truth when it is opposed by others who may seem to have as good a right to be heard.

The ninth and closing vision (6:1-8), furnishes another spectacle of judgment on the nations and the quieting of the divine Spirit with the result. Space prevents an enlargement upon it, nor is it absolutely necessary in the light of the foregoing.

Crowning of the High Priests, Chapter 6

The prophet is now called upon, however, to do something in the nature of an object-lesson, which would seem to symbolize that great future event which will follow the judgments referred to, viz., the manifest reign of CHRIST over the millennial earth.

- who have now come from Babylon on an embassy of some kind and whose guests are they (v. 10)?
- what precious articles do they seem to have brought with them as gifts for the Temple (v. 11)?
- what is the prophet to do with some of this silver and gold?
- what is he to say in connection with this transaction (vv. 12-13)?
- what then shall be done with the crowns, and why (vv. 14-15)?

That this whole transaction is symbolic is plain from two or three points of view.

In the first place, the royal crown did not belong to the high priest or any other son of Levi, but to the tribe of Judah in the line of David.

In the second place, there is the expression, "**Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH!**" To whom, as we have already seen, does that name belong?

Then in the third place, we have the declaration, "**He shall build the temple of the Lord.**" To whom in the fullest sense can this apply, save to CHRIST? And then, "**He shall bear the glory,**" and "**He shall be a priest upon His throne.**" Of none other than CHRIST has this even been predicted. He only is the priestly King. Compare Psalm 110, and Hebrews 7. What language in verse 15 bears a possible reference to the Gentiles in that day? On what condition is all to be fulfilled (same verse)?

We shall be obliged to pass over, for want of space, any particular consideration of the two next ensuing chapters, 7 and 8, which are in a sense parenthetical, although in perfect accord as to their teaching with the general drift of the whole book.

Certain men of Bethel sent messengers to Jerusalem to inquire on the subject of ritual or ceremonial fasting. Had their fasting on certain occasions hitherto been acceptable to GOD and were they to continue it in the new regime? They are shown what a hollow and hypocritical thing that service had been hitherto; how it was just such formalism and hypocrisy as that which had brought the late punishment upon their fathers; how that the kind of fasting the Lord desired was of a different nature altogether; and finally, that in the blessed time coming feasting will take the place of fasting altogether.

These brief hints I trust will enable the readers to reach a fair understanding of the chapters under consideration in their present connection.

Part Second of the Book, Chapters 9-14

It was stated previously that the first part of the book, chapters 1-8, referred chiefly, though not entirely, to the prophet's own time. It is now seen in what sense that is true.

The basis of all the prophecies in that part had a historical relation to the period then present. They were uttered, so to speak, to cheer and encourage the people in the work of rebuilding the Temple. And yet after all, there is not one of them that did not take cognizance of the far future. Indeed, some would say that they had little bearing on the prophet's own time in comparison with the remoter and completer application. However that may be, one thing is quite clear, viz., that the discourses of this, the second part, deal almost entirely with the future.

It will aid in the understanding of these chapters if we recall a few historical facts.

- At the date of this book the Medo-Persian was the great world-power to which the Jews were subject.
- It was followed by the Greeks, and the Greeks by the Romans.

During the Roman regime our Lord was crucified and Jerusalem destroyed. The present (i. e. our own time), is an interregnum so far as Jewish national history is concerned, which will continue till Israel is once more in Jerusalem, in covenant with Antichrist, and about to pass through the tribulation of that period prior to her final deliverance and blessing. Here then are three distinct periods in Jewish history which we may call, the Grecian, the Roman and the final periods. I think Zechariah treats of each of these periods in the chapters following, and while I confess to great difficulty in the explanation of them, yet I will do what I can to approach their meaning:

Grecian Period, Chapters 9, 10

You will recall from the study of Daniel that this period begins with Alexander the Great, the notable horn between the eyes of the he-goat. When he crossed from Greece into Asia he swept down the Phoenician and Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean, besieging and capturing

Damascus, Sidon, Tyre, Gaza and other cities in the south Philistine country. But strange to say, he passed by Jerusalem more than once without doing it harm.

The Jewish historian Josephus explains this by a dream which the great monarch had, and which was remarkably fulfilled by the appearance to him at Jerusalem of the high priest and his train. However this may be, the opening verses of chapter 9 give us the prophetic outline of his career at this time.

Read verses 1-7. For the deliverance of Jerusalem which actually occurred, read verse 8.

But now we come to a further illustration of the law of double reference, for the same verse which speaks of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Alexander, speaks evidently of another and more lasting deliverance which can only find fulfillment in the latter times.

- what shows that this ultimate deliverance, thus foreshadowed, is connected with the coming of CHRIST (v. 9)?
- when were these words fulfilled at least in part? (Matthew 21:5).
- what shows that their complete fulfillment, according to the law just mentioned, is reserved for the latter times, or CHRIST's second coming (vv. 10, 11)?

Verses 13-17 are particularly obscure, but thought by some to refer to the period of the Maccabees who delivered their people for a while from the yoke of the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes B. C. 170, or thereabouts, while the Grecians represented by him were still in power. However this may be, it is evident from what follows that, as in so many other instances previously discovered, this deliverance foreshadowed and pointed forward to a greater and final one to come.

Roman Period, Chapter 11

The period of Greek supremacy is at an end, and we have reached the events in the Roman period culminating in the rejection by the Jews of the Son of GOD.

The eleventh chapter opens with a scene of judgment (vv. 1-6). Then follows the cause of it (vv. 7-14). It will be noticed in verse 4 that the prophet is commanded to do a symbolic act, and in verse 7 he is seen in the performance of it. What was this act? There will be little doubt in any mind after reading the complete context, that in this act he is the type of the Good Shepherd, JESUS CHRIST. Compare Matthew 9:36, and John 10. What does the Shepherd carry with Him to guide and protect His flock?

There is difficulty in explaining the meaning of these staves unless we adopt that hinted at in verses 10 and 14, where "Beauty" seems to refer to the divine covenant, and "Bands" to the union between the ten tribes and the two.

Who are seen to be "cut off" in verse 8? It is generally supposed that these "**three shepherds**" "stand for the three classes of rulers that governed Israel," priests, prophets and lawyers (Jeremiah 2:8, Matthew 16:21).

Our Lord pronounced woes against them (Matthew 23), and when the city was destroyed their rule came to an end.

- what portion of the flock paid attention to and were fed by the shepherd (v. 11)? Compare Matthew 5:3; 11:25; I Corinthians 1:26-29.
- how does verse 12 point to the rejection of the Shepherd by the flock?
- what incident is foreshadowed in the next verse?
- who is the prophet now commanded to impersonate (v. 15)?
- what person yet to come will answer the description in verses 16 and 17?
- can this be any other ultimately than the Antichrist? Read the sad words in John 5:43.

Final Period, Chapters 12-14

I believe all the prophecies in this section of the book, are yet to be fulfilled, and that the fulfillment takes place at the period hitherto so frequently referred to. It is the time when Israel is once more in Jerusalem in the national sense, though at first in an unconverted condition.

We saw in the book of Daniel that the Antichrist would at this time enter into covenant with Israel, and afterwards (in the middle of the last period of seven years), break that covenant. Then "**the time of Jacob's trouble**" begins, the nature of which will in part be the combination of the Gentile nations, i. e., the Roman world, against it. Antichrist himself will be at the head of this combination doubtless, if we may judge from a comparison of Daniel with Revelation.

It is at this point, when the nations are besieging the Holy City, that the present "**burden of the word of the LORD**" begins (12:1, 2).

We cannot pause to outline these chapters in detail, nor is it necessary for those who have carefully perused the earlier books of the prophets in connection with these lessons.

A hint here and there will suffice.

For example:

- in this siege Jerusalem will for the first time be victorious (12:2, 3);
- the victory, however, will be of a supernatural character (vv. 4-8);
- the conversion of the nation will accompany it (v. 10, also 13:1), and
- it will take place coincidentally with their great tribulation (13:8, 9; 14:1-3);
- CHRIST shall appear to them (14:4);
- the earth will rejoice (v. 9);
- as will also Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 10,11);
- their enemies will be punished, and
- the millennium will have begun (v. 16 and the following verses).

~ end of Lesson 36 ~
