

Zechariah - The Dreaming Prophet

I) Background and Introduction

A) Introductory discussions

1) Of dreams and visions

- * How do we (LCMS) feel about prophetic dreams or visions?
- * What make a dream a nightmare?
- * How are dreams and visions similar and different?
- * Is “Thy Kingdom come” a vision?

2) The Oracle

- * What is an Oracle?
- * How do oracles affect (or effect) behaviors?
- * Do oracles paint a picture or call to participation?

3) Proleptic eschatological prophecy

- * Proleptic means “now and not yet” / inauguration vs. consumation
- * eschatological refers to the end times, particularly the Last Day / Christ’s return
- * How is “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” proleptic?

B) Zechariah’s world

- 1) Begins in the 2nd year of the reign of Darius I (520 BC - same time as Esther)
- 2) Persian records indicate 20 satrapies, Esther gives 127 provinces
 - the “lands beyond the River” refer to everything west of the Euphrates
 - Northern border of this satrapy was the city of Damascus
 - the *region* around Jerusalem was called “Yehud” (Greeks would name Judah)
 - Rebuilding in Jerusalem was at a standstill; Temple only partially completed
- 3) Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah and the two share much (imagery, themes)
- 4) Total population of all of Yehud was only about 50,000 mixed inhabitants
- 5) Jerusalem very sparsely populated (much of it still rubble from 587 siege)
- 6) Region was “economically disadvantaged”
 - few natural resources (no gold, copper, or tin mines, few trees, etc.)
 - no manpower to extract what little was there (mostly salt deposits)
 - Economic base was agriculture which is fickle at best (subsistence farming)
- 7) The economic conditions are summed up in **Haggai 1:6**

C) What we know about Zechariah himself

- 1) Short genealogy - only 3 generations; Iddo, Berechiah, Zechariah
- 2) Iddo is mentioned in **Nehemiah 12:4** and **Ezra 5:1-2** as a priest
 - Iddo was as common a name back then as “Jim” is for us today
 - Cannot say with certainty that the Iddo of Ezra / Nehemiah is the same as here

- 3) Zechariah was part of a priestly family
 - familiar with the rites and rituals of the Temple (under construction)
 - Knew the Law of Moses and what the people *should* be doing
 - Would also be a public figure involved with politics, social justice, economics, etc
- 4) Had a series of 8 visions - all in the course of one night
- 5) 2 years later he delivers 2 oracles or prophetic speeches

D) Main themes of Zechariah

- 1) Repentance - in a “get back to work” sort of way vs. denouncing sin / sins
- 2) The City of God / Holy City - I think St. Augustine borrowed much from Zechariah
- 3) The Kingdom of God on earth - see proleptic eschatology above
- 4) The Messiah - God’s special ruler who will inaugurate the Kingdom on earth
- 5) The people of God - God’s chosen and elect ones, those who are faithful
- 6) Cleanliness - not *next to* but IS Godliness.
- 7) The Temple - past, present, and future

E) Prophetic introduction - **1:1-6**

- 1) Don’t be like your forefathers!
 - Why did the Exile happen?
 - Could such a calamity happen again?
 - What can be done to prevent further destruction, dispersion, and depression?
- 2) Don’t make God angry, you wouldn’t like Him when He’s angry”
 - Not a popular notion, we want / serve a God of love
 - What happens when we ignore God’s wrath and warnings?
 - Does God *require* that we change? (See **Heb. 10:26-31, John 3:3, Matthew 16:24**)
- 3) Committing the oldest sins in the newest ways
 - What is idolatry?
 - * gross idolatry
 - * subtle idolatry
 - What is Hypocrisy?
 - How do both manifest, even in Christian worship?
- 4) “Normalcy is highly overrated”
 - Is having / living “a normal life” sinful?
 - Does the excuse “Well, everyone else is doing it” work with God (or anyone)?
 - Are sins of omission just as necessary to be repented of?
 - How does one “bear fruit in keeping with repentance” for sins of omission?
 - How “contercultural” ought Christian to be?
 - * Do we still live in a “Christian culture”?

II) Visions in the Night

A) The man amongst the myrtles (1:7-17)

1) A brief review of dreams and visions

- How is one to know if a dream is sent by God or is just “an old potato” (Scrooge)
- Is the interpretation of dreams a Christian or a pagan practice?
- What is the botanical symbolism of myrtles?

2) The four horsemen of the myrtles?

- compare these horsemen with **Revelation 6:1-8**
- How would riders be an everyday vision for Zechariah?
- What is the “ravine” or “glen”
- Who is the rider on the red (roan) horse? How is he different from the others?

3) Patrol reporting in

- What is the “problem” the angelic scouts have observed?
- Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
- What response does this evoke in their “captain”?

4) How long, O Lord? (See also **Revelation 6:10**)

- What did “the nations” do to merit God’s wrath?
- What does this say to us and the “current events” of our day?
- Is “national security” a bad thing? (See **Matthew 24:37-39**)

5) Comfort, comfort these my people (1:14-17)

- What is Zechariah to proclaim to those in Yehud?
- How does God “dwell with His people”
 - * Old Testament times
 - * New Testament times
 - * Modern times
- How are Jerusalem / Zion and the cities of Yehud a picture of the Church today?

B) Four horns and 4 craftsmen (1:18-21)

1) What do horns symbolize (both here and elsewhere)?

- * power? Kings / kingdoms? Triumph (Psalm 92:10 / the shofar)
- * “You mess with the bull, you get the horns” - The Breakfast Club
- * What do the horns represent here?
- * How have these nations been “horny” towards God’s people?

- 2) "I wanna be a blue collar man" (well, men in this case)
 - How are humble workmen essential to the rebuilding of Jerusalem?
 - How are "blue collar" workers essential in our day and age?
 - How can these blue collar types "terrify" the mighty horns?
- 3) Little men doing mighty things
 - How do the craftsmen show faith and works going together?
 - Can your vocation also be a witness - not just an opportunity *for* witness, but actually *be* the witness?
 - Is there a division between the Church and "the real world"?

C) The Measuring Line (2:1-13) - a fulfillment of 1:16

- 1) The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places - Psalm 16:6
 - How important is a "site survey" before construction begins?
 - Why would Jerusalem need to be measured, aren't the foundations still there?
 - Why is this survey deemed unnecessary?
- 2) An Oracle (Thus saith the LORD)
 - Who originally cast the people to the four winds?
 - What is Zechariah calling them to do now?
 - Why should they uproot, journey, and resettle?
- 3) To the exiles in Babylon (I Peter 5:13)
 - How can this be prophecy if Babylon is already fallen?
 - Why would any faithful Jew remain in Babylon?
 - What does Babylon represent (from Gen. 11 to Revelation 18)?
- 4) A Call to all nations (10-13)
 - What is so special about a trip to Jerusalem?
 - How do we reconcile the special place Israel has as God's chosen with His call to ALL nations to come to Jerusalem?
 - What will happen to those nations not "under God"?

D) Joshua's new clothes (3:1-10)

- 1) Not your grandfather's Joshua
 - What does High Priest do if he has no Temple to work out of?
 - Shouldn't the High Priest be the one calling for the rebuilding of the Temple?
 - What is significant about this High Priest's name?

2) You're a mess!

- Describe the courtroom scene shown to Zechariah
- Why is it necessary for the High Priest to be "clean"?
- How does his "uncleanness" affect all of God's people?

3) The Judge's ruling

- Are we talking about outward or inner cleanliness?
- Is verse 7 about the Temple in Jerusalem or the Temple in Heaven?
- Who is this "angel of the LORD" standing by?

4) The ONE who is to come (8-10)

- How is God's Messiah described? (See **Jeremiah 33:14-16**)
- What "single day" is foreshadowed in 9:b?
- What was unique about the stone (diadem) set before Joshua?
- What picture of the Messianic Kingdom do we get in verse 10?
- How does this vision help us understand Jesus' role as our great High Priest?
- How does this promise (made fact by Jesus) help us deal with the issue of hypocrisy?
- Comment on how the following hymn verse summarizes it (LSB 574)

When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look, and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died,
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God, the Just, is satisfied,
To look on Him and pardon me.

- Before the Throne of God Above
Charitie Lees DesChenez 1863

E) Of Church and State (4:1-14)

1) Zerubbabel, proxy governor of Yehud

- What "duties" does the Church owe the State?
- what "duties" does the State owe the Church?
- Why can these two things not be "separated" from each other?

2) A most unusual lampstand

- How is this vision different than the ones that came before it?
- What comes to mind when the word "lampstand" is used?

* **Exodus 25:31-40**

* **Leviticus 24:1-4**

* **Rev. 2:1**

* **I Maccabees 1:21**

- How is this lampstand different from all the others?
- 3) Put oil in my lamp, keep me burnin’
- Where else in Scripture or mythology do we see the image of two trees?
 - What else was olive oil used for (and still is today)?
 - Is the dripping “gold” literal or symbolic? If the latter, of what?
 - Who or what is the “source” of your “oil”? What keeps you burning?
- 4) Climb ev’ry mountain...
- What does the “mighty mountain” of verse 7 represent?
 - How is Zerubbabel to “level” this mountain?
 - Will Zerubbabel do this on his own or by his political powers?
- 5) The Capstone (7)
- What is the meaning of a capstone?
 - When was the capstone ultimately laid in Jerusalem (see **Luke 20: 17**)
 - So is Jesus Cornerstone or Capstone?
 - How does Jesus “complete” the rebuilding of the Temple?
- 6) The day of small things (10)
- “A journey of 1,000 miles begins with _____”
 - How can seemingly small things change lives?
 - Explain Dr. Jordan Peterson’s advice to “Just make your bed.”
- F) The flying scroll (5:1-4)
- 1) “Far as the curse is found”
- What is a curse? (Islam has turned it into an art form)
 - What is the cause of the curse(s) of God? (Hint: It’s not sin)
 - Why are curses sometimes called, “the left hand of God”?
- 2) The scroll (1-2)
- How large is this scroll? Why so big?
 - What do we know of its origins and purpose?
 - Why writing on both sides? (See **Ezekiel 2:9-10**)
- 3) Impending doom for _____
- How will the thief be punished?
 - How will the perjurer be punished?
 - Why are these two sins singled out for eradication?

- 4) ...To touch their wings of gold...
- What do wings usually represent?
 - What attributes do birds of prey (and angels) have?
 - Is there any area of life not covered by God's commands?

G) The Woman in a basket (5:5-11)

1) "As seen on TV"

- What goods or services didn't live up to their advertising hype?
- What business practices today might be offensive to God? Why?
- Can one be "a good man of business" AND a faithful Christian?

2) The Ephah (basket)

- This was a "standardized" basket for measuring grain
- Would hold roughly 5 gallons (1/2 bushel), or a week's worth of wheat or barley
- To use a smaller ephah was denounced in many places in the Old Testament

3) The woman

- Why are women the "go to" for the representation of wickedness?
- What is unusual about this woman?
- Who "puts the lid on it"? Is he sealing the woman or wickedness?

4) "You are part of the rebel alliance and a traitor. Take her away!"

- Who carries the basket away? How can they do so?
- Where do they take her / it?
- How is Babylon the "home" of wickedness?
- Why is it important that a "house" is built for her?
- How does she / it become enshrined as an idol?
- How does this fulfill what Jesus said in **Luke 16:13**?
- How does this vision fit with the previous ones about the Temple and God's rulership?

H) The 4 chariots (6:1-8)

1) Chariots of fire

- Where else do we see chariots in Scripture?
- What are chariots used for / what do they symbolize?
- So is God "going to war" in this vision?

- 2) Between the bronze mountains
 - Solomon's Temple had two large brass columns (I Kings 7:13-22)
 - How different are pillars from mountains?
 - So where are the 4 chariots (spirits / breaths) "stabled" prior to verse 5?
- 3) Of all the nations (6)
 - Which compass point isn't mentioned here? (4 chariots, but only 3 directions?!?)
 - Why is the North singled out for special attention?
 - What does the black horse symbolize? (See also **Revelation 6:5-6**)
- 4) "There is peace to be found only on the other side of war." - Arthur (8)
 - How is the "North" finally pacified?
 - How is this the opposite of the "rest" we saw in the first vision?
 - How does Jesus fulfill this vision in **John 16:33**?

I) Joshua's "Coronation" (6:9-15)

- 1) The Word of the LORD came...
 - before it was through dreams / visions, now it comes as a command
 - What is Zechariah now commanded to DO?
 - How does this show faith and works belong together?
- 2) Silver and Gold (and not the Burl Ives Christmas song)
 - Who are these "men who have arrived from Babylon"?
 - Why are they bringing silver and gold?
 - How does this give us a picture of the future Church?
- 3) Forging the crown
 - Who is this Josiah?
 - What is he to do with the silver and gold?
 - How is this crown a symbol of things to come
- 4) Set it on the head of the High Priest, Joshua
 - What does a High Priest usually wear on his head?
 - Why not give the crown to Zerubbabel?
 - What is this "coronation" to signify? (See **I Peter 2:9**)
- 5) As a lasting memorial
 - Why are memorials given? (Hint, it's in the name)
 - What are the nations coming to the Temple to remember?
 - How are verses 12-14 fulfilled in Jesus' words of **Matthew 16:18 & John 2:19**?

- 6) For all nations
 - Who is going to help build this kingly Temple?
 - What “Temple” was built in **Acts 2:5-12**
 - Would the prophecy still hold if we substituted “denminations” for “nations”?

III) The Oracles of Zechariah

A) From Fasting to Feasting (Chapters 7&8)

- 1) 2 years have now passed since “The Word of the Lord came in the night”
- 2) Why were the children of Israel mourning and fasting?
- 3) The Exile is over, the Temple nears completion, so is fasting still necessary?
- 4) What 3 fold response does Zechariah give?
- 5) What are the marks of true fasting (see also **Isaiah 58:1-12**)
- 6) How are we to know if repentance is genuine?
- 7) Why must *this* kind of fasting be done before worrying about the changes rites and formalities of the new Temple?
- 8) As Christians are we called to fast or to feast?
- 9) How is the movement from perpetual fast to repetitive / recurring feast (which shall have no end) an example of the “now & not yet” of Zechariah’s prophecy?
- 10) What are the seven causes for celebration given in **8:1-17**
 - A) _____ (3) b) _____ (4)
 - C) _____ (3) d) _____ (6)
 - E) _____ (7) f) _____ (12-13)
 - G) _____ (16-17)

11) What three fold fulfillment yet awaits God’s people?

12) How should Christians view fasting?

- Is there any commandment to do so in the New Testament?
- Is there precedent for it in the lives of the Apostles and early church?
- Did Luther say anything about fasting?

B) The Coming King - Zechariah’s Messianic chapter (Chapter 9)

- 1) Who is listed as Israel’s “frienemies”?
- 2) How will they ultimately be dealt with?
- 3) What do we learn of this new King from the well known verse 9?
- 4) How is this King greater than any that preceeded or will follow Him?
- 5) What will this King offer that no other king ever could or can?

- 6) How is this “new covenant” to be sealed?
- 7) What will happen on *that day* to God’s people, no matter where they’re living?

C) Sinful and Sanctified Shepherds (10:1-11:3)

- 1) How is 10:2 fulfilled by Jesus in **Matthew 9:36**?
- 2) How does Paul (**Acts 20:29**) warn that poor shepherding will continue until Christ’s return?
- 3) How are the roles of shepherd and King linked?
- 4) What was the worst thing the bad shepherds did?
- 5) With what metaphors are the good leaders identified?
- 6) What are some things God will do for His “flock” through these good shepherds?
- 7) Where does this oracle find its ultimate fulfillment?
 - * It’s the 4th Sunday of Easter every year
 - * The Gospel reading for that week always comes from _____
- 8) Why are the bad shepherds to start wailing NOW? (When is wailing usually done?)
- 9) What is the symbolism of “cedars of Lebanon”?
- 10) What / where is Bashan? What was its “claim to fame”?
- 11) How will the land the bad shepherds rely on also be laid waste?
- 12) Why does a good god allow bad shepherds to oversee His people?

D) A Tale of Two Shepherds - a chancel drama (11:4-17)

- 1) How can “playing God” be a good thing?
- 2) How are people sometimes viewed as “a piece of meat”? (Especially Freshmen)
- 3) How do we get the kind of leaders we deserve?
- 4) How does this “enacted parable” fit with **Romans 1:24-28**?
- 5) How does God shepherd this unruly flock in verse 7?
- 6) What is the ultimate punishment for these sheeple?
- 7) How is this shown symbolically?
- 8) How much is a shepherd worth? (See **Exodus 21:32**)
- 9) What does the breaking of the second staff mean?
- 10) How does unity with people rely on unity with God?
 - * Does evil ever “eat itself” / the wicked turn on one another?
 - * Is evil (and evildoers) its own worst enemy?

- 11) What will happen to the worthless shepherds (16-17)
- 12) How do we tell a good shepherd from a bad one?

E) He hath borne our iniquities and carried our sorrows - Chapter 12

- 1) How is Jerusalem (as a metaphor for God's people) pictured here?
- 2) What is the effect of drinking this cup?
- 3) If that's the effect, why would anyone want to drink the wine?
- 4) How does Zechariah's imagery mesh with that of **Revelation 18:3-8**
- 5) Is verse 10 about the battle and its aftermath or about the Christ?
- 6) Who does the piercing? What flows from it?
- 7) How does this repentant wailing echo **Exodus 11:6, 12:30**
- 8) How does this mourning and purging out extend to all?
- 9) Are grace and supplication two sides of the same coin?

F) Cleansing and Restoration (Chapter 13)

- 1) What characteristics do fountains have?
- 2) How is *this* fountain special?
- 3) What else will this fountain cleanse?
- 4) What three things will be "cleansed" from Israel?
- 5) Are the "prophets" mentioned in this chapter the same as the ones mentioned earlier?
- 6) How does striking the Shepherd bring about repentance and reconciliation to God?
- 7) Have the last 2,500 years or so been a "refining" process?
- 8) How does this chapter mesh with the "pierced one" of the last chapter?
- 9) How are both fire and water used for cleansing / purifying in the New Testament?

G) ...and He shall reign forever and ever (Chapter 14)

- 1) To what, in our day and age, could we compare a "Kingdom"?
- 2) Who will be judged "on that day" and what will be the evidence for a verdict?
- 3) How does verse 3 echo Job's words of hope in **Job 19:25**
- 4) Who are the "holy ones" of verse 5?
- 5) What will be unique about "that day" according to verses 6 & 7?
- 6) How will even the seasons be transformed?

- 7) Is “Jerusalem” to be taken literally?
- 8) What imagery is used for those not numbered among the “holy ones”?
 - Is this imagery appropriate / fitting?
- 9) Why is the Feast of Tabernacles singled out instead of Passover?
- 10) Did this prophecy find its fulfillment in **Acts 2:1-8**?
- 11) How did Jesus deal with the *Canaanites* in **John 2:15**?
- 12) What is the overarching characteristic of this King(dom)?

For Lent 2025, beginning March 12th (Ash Wednesday is March 5) we will be going through *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. Please read through the visit to the house of the Interpreter before March 12th.