

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 65.8%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Haggai 1 & Ezra 5:1 – 2

Monday: Haggai 2:1 – 9

Tuesday: Zechariah 1:1 – 6

Wednesday: Haggai 2:10 – 23

Thursday: Zechariah 1:7 – 21

Friday: Zechariah 2

Saturday: Zechariah 3

Current # of email addresses in the group: 627

Sorry for the delay this week in getting out the reading program. Busy week with a sermon, memorial and young adult activity.

This week we start two new books, Haggai and Zechariah. We will also finish Haggai this week! Exciting!

Have a great week!

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

[https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA\\_tacLBfv1XR3jH](https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH)

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 101**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 680 – SUNDAY: June 22<sup>nd</sup>

Haggai 1 & Ezra 5:1 – 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The Samaritan resistance to the Jews of Judea had taken its toll. The Jews quit the rebuilding of the temple and went about their own affairs. This resulted in a period of national

punishment, as the prophet Haggai explains. Yet rather than seeing events in this way, the people looked on their "misfortunes" as simply more reasons to not resume the construction. As time went on, the orientation of the people changed until the rebuilding of the temple perhaps seemed like something that would never happen.

"The reconstruction project may have faltered also because of the unstable political situation that followed the death of Cyrus in [530] B.C. [His son] Cambyses came to the throne and reigned for seven years. His major accomplishment was his bringing Egypt under Persian control. The passage of his armies through the land of Israel may have worked a hardship on the native population. Demands for food, water, clothing, and shelter may have greatly diminished the meager resources of a people engaged on a building project well beyond their means" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, introduction to Haggai).

[Ezra 4:24](#) gives the time frame for the first two verses of Ezra 5: the second year of the Persian king Darius (ca. 520 B.C.). His accession was a time of major change in the empire. An overview of this period provides us with a context for events in Judea described in our current and subsequent readings.

John Bright's *A History of Israel* states: "Beginning in 522, the Persian Empire was racked by a series of upheavals that bade fair to rend it asunder. In that year, as Cambyses was en route through Palestine on his return from Egypt, news reached him that one Gaumata had usurped the throne and been accepted as king in most of the eastern provinces of the empire. This Gaumata gave himself as Cambyses' own brother Bardiya [Smerdis], whom Cambyses had had secretly assassinated some years previously. Cambyses thereupon, under circumstances that are obscure, took his own life. An officer in his entourage, Darius, son of the satrap Hystaspes, and a member of the royal family by a collateral line, immediately claimed the throne.

Accepted by the army, he marched eastward into Media, brought Gaumata to heel, and executed him" (2000, p. 369).

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* notes, "Some modern scholars consider that [Darius] invented the story of Gaumata in order to justify his actions and that the murdered king was indeed the son of Cyrus" ("Darius I," *Micropaedia*, Vol. 3, 1985, p. 887). Yet this is mere conjecture, as there is no way at present to really know.

Bright goes on to say: "But Darius' victory, far from establishing him in his position, set off a veritable orgy of revolt all over the empire. Though Darius in his great trilingual inscription on the cliff of Behistun sought to belittle the extent of the opposition to him, it is clear that unrest exploded from one end of the realm to the other. Rebellions broke out in Media, Elam and Parsa, in Armenia, all across Iran to the farthest eastern frontier, while in the west both Egypt and Asia Minor were affected" (p. 369).

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* further explains, "In Susiana, Babylonia, Media, Sagartia, and Margiana, independent governments were set up, most of them by men who claimed to belong to the former ruling families" (p. 887).

Continuing in Bright's account: "In Babylon, one Nidintu-bel, who claimed to be—and possibly was—a son of [the last Babylonian king] Nabonidus, set himself up as king under the name of Nebuchadnezzar III and managed to maintain himself for some months before Darius seized him and executed him. The following year saw another rebellion in Babylon, the leader of which likewise called himself Nebuchadnezzar [IV] and claimed to be a son of Nabonidus. He, too, made trouble for some months until captured and impaled by the Persians, together with his chief supporters. Throughout his first two regnal years Darius had to fight without cessation on one front after another in order to win

through. It was probably not until late in 520 that his position was actually secure.

"Meanwhile, it must have seemed that the Persian Empire was literally flying to pieces. As nationalistic feeling exploded everywhere a tense excitement was created from which the little community in Judah was by no means immune. Dormant hopes were awakened. Perhaps the awaited hour, the hour of the overturn of the nations and the triumphant establishment of Yahweh's rule, had come at last!" (2000, p. 369).

For those focused on the world scene at the time, certain statements in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, who then preached to the people of Judea, could easily have been interpreted in that way. This might well have played a part in the positive response of the people to their exhortations. Moreover, it was less than four years until the end of the 70 years since the destruction of Jerusalem and the first temple (586-516 B.C). It was time to get busy and get the job done. Through world events, the inspired preaching of His prophets and directly stirring the hearts of Judah's leaders and people, God provided the needed motivation to ensure the fulfillment of His promises.

### **Introduction to Haggai**

As [Ezra 4:24-5:1](#) makes clear, in the second year of Darius (ca. 520 B.C.), two prophets came on the scene in Judea exhorting the Jews who had returned from Babylonian captivity to resume work on the temple of God. These two prophets were Haggai and Zechariah. Recall that in the Hebrew Bible, the 12 "Minor Prophets" constitute a single book of Scripture—concluding the Prophets division of the Old Testament. Haggai is the 10th book of the Minor Prophets. It is the first of the last three—Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi—which together are known appropriately as the Postexilic Prophets.

The name Haggai means "Festive," "Festal One" or "My Feast"—the Hebrew *hag*, the word for festival, coming from the concept of moving or dancing in a circle. "It has been suggested that the name was given him because he was born on some feast" (Charles Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 1952, p. 237). Some think this name might be a shortened form of Haggiah (a name borne by another individual in [1 Chronicles 6:30](#)), which means "Feast of Yhwh" (see *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, introduction to Haggai). It is interesting that the prophet Haggai's mission was to call on the Jews to restore the temple and its worship—making it once again the center of Jewish festivity and of God's sacred feasts in particular. In any event, as *Expositor's* states in a footnote to [Ezra 5:1](#), Haggai "was a popular name. It was borne by eleven individuals at [the fifth-century-B.C. Jewish community at Aswan in Egypt on the Nile island of] Elephantine and by four in the Murashu texts [of Babylon] ([Michael] Coogan, [*West Semitic*] *Personal Names* [*in the Murašû Documents*, 1976], p. 23)."

Nothing else is known about Haggai apart from his short book, the two occurrences of his name in the book of Ezra ([Ezra 5:1](#); [Ezra 6:14](#)) and an allusion to him in [Zechariah 8:9](#). Some have seen [Haggai 2:3](#) as an indication that the prophet himself saw the earlier temple of Solomon, which would put Haggai in his 70s or older. His old age is given as the reason for the brevity of his work and writing—cut short, it is presumed, by death. Yet the verse in question does not actually say that Haggai saw the former temple. Perhaps he merely knew of its dimensions—or was afforded a glimpse of it in inspired vision. So we really have no clue as to the prophet's age. He could well have been a young man. The placement of Haggai before Zechariah in Ezra and of Haggai's book before Zechariah's in scriptural arrangement could indicate that Haggai was older, but that is not really telling of age as Zechariah himself was young (see [Zechariah 2:4](#)). Moreover, the book placement could simply signify the fact that Haggai's book began first (see [Haggai 1:1](#); [Zechariah 1:1](#)).

Haggai's book was meant for the people of his own day but its scope clearly goes far beyond this. "He begins with the rebuilding of the temple, but goes on to speak of the shaking of all nations, the coming of the Lord, and the glory of His millennial reign" (Feinberg, p. 237).

The word Haggai consistently uses for the temple in His book, as in many other places in Scripture, literally means *house*, as the King James Version renders it. The idea is that of a dwelling place for God. Of course, since God is in heaven, we realize that it is through His Spirit that He dwelt in the temple Solomon had built. We should consider that the temple of God today is His people, the New Testament Church in which He now resides through His Holy Spirit (see [Ephesians 2:19-22](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16-17](#); [1 Timothy 3:15](#)). And so the book of Haggai has much to say to true Christians. Indeed, there have been times over the centuries where the temple-building tasks God has delegated to His servants—preaching the gospel as the means by which He calls new members and nourishing those members to steady and strengthen them in the structure—has been neglected. And yet God has always stirred some to resume the work. Even now, we must realize that God is still in the process of building His spiritual temple, adding people to it. We must be careful, then, not to neglect participating in God's work of building His temple today. In fact, we should consider that God considers each of us *individually* as His temple ([1 Corinthians 6:19-20](#)). So part of our work is to, with God's help, take care of ourselves—body, mind and spirit—cooperating with Him in His work of spiritually building each of us up personally, growing and overcoming with His help to become the kind of temple He desires. And in that light we must also work to serve and help the interests of every individual in whom God's Spirit dwells.

God's Word through Haggai today is the same as it was to the people of the prophet's own time: "...Build the temple, that I may take pleasure

in it and be glorified,' says the Lord" ([Haggai 1:8](#)). This is the message of the whole book.

### **"Wages...Into a Bag With Holes"**

The date on which Haggai's first message commences corresponds to August 29, 520 B.C. It is immediately directed to the leaders of Judea—Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua or Jeshua the high priest ([Haggai 1:1](#)). Yet it is evidently also announced to all Jews of the land (see [Ezra 5:1](#)).

The people maintained that it was not the appropriate time for reconstruction ([Haggai 1:2](#)). We can look at this in two ways. First, circumstances did not appear "ideal" to them. They had given up the reconstruction in the face of the Samaritan antagonism. That antagonism had probably not abated. God had not seen fit to remove the Samaritans from the land and replace them with people friendly to the Jews and their efforts. The Persian overlords had not quashed the Samaritan resistance and given new declarations of support and provided financing for the Jewish rebuilding effort. The Jews were waiting for some forthcoming miraculous circumstances. But God had already given them the task and provided miraculous assistance in the past. Their responsibility now was to step out in faith to continue in obedience to God—and He would continue to see them through.

If we wait until circumstances are "ideal" to obey God, we will *never* obey Him. Our faith is tested through adversity. God wants to see how we will handle His commands even in the hard times. Moreover, we must never put off obedience to God until some later, more "propitious" time. Consider when a person has a new job and learns that his employer expects him to work on the Sabbath. He might think, "Well I'd better not try to take off on Saturdays now. My supervisors won't go for that. I'd better wait until I've been here a few more months or a few more years and then press my case." This



attempt to "work matters out to obey God," thereby delaying obedience, is still *disobedience*—sin against God. In such a situation, the person should immediately inform his employer, politely and respectfully of course, that he henceforth will be unable to work on the Sabbath—and then stand by his convictions. This is the attitude God will bless, not an attitude of compromise and faithlessness.

The second sense of it not being time to renew work on the temple involves the idea of there not being *enough* time. "How modern an objection!" notes *The Bible Reader's Companion*, "Sorry, there just isn't time right now for prayer. I'd like to read my Bible, but I have to get up so early for my work. And at night I'm too tired to do anything but read [or watch] the news [or some relaxing entertainment]. The people of Judea were also busy: too busy with their own affairs to have time or money to invest in rebuilding the temple of God. As a result *they* lost out!" (note on verse 2).

In verses 3-4 and 9, the Jews are chided for somehow finding enough time and money to build up and adorn their *own* houses—*running* to serve themselves—while letting *God's* house lie in ruins. He tells them to take stock of their situation (verse 5). All of their efforts produce little income. Their food and drink is not enough to satisfy them. Their clothes are not sufficient to keep them warm. Their wages seem to go into a "bag with holes" (verse 6). The reference here is to a money sack, which people carried before pockets and purses came into use. The people's income seems to leak away. The harder they work, the further they get behind.

"Haggai rebuked the people with a...play on words.... He proclaimed that because the Lord's house had remained 'a ruin' (*hareb*, [Hag 1:4](#), [9](#)), the Lord would bring [or, rather, had already brought] 'a drought' (*horeb*, [Hag 1:11](#)) on the land" (*Expositor's*, note on [Ezra 5:1](#)). Indeed, God had cursed the people's efforts because of their failure to honor and obey him ([Haggai 1:7-11](#); see also 2:16-17). "There's a lesson here



for us. God is the one who makes any effort bear fruit. We need to put Him first. When we do, the Lord will bless" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on 1:5-6).

The irony is that the reason the people did not have the time or substance to expend on the work of God is that they did not expend time and substance on the work of God first. People often feel that they "cannot afford" to support God's work. Yet they have it backwards. The truth is that they cannot afford to *not* support it. They cannot afford to *not* take time to pray, to study God's Word, to meditate on His laws and to obey Him and support His work. If we put God first, devoting ourselves to His service—in our hearts and minds, in our time and energy, in our finances, in every area of our lives—God will take care of us. If we support His work through our time and means, He will see to it that our remaining time and means are sufficient for the rest of our needs. God promises this in regard to His command about tithing in [Malachi 3:8-12](#)—and in regard to proper prioritizing of life's demands in [Matthew 6:25-34](#).

After presenting God's rebuke, Haggai has the distinction of being one of the few prophets in the Bible whose words were positively heeded. The leaders and people, with an appropriate fear of further neglecting their relationship with God, determine to now obey Him and renew work on His temple ([Haggai 1:12](#)). God then encourages them with the wonderful news that He will be with them (verse 13)—a necessity for their success in this and every spiritual venture. Verse 14 reveals that God Himself has inspired the national recommitment. The work recommences a little more than three weeks from Haggai's initial message (same verse). Perhaps the intervening time was "spent in taking inventory of their supplies, assessing and assigning jobs, and completing plans" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 13-15). It seems likely from the wording of [Ezra 5:1-2](#) that Zechariah had also preached to the

people prior to their renewed work even though his book does not actually begin until afterward.” [END]

### Day 681 – MONDAY: June 23<sup>rd</sup>

Haggai 2:1 – 9

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: “The people of Judea had recommitted themselves to the work of God and had gotten off to a good new start. Through Haggai, God had exhorted them to the task and then encouraged them with the assurance of His presence with them. But that was of course not enough. This next message of Haggai illustrates the need for *ongoing* exhortation and encouragement—just as God's people need today and at all times.

This next message comes just under a month from the recommencement of the temple construction. Interestingly, it comes on the 21st day of the seventh month, the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (see [Leviticus 23:33-44](#)). It was at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles that Solomon had dedicated the first temple. And for those who were old enough to remember, the annual Feast of Tabernacles was probably the time of the greatest expression of joy before the splendor of the former temple.

In recalling these things, some measure of disappointment may have set in—just as had happened when the foundation of the second temple was first laid, when those who remembered the former temple of Solomon wept (see [Ezra 3:12-13](#)). This could have been part of the reason for previously quitting the reconstruction—the idea of “What's the use? It will never be as good as it was before.”

Haggai now “puts the discouraging sentiments into the mouths of the audience. They were all thinking it, and now Haggai has said it. The new is inferior to the old, and that fact along with the other discouraging circumstances had thoroughly depressed the people and stifled their

initiative. One account of the effort Solomon put into his temple is recorded in 2 Chronicles 1-4. Compare this with the meager means of the returned exiles, whose temple must have looked small indeed" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Haggai 2:3-5](#)). We can fall into this way of thinking with regards to the spiritual temple of God—His Church, considered either collectively or personally. Perhaps we reflect on the material accoutrements and accomplishments of the Church of God in the last century—with huge congregations, superb buildings and grounds, abundant financial means and a powerful, globe-girdling work. We could then look on the more modest physical situation of today and become discouraged—wondering what the use is of carrying on with the temple-building work God has delegated to us when our physical circumstances will seemingly never match what was there before. Maybe similar reasoning is applied to our spiritual condition if we have neglected our relationship with God: "I was so spiritually focused years ago. But I've made some wrong choices. I've done some bad things. I'll never be where I was before. Why even bother?"

God did not leave the returned exiles hopeless. As *Expositor's* notes: "Having brought the very problem of discouragement into focus, Haggai next offered the divine antidote: 'Be strong...be strong...be strong...and work. For I am with you' (v. 4). Notice the same imperative thrice repeated—to Zerubbabel, to Joshua, and to all the people. Notice also the threefold repetition of the formula 'declares the Lord.' The problem was essentially one of attitude. So the primary command was to take courage. When the people did that, the command to 'work' would be fulfilled quite naturally. For the Lord to have only said 'work' without giving assurances would have been inadequate motivation. These people did not need to be whipped but encouraged—not cudgelled but made optimistic. The most uplifting thing they or anyone could hear was that God was with them....

"The thought must have passed through some minds that God was with them no longer. There must have been those who were theologically naive and doubted that God could be with them if the temple and the ark [of the covenant] in particular were not intact. Undoubtedly fear gripped many of the returnees—fear that God had...[eternally abandoned] Jerusalem, fear that no amount of praying or piety would induce him to bless them again, fear that the whole endeavor was in vain, fear that the political enemies would in fact win, fear that all was lost. Therefore, the words of God through Haggai, which must have had a ring of authority to them, would have been of great comfort And that encouraging word that shored up the sagging spirits of our spiritual forefathers should serve to bolster our spirits as well when we are spiritually discouraged" (note on verses 3-5).

Verse 6 is the only verse of Haggai quoted in the New Testament—in [Hebrews 12:26](#). [Haggai 2:5](#) is a reference to God's Spirit being with the ancient Israelites at Mount Sinai. This is the time when [Hebrews 12:26](#) says God's "voice then shook the earth." [Haggai 2:6-7](#) goes on to describe the time when God "once more...will shake heaven and earth...and...all nations." [Hebrews 12:26-28](#) shows that the final shaking to come will leave only the Kingdom of God. This is certainly an end-time prophecy. It should be noted, though, that, as commentator Charles Feinberg explains, some have viewed [Haggai 2:6-7](#) as referring "to the revolutions in the Persian and Greek empires. There were such shakings in these governments, but they can only be considered as initial and preparatory steps in the long process where the kingdoms are shaken from their position of rule, and finally the kingdom of the Lord Christ is realized upon earth" (*The Minor Prophets*, pp. 243-244). Given the turmoil at the beginning of Darius' reign, it is conceivable that the returned exiles took this prophecy as applying to events of their own day—and misunderstanding this and the rest of Haggai's prophecy as indicating the imminence of the messianic age.

Verse 7 mentions the "Desire of All Nations" and filling the temple with glory. Many have seen in these words a reference to the Messiah, Jesus Christ—that is, all nations desire a divine Savior and Deliverer and a relationship with the Creator of mankind even though they do not know His actual identity or understand God's will. Others link the phrase "desire of all nations" to the mention of silver and gold in verse 8, seeing the "desire" as the precious things of the gentile nations being brought into the millennial temple of Ezekiel 40-44. Yet the mention of all the gold and silver in the world belonging to God may simply have been His way of telling the people that they need not fret over the absence of such precious metals from their present construction. After all, no matter how things look to them, God states that the glory of "this latter temple" shall be greater than the former (verse 9).

It perhaps seems odd that the millennial temple would be in view here considering that it will be a different temple than the one Zerubbabel built. Zerubbabel's temple, the second temple, later renovated by King Herod, was utterly destroyed by the Romans. The millennial temple, as described in the final chapters of Ezekiel, will not be built until Christ's return. It would seem, then, that the second temple must have been intended on some level here in Haggai 2. Consider that a comparison is being drawn with Solomon's temple, and God is encouraging the people about the temple they are working on. How would it be an encouragement if the point were that the temple they were working on would not receive the greater glory—that the greater glory was instead reserved for a later temple to be built millennia after the one they were working on was destroyed?

Of course, Haggai's immediate audience would not have known any of this bad news. Moreover, we should return to verse 3, where Haggai asks, "Who is left among you who saw *this temple* in its former glory?" Feinberg remarks, "From God's viewpoint there was only one house of the Lord on Mt. Zion, whether it was the Temple built by Solomon,

Zerubbabel, or Herod later" (p. 243). Indeed, there is continuity between the temples. Nevertheless, we should recognize that a contrast is being drawn between "this latter temple" and "the former."

What, we might ask, did the second temple experience in the way of divine glory? After all, we've already seen that it was smaller. Moreover, factors evident upon later completion could have seemed to belie the idea of greater glory. "The Babylonian Talmud indicated five things were lacking in the Temple of Zerubbabel which were present in the Temple of Solomon: (1) the Ark of the Covenant [containing the Ten Commandments]; (2) the holy fire; (3) the Shekinah glory [the divine presence of God]; (4) the spirit of prophecy (the Holy Spirit); and (5) the Urim and Thummim" (p. 240). Yet consider that to this very temple, as later renovated by Herod, would come the Creator incarnate—God made flesh—Jesus Christ. Furthermore, as we will later consider in reading Acts 2, there is reason to believe that the temple may have been the "house" where Jesus' disciples were gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following His death and resurrection—where the Holy Spirit came and filled them in a manifestation of power and thousands of gathered witnesses from different countries were converted as a result. This was the beginning of the New Testament Church—the *spiritual* temple of God as mentioned before—again providing a sense of continuity.

Indeed, the prophecy of the Desire of All Nations and the temple being filled with glory, while perhaps referring in part to events surrounding Christ's first coming, would—given the apparent time frame of following the shaking of all nations—seem to have more direct reference to events surrounding Christ's *second* coming. And the temple of God of that time referred to in the prophecy could well signify the spiritual one that continued right on beyond the destruction of the second temple and remains to this day—the New Testament Church of God.

Those elements of the first physical temple that were missing in the second have spiritual counterparts in the spiritual temple, the Church. Rather than the ark containing the Ten Commandments, the members of the Church of God have the law of God written on their hearts. Rather than the divinely ignited holy fire for sacrifices, those in the Church of God are offered up as living sacrifices, and their prayers as incense. The Shekinah (indwelling) glory of God abides within the members of His spiritual temple. The Church of God has the "prophetic word confirmed" ([2 Peter 1:19](#)). And rather than consult the Urim and Thummim, those in the Church are able to consult the full written Word of God and His ministry and receive discernment through God's Spirit. It is the Church of God, the spiritual temple, that will obtain the greatest glory of all, when it is fully glorified—indeed, deified—at the time of Christ's return. The glorified Church will then dwell with Christ at the physical millennial temple, again providing further continuity of the temple theme—that of a dwelling place, a house, a home for God and His family.

[Haggai 2:9](#) ends with God's promise, "And in this place I will give peace"—*shalom*, ultimate contentment and satisfaction, with all as it should be. That certainly has not described the history of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount of any age since Haggai wrote. And even the Church, while experiencing a measure of the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" ([Philippians 4:7](#)), has not received it in its fullness and perfection. That is something that lies yet in the future—the wonderful hope for which we wait." [END]

Day 682 – TUESDAY: June 24<sup>th</sup>

Zechariah 1:1 – 6

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "[Ezra 4:24-5:2](#) says that in the second year of the Persian king Darius, the Judean governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Jeshua or Joshua recommenced the work on the second



temple in response to the preaching of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. [Haggai 1:14-15](#) tells us that the work was resumed on the 24th day of the sixth month (corresponding to September 22, 520 B.C.). Yet the first message of the book of Zechariah is dated to the *eighth* month of the same year (late October to late November)—one to two months after the work's resumption. Evidently Zechariah preached with Haggai prior to the 24th day of the sixth month but didn't receive the message from God that begins his book until the eighth month. In other words, Zechariah's ministry began prior to the writing of his book.

Zechariah is the 11th of the 12 Minor Prophets—the second of the three Postexilic Prophets. He refers to himself as "Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo" ([Zechariah 1:1](#)). Ezra refers to him as "Zechariah the son of Iddo" ([Ezra 5:1](#); [Ezra 6:14](#))—"son" in this case meaning "grandson." "Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was not only a prophet but also a priest. He was born in Babylonia and was among those who returned to Palestine in 539-537 B.C. under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua (cf. Iddo, [Nehemiah 12:4](#)). At a later time, when Joiakim was high priest, Zechariah apparently succeeded his grandfather Iddo ([Zechariah 1:1](#), [7](#)) as head of that priestly family ([Nehemiah 12:10-16](#)). Since it was the grandson (Zechariah) who in this instance succeeded the grandfather (Iddo), it has been conjectured that the father (Berekiah, [Zechariah 1:1](#), [Zechariah 1:7](#)) died at an early age, before he could succeed to family headship. Though a contemporary of Haggai, Zechariah continued his ministry long after him (cf. [Zechariah 1:1](#) and [7:1](#) with [Haggai 1:1](#); see also [Nehemiah 12:10-16](#)). Considering his young age in the early period of his ministry ([Zechariah 2:4](#), 'young man'), it is possible that Zechariah continued into the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.)" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, introduction to Zechariah). Chapters 1-8 of Zechariah are

dated to the time of the temple's reconstruction. Chapters 9-14 are undated and believed by many to have been written much later.

The name Zechariah, a common one in the Old Testament, means "Yhwh Remembers." *Expositor's* notes: "The three names in the complete patronymic formula (Zechariah, Berekiah, Iddo) mean 'the Lord remembers,' 'the Lord blesses,' and 'timely (?).' [Commentator Charles] Feinberg...combining the three names, believes they signify that 'the Lord remembers,' and 'the Lord will bless' at 'the set time,' which, in a sense, is the theme of the book" (note on Zechariah 1:1). Zechariah's message is that God will not forget or forsake His people—He will remember and restore them. This was already evident through the restoration God was then accomplishing. And in due time God would send the Messiah to bring them eternal salvation and glory.

"Zechariah is frequently called the 'prophet of hope'.... [His] book is filled with references to Christ. Messianic references include mentions of Christ's lowliness and humanity ([Zechariah 6:12](#)). They describe His betrayal by Judas ([Zechariah 11:12-13](#)), His deity ([Zechariah 3:4](#); [Zechariah 13:7](#)), His priesthood ([Zechariah 6:13](#)), and His kingship ([Zechariah 6:13](#); [Zechariah 9:9](#); [Zechariah 14:9](#), [Zechariah 14:16](#)). Zechariah also speaks of the Messiah's being struck down by the Lord['s command] ([Zechariah 13:7](#)), His second coming ([Zechariah 14:4](#)), His glorious reign ([Zechariah 9:10](#); [Zechariah 9:14](#)), and His establishment of world peace ([Zechariah 9:9-10](#); cf. [Zechariah 3:10](#)). In few Old Testament books do we find such constant attention given to the coming Saviour" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, introduction to Zechariah).

In his book *The Minor Prophets*, Charles Feinberg states: "The prophetic horizon of Zechariah is far broader than that of the other minor prophets. His book has been called an apocalypse because of the presence of a number of visions. He dwells on the Person and work of Christ more fully than all the other minor prophets together" (p. 273).

Zechariah's message was no doubt an encouraging one. Like Haggai, he experienced a positive response from the people of Judah. This leads to a question about what became of this particular prophet. Jesus later mentions the horrifying martyrdom of "Zechariah, son of Berechiah...murdered between the temple and the altar" ([Matthew 23:35](#))—the location seeming to imply that the victim was a priest, as only priests were permitted in this area. Yet it would seem odd for the author of the book of Zechariah to have been meant considering that Ezra and Nehemiah make no mention of such a vile act—one that would have represented a drastic change in the orientation of the people. It is, however, possible that Zechariah lived beyond the completion of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah and that his martyrdom came at that later time—perhaps by people who felt his messianic proclamations had failed. Alternatively, commentators typically conclude that Christ was referring to Zechariah "the son of Jehoiada" who was stoned to death in the temple court ([2 Chronicles 24:19-22](#))—seeing Jehoiada as actually his grandfather and Berechiah as his father though not named in Scripture (or Berechiah as a second name for Jehoiada). Chronicles was the last book of the Bible in Jesus' day, and it is argued that His statement "the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah" was intended to signify martyrdom "from one end of Scripture to the other."

### **"Return to Me...and I Will Return to You"**

The prophet Zechariah's book opens with a call to repentance ([Zechariah 1:1-6](#)). Though God had stirred the hearts and minds of the people to resume work on the temple, it is evident that they were not fully reformed. Working on the reconstruction was not enough. They needed to completely reorient their lives toward God, serving Him wholeheartedly with the right attitude. And they needed to stay the course—remaining consistent in obedience (a rather tall order for a people who did not have the indwelling strength of God through His

Spirit). Haggai had already addressed the disappointment of many over the scope of the new temple as compared with Solomon's ([Haggai 2:3](#)). Discouragement could have led to neglect and giving up as it had some years before. So Haggai urged a steady strength. Through Zechariah God urges "return"—repentance.

It was imperative for the people to recognize their tendency to sin and the possibility that they could fall into their forefathers' pattern of rejecting God. (Indeed, as [1 John 1:7-8](#) makes clear, even true, converted Christians do not always succeed in their ongoing struggle against sin—and must regularly and constantly "return" to God and His ways.) Nevertheless, the admonition that the people not follow in their forefathers' footsteps should have served as an encouragement. The returned exiles had a choice in the matter—they did not *have* to go the way of their ancestors.

The great God was with them to help and guide those who would trust in and submit to Him—and to correct and chasten those who would not. "Note the title 'Lord of Hosts' [*Yhwh Sabaoth*] throughout this passage and the entire prophecy as well. It is the characteristic name for God in Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, occurring more than eighty times. The Greek translation of the Old Testament renders it 'the Almighty.' God is Lord of the stars, the powers of heaven, and all the forces of the universe—a most inclusive and comprehensive name for God" (Feinberg, p. 275).

[Zechariah 1:5-6](#) offers an important perspective about the prophetic pronouncements of the Bible. Many earlier prophets had warned of future national destruction to come on Israel and Judah for their failure to obey God but died before the destruction came to pass. Many looked on their deaths as justification for viewing their warnings as false alarms. And yet their pronouncements came true. "Though the messengers may be gone, God's words live on to be fulfilled (cf. [Isa 40:6-8](#))" (*Expositor's*, note on verses 4-6). Many today scoff at end-time

prophecy, claiming that those who issued apocalyptic warnings are long since dead and gone—their pronouncements nothing to worry about. This kind of thinking is foolish. Almighty God is still alive. He's the one who actually made the pronouncements through His servants—and He will ensure their fulfillment.

In verse 6, the phrase "So they returned" or "'Then they repented' [NIV] ('came to themselves,' 'changed their minds') is apparently a reference to what happened to the preexilic forefathers and/or to their offspring during the Exile and immediately afterward.... They had to acknowledge that they had brought the divine discipline of the Exile on themselves because they had refused to 'listen,' or 'pay attention,' to the Lord and to his words of warning through his servants the prophets. They also had to acknowledge that the Lord was just and righteous in his judgment, for he had done to them what their ways and practices deserved, all in accord with what he had 'determined to do' (cf. [Lam 2:17](#))" (*Expositor's*, note on [Zechariah 1:4-6](#)).

The Exile had vindicated the rejected former prophets—their words had come true. The people of Zechariah's day needed to learn the lessons and live their lives according to God's will. Of course, the message was not only for Zechariah's day. These words were written for us as well." [END]

Day 683 – WEDNESDAY: June 25<sup>th</sup>

Haggai 2:10 – 23

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Haggai's last two recorded messages came on the 24th day of the ninth month in Darius' second year (verses 10, 20)—corresponding to December 18, 520 B.C.

Haggai's first message on this day opens with a discussion of holiness and defilement. The previous month, Zechariah had issued a call to repentance, as we saw in our last reading ([Zechariah 1:1-6](#)). Though the

people were once again engaged in the work of God, they still had personal sins, including wrong attitudes, to contend with. It was essential that they remain conformed to God's will.

In [Haggai 2:11-13](#), God directs His prophet to ask the priests about issues of holiness. It was their responsibility to teach God's laws to the people, and it seems likely that this exchange took place before a gathering of the people. "There were two distinct questions: (1) If a man were carrying sacrificial (holy) flesh [that is, a dedicated meat offering] and happened to touch another object, would the object touched thereby become holy or set apart to the Lord? (2) If a man who was unclean by reason of contact with a corpse should touch any such object, would the object become unclean because of the man's uncleanness? The answer to the first question is negative; to the second it is affirmative. The passages bearing on the subject should be read carefully. (Note [Lev 22:4-6](#); [Num 19:11](#); and [Lev 6:18](#).) Moral cleanness [which ritual purity symbolized] cannot be transmitted, said the Mosaic law, but moral uncleanness can. Legal impurity is more easily transmitted than legal purity. A healthy man cannot communicate his health to his sick child, but the sick child can communicate its disease to the father" (Charles Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 245-246).

God explains that this is just how it had been with the Jewish nation (verse 14). When the returned exiles arrived in Judea, they had set up the altar of God and reinstituted sacrifices ([Ezra 3:1-6](#)). Yet when the people gave up on their duty to reconstruct the temple, the ongoing sacrifices did not purify them even in a ritual sense. Instead, God considered these offerings unclean because the whole focus of the nation was wrong. Even the priests to whom Haggai spoke had been guilty—and it must have stung when they understood the point he was making.

Consider the imagery here further. Haggai's example was of a person, an individual, carrying sacrificial meat in his garment and of another person, again an individual, who was unclean because of a dead body. If there were one or a few people with right standing before God through physical and spiritual sacrifices, these could not spread righteousness throughout the nation just by their presence. On the other hand, a person who had become defiled through contact with a dead body would spread defilement (physical uncleanness being symbolic of spiritual uncleanness). A little sin in a group will spread (see 1 Corinthians 5). Perhaps what started as the wrong attitudes of a few people spread throughout the nation, eventually leading to the disengagement of the people from the rebuilding project.

Since Zechariah had just issued a call to repentance, we may surmise that some still had wrong attitudes even after the recommitment of the nation. Again, all it took was a few bad apples and the whole Jewish nation was at risk of being corrupted once again. The current rebuilding effort had to be accompanied by the right attitudes and ongoing obedience or the result would be the same. Just having a temple would not shield them from this reality. "The existence of the temple itself guaranteed nothing. The hearts of the people had to be in harmony with the sacrifices being made" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Haggai 2:13-14](#)).

In verse 15, the New King James Version has "consider from this day forward...." And yet what follows concerns past circumstances. The Hebrew word translated "forward" literally means "upward," and its meaning here is disputed. Some translations have it as "backward"—as in the English idioms where "up the chain" denotes an earlier episode and "down the line" denotes a later one. If the meaning is "forward," the sense here is "From now on you need to think about these past circumstances." If the meaning is "backward," the concept is "Think



back from this day on these past circumstances." (The same applies to verse 18).

But the time frame of the past circumstances is not immediately clear. When was "stone ... laid upon stone in the temple"? Some maintain that this refers to the laying of the foundation of the temple 16 years earlier (see [Ezra 3:8-12](#)). Others believe the reference is to the resumption of work on the temple just three months prior (see [Haggai 1:14-15](#)). Still others think the reference is to the day of Haggai's present message, the 24th day of the ninth month—seeing verse 18 as saying that it was on this particular day "that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid."

To understand, we should consider the circumstances the people were to reflect on. God had cursed their efforts and their produce to humble them and provoke them to repentance (verses 16-17). Interestingly, verse 17 is a quote from one of the earlier Minor Prophets, Amos, who had applied these words to the nation of Israel (see [Amos 4:9](#)). Nevertheless, the wording parallels the Lord's statements about the returned exiles in Haggai 1 (verses 6, 9-11). And it fits well with the point about their past defilement that He had just made in verses 10-14. Since their alienation from God and consequent punishment are said to have come *before* the laying of stone upon stone (verse 15), the stone-laying here would not seem to be the earlier laying of the foundation in Ezra 3—as the people were not then being punished for disobedience. (Unless the Exile as a whole is in view, but the blighted crops and hail seem to denote not the experience in Babylon but rather the punishment the people experienced in Judea after forsaking the temple reconstruction.)

How are we to reconcile the apparent contradiction of the temple foundation having been laid 16 years earlier ([Ezra 3:8-12](#)) and now again at the time of Haggai's preaching ([Haggai 2:18](#))? There are a few possibilities. It may be that the foundation laid 16 years earlier was

unfinished—and that work on it was resumed and completed during Haggai's ministry. It could also be that the foundation was earlier completed and even built upon but that, due to problems resultant from neglect, the structure had to be taken back down to the foundations and repairs made. It is also possible "that the first marked the subterranean foundation-laying and the second the first building at ground level as in ancient Mesopotamian practice" (*New Bible Commentary: Revised*, note on verse 18).

The laying of stone upon stone in verse 15, then, seems to refer to the resumption of the work on the temple three months prior. And the day of Haggai's current message being the date the foundation was laid (verse 18) would appear to mean that the foundation was finished on that day. We could perhaps loosely paraphrase verses 15-19 like this: "Think about how things were. Before you resumed work on the temple three months ago, I made things really hard for you when you would not repent. But now from this 24th day of the ninth month (on which the foundation has been completed), you may not see the results yet but I'm turning things around for you to bless you."

It is possible that there is a dual application to Haggai's message. A number of people have recognized the 24th day of the Hebrew ninth month, Kislev, as marking an important occasion in the modern history of the Jewish people. In 1917 the date corresponded to December 9, the day the Turks surrendered Palestine to the British during World War I. The British represent the leading nation of Israelite descent (see our free booklet [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#)). And Britain is subject to the British monarchy—the Jewish dynasty of David (see our online publication [The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future](#)). As noted earlier, [Haggai 2:17](#) was quoted from [Amos 4:9](#), which referred initially to destruction to come on the northern kingdom of Israel. The words seem parallel to the national curses for disobedience in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. These passages

seem to set forth a 2,520-year withholding of blessings—for the northern kingdom extending from their captivity and fall in the late 700s B.C. to the late 1700s and early 1800s A.D. (see “[Birthright Blessings Delayed for 2,520 Years](#)”). Yet what of Judah? Interestingly, 2,520 years prior to 1917 was 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar initially invaded ancient Judah in 605 B.C. but then quickly returned to Babylon to assume the throne of the Babylonian Empire upon the death of his father. As explained in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Jeremiah 36, he returned in Kislev of the next year to secure his claim on Judah and its neighbors. It was at this time that a fast was called and Jeremiah's book was read to the people—and King Jehoiakim, having one last opportunity to repent, instead burned Jeremiah's book.

It certainly seems more than a mere coincidence that exactly 2,520 years elapsed from this confirmed subjugation of the Davidic dynasty in the Holy Land to Babylon until the restoration of the Davidic dynasty's sovereignty over the Holy Land—and that this restoration occurred on the 24th day of Kislev. This would later lead to the return of Jews to the Holy Land and the formation of the Jewish state of Israel. Thus, it may well be that God's statement that He will bless the Jews from the 24th day of Kislev concerns, on some level at least, the events of 1917. And there may yet be other applications, as the prophecy that follows in Haggai 2, still connected with the 24th of Kislev, concerns the end time.

### **Zerubbabel Chosen as a Signet**

The 1st four verses of Haggai 2 constitute a second message given through the prophet on the same 24th day of Kislev. This final message of the book is addressed to Judah's governor, Zerubbabel.

The shaking of heaven and earth (verse 21) is repeated from verse 6—when God said greater glory than Solomon's temple would fill the new temple. Unless Haggai in some unrecorded sermon disabused them of the notion, the reference to the throwing down of the "throne of

kingdoms" and the destruction of the strength of the gentile kingdoms (verse 22) would likely have been seen by the Jews of Judea as a reference to the fall of Persia—a concept to which the turmoil at the beginning of Darius' reign, which was still going on at this time, may well have lent credence.

God's reference to Zerubbabel as "My servant" and to His choosing him as a signet (verse 23) would have had quite an impact as well.

Zerubbabel's grandfather was Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, whose descendants God had banned from the throne of David ([Jeremiah 22:30](#)). In giving that ban God had declared, "As I live...though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off" (verse 24). Those considering Haggai's prophecy might easily have wrongly concluded the following: the Persian Empire is now crumbling; God has overturned His ban on Jeconiah's descendants; Zerubbabel will soon reign as king; Zerubbabel is the Messiah.

Time would soon reveal these conclusions as erroneous. Darius soon solidified his rule and strengthened and expanded the Persian Empire. God did not negate His own word in removing the dynastic ban He had placed on Jeconiah's descendants. Zerubbabel never became king. And thus he was certainly not the prophesied Messiah. In fact, he mysteriously disappears from the storyline of Ezra shortly afterward, which we will later consider.

The book of Hebrews interprets the great shaking of [Haggai 2:6](#) in an end-time sense. This is the reasonable interpretation of what is apparently the same shaking in verse 21. The overthrow of the "throne of kingdoms" (verse 22) will be accomplished in the same time frame. "Notice that it is 'throne' in the singular and not the plural. There is one supreme ruler over the earth, permitted by God and carried out by Satan, and it will be replaced by that of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See [Rev 11:15](#))" (Charles Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 247). Enemy forces

fighting among themselves ([Haggai 2:22](#)) is another characteristic of the time of Christ's return (see [Zechariah 14:13](#)).

Then in verse 23 we have the exaltation of Zerubbabel, which occurs "in that day." Clearly this did not refer to the time of Haggai's preaching. "In that day" would here signify the day of the great future shaking just indicated—the time of Jesus Christ's second coming. Moreover, the phrase "in that day" is a typical formulation in prophecy for the end-time Day of the Lord.

Given all this, how are we to understand this future exaltation of Zerubbabel? There are a few different prevalent ideas. On one hand, Zerubbabel is seen as the predecessor of the Messiah. That is, in addressing Zerubbabel but specifying the time as that of the great shaking, the one really being addressed is the person who will hold Zerubbabel's office at that later time—the Messiah. In another view, Zerubbabel is simply seen as a representative type or symbol of the coming Messiah—wherein the faithful Davidic leader of the Jews stands for the *ultimate* faithful Davidic leader of the Jews. Alternatively, the exaltation and choosing of Zerubbabel is viewed as a reference to the Messiah coming from his line of descent—and Jesus is legally reckoned as a descendant of Zerubbabel through His adoption by Joseph (see Matthew 1; we will consider the physical genealogy of Luke 3 when we come to the New Testament).

There is, however, another very real and even likely possibility. Near the beginning of Haggai's short book, Zerubbabel had led the way in the nation's repenting and returning to the work of God (see [Haggai 1:12, 14](#)). And here at the end, he is promised a sure reward. Zerubbabel would indeed reign as a king before God. But not through his physical descent from Jeconiah, as that was forbidden. Rather, at the end of this evil age, when the spiritual powers and governments that dominate this planet are shaken and overthrown, Zerubbabel will receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Spiritually born in a new

body in direct descent from Almighty God, his descent will no longer be reckoned according to the flesh. Like all the saints, He will be able to sit with Jesus Christ on the throne of David and reign.

Zerubbabel, whose name means "the Seed of Babel"—signifying his birth there—can thus be viewed as typical of all God's servants. We have all been born in the Babylon of this world. But like Zerubbabel, we can be the "chosen" of God. We can function as God's signet. God may well have intended Zerubbabel to begin functioning in that capacity while still in the flesh—from that same 24th day of Kislev. In its entry on "signet" in the context of [Haggai 2:23](#), *A Dictionary of Bible Types* states: "This unusual compliment is probably the greatest given to a man by the living God. He informed Zerubbabel that He would touch his life in such a blessed way that he would leave on every other life he touched the imprint of God and the impress of heaven. His conversation with others and his manner of life with them would make an indelible impression upon their hearts and they would know that he was a man of God" (1999, p. 371). This should characterize all of our lives even now. And if we remain faithful, when glorified in the Kingdom of God, together with Zerubbabel and the rest of the saints, we will be able to serve as the *perfect* representatives of God the Father and Jesus Christ for all eternity." [END]

Day 684 – THURSDAY: June 26<sup>th</sup>

Zechariah 1:7 – 21

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Haggai's book ended on the 24th of the ninth month in Darius' second year. Zechariah's book resumes exactly two months later, on the 24th of the *11th* month (1:7)—corresponding to mid-February of 519 B.C. [Zechariah 1:7-6:15](#) records a sequence of eight visions (or seven, depending on how they are reckoned) that the prophet experienced that night followed by the symbolic crowning of the high priest Joshua, as we will later see. In this section, "Zechariah

pursues the same end as Haggai, rebuilding the temple as the center of worship and world rule, and as a place of pilgrimage for the nations (8:20-23; [Hag. 2:7-9](#))" (*The Nelson Study Bible*, note on [Zechariah 1:7-6:15](#)). Yet in going through these visions, we will likely find some of them to be among the most cryptic and enigmatic in the entire Bible.

The first vision (1:7-17) portrays a man on a red horse standing in a hollow or ravine among myrtle trees. "Myrtle is an evergreen tree that was once very common in the vicinity of Jerusalem ([Nehemiah 8:15](#))" (note on [Zechariah 1:8](#)). The "man" is identified in verse 11 as "the Angel [*malakh* or 'messenger'] of the Lord." Many have viewed this phrase here as a reference to the preincarnate Christ, as it often is in the Old Testament. This is probably the case since the figure here is apparently the same as the Angel of the Lord in the fourth vision of the night who, as we will later see, is evidently divine (see 3:1-4).

*The Expositor's Bible Commentary* further notes: "In [Revelation 6:4](#) the red horse (see also [Zech 6:2](#)) is associated with a sword, the instrument of war and death, which may also be the significance of the color here (cf. [Isa 63:1-6](#)).... In [Nehemiah 8:15](#) [cited above] myrtle trees, which are evergreen, are associated with the Feast of Tabernacles for making booths; and in [Isaiah 41:19](#) and [55:13](#) they are included in a description of messianic kingdom blessing. Perhaps, then, they speak of the hope and promise of the future, the restoration from Babylonian exile being but the initial stage in the progressive fulfillment of that promise. The trees are situated in a ravine. At the foot of the Mount of Olives are myrtle groves in the lowest part of the Kidron Valley. The ravine may picture Judah's lowly condition at the time; but, as suggested above, there is a ray of light or hope for the future. Behind the horseman were red, brown, and white horses—presumably [or, rather, possibly] with riders on them, since they report to the angel of the Lord in v. 11. These other riders or horses apparently represent angelic messengers (cf. v. 10). White horses are associated with vengeance and triumph (cf. [Rev](#)



[19:11](#), [14](#) [and the *conquest* aspect of 6:2])" (note on [Zechariah 1:8](#)). It could be that the horses themselves represent angels, as they also may in [Revelation 19:11](#) and verse 14 (compare [Psalm 18:10](#)). It may be that there were seven reconnoitering angels here in all who walk "to and fro throughout the earth" ([Zechariah 1:11](#); compare 4:10). We will see the figure of horses of different colors again at the end of Zechariah's night visions in chapter 6, where they are "eager to walk to and fro throughout the earth" (verse 7)—in that case to deliver divine judgment on the nations.

The report the horses or horsemen give to the Angel of the Lord in chapter 1 is that all the earth is resting quietly (verse 11). This is not a description of the peaceful messianic Kingdom to come. Rather, we must view this report in light of the comment God makes in verse 15: "I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease." This description fit the circumstances of the time this prophecy was given. Recall that the first two years of the reign of the Persian emperor Darius (522-520 B.C.) were wracked with turmoil, as he put down one rebellion after another as recorded in his famous inscription high on the Behistun (or Bisitun) cliffs in western Iran ([Source](#)). But by the end of 520, he had established control throughout the empire.

So the Persian Empire was secure and Judah remained in a lowly, oppressed position. "The report of the horsemen must have disappointed God's chosen people because it told of rest and peace among the nations, when, instead, they were expecting the 'shaking of all nations' ([Hag 2:6-9](#), [20-23](#)) as the sign of returning favor and full blessing to Zion" (*Expositor's*, note on [Zechariah 1:12](#)).

In verse 12 the Angel of the Lord, again probably a reference to the Being who would later be born as Jesus Christ, intercedes with God on Judah's behalf (compare [Hebrews 7:25](#)). In response, God declares His zeal for Jerusalem and His anger with the nations. God had been "a little angry" or, probably better translated, "a little while angry" with

His sinning people (see *Expositor's*, note on verses 13-15). But now His anger turns to the gentile powers. While He had used them to punish Israel and Judah, the personal motivation of the gentile nations in their assault on God's people was evil (verse 15). Given the end-time element to the prophecies of this section, we should recognize the peace and ease of the nations in verses 11 and 15 are probably mainly referring to a period in the last days—when the gentile powers seem triumphant, things seem quiet for a time and Israel and Judah are subjugated.

God promises that He will yet show mercy to Jerusalem, the stretching of the surveyor's line of verse 16 demonstrating God's intent of rebuilding the temple and the Jewish capital.

Considering this prophecy in the light of what we've already seen from Haggai and what is yet to follow in Zechariah, it seems that God building His house in verse 16 applied on one level to the temple reconstruction in the time of those prophets, on another level to the building of the spiritual temple, the Church (which would begin in Jerusalem and be referred to as spiritual Jerusalem and Zion), and then on another level to the millennial Jerusalem and temple and beyond. Note the mention of *cities* again expanding and prospering in verse 17, clearly pointing to the physical, national application of the prophecy. Besides simply referring to Judah's ancient return, this surely represents—considering the evident end-time focus in the series of visions here—the future restoration of all Israel.

Commentator Charles Feinberg gives a good summary of the first vision: "The distinctive features of comfort for Israel in this first vision are: (1) the presence of the Angel of [Yhwh] in the midst of degraded and depressed Israel; (2) His loving and yearning intercession for them; (3) the promises of future blessings. We may say, then, that the import of the vision is this: although Israel is not yet in her promised position, God is mindful of her, providing the means of His judgment on the

persecuting nations, and reserving glory and prosperity for Israel in the benevolent and beneficent reign of the Messiah. The series of visions carry us through God's dealings with Israel from the time of their chastisement by God under the Gentile powers until they are restored to their land with their rebuilt city and temple under their Messiah King. The first vision gives the general theme of the whole series; the others add the details...When the world was busy with its own affairs, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah were upon the lowly estate of Israel and upon the temple in Jerusalem" (quoted in *Expositor's*, note on verses 16-17).

The same commentator also proposes that the first vision sets the stage for those that follow. "All eight visions form a unit, and the first is the key to all of them" (Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 1952, p. 275).

### **Four Horns and Four Skilled Workmen**

Having in mind the above view, that the first vision is the key to the other visions of the night, Zechariah's second vision (verses 18-21) is understood to be an amplification of God's wrath on the nations at ease in verses 11 and 15.

Zechariah sees four horns "that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem" (verse 19) followed by four craftsmen or workmen who come to terrify and cast out the horns (verses 20-21). The symbol of horns is a common one in Scripture. Based on these being the implements with which many animals fight, horns symbolize the power and strength of nations or their rulers (see [Daniel 7:7-8](#), [24](#)). As for the craftsmen, "the Hebrew word is used for any skilled workman in wood, metal, or stone" (p. 278). Some render the word as "smiths." Here we have an image of those who smite with the hammer, grind down, break into pieces, plunge into fire, reshape what is usable and throw away what is not. In essence, they are workers skilled in destruction.

Who exactly the four horns are is not entirely clear. They seem to be described as having *scattered* (past tense) the people of Israel and Judah, which would seem to point to events that had already happened. However, the Hebrew verb could also be translated *scatter* (present tense, see *Expositor's*, note on [Zechariah 1:18-19](#)), which could point to scatterings yet to happen.

The horns are most commonly identified either as (from a solely past-tense perspective) Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia or (from a past-to-future perspective) as identical with the four empires of Daniel 2 and 7—Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. One problem with the *first* interpretation is that it does not continue to the time of Israel's ultimate restoration in the messianic age, in line with the rest of the visions in this section. One problem with the *second* interpretation is that it leaves out the nation that scattered the northern kingdom of Israel—Assyria (see again verse 19). Another problem with *both* interpretations is that the Persians did not scatter the people of Judah (see verse 21). Neither did the Greeks, even during the Seleucid persecutions.

All this being so, a more likely interpretation of the four horns would seem to be: 1) ancient Assyria, which deported Israel and part of Judah; 2) ancient Babylon, which deported Judah; 3) ancient Rome, which would later deport the Jews of Judea; 4) the end-time revival of all these empires in the same power bloc, which will deport both Israelites and Jews from their homelands. The four smiths who remove these horns would then be: 1) ancient Babylon, conqueror of Assyria; 2) ancient Persia, conqueror of ancient Babylon; 3) the Gothic hordes who would bring down the Roman Empire; 4) the Messiah, who will ultimately defeat the end-time Roman-Babylonian-Assyrian power bloc.

In the end, God tells us in [Psalm 75:10](#), "All the horns of the wicked I will also cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted." [END]

Day 685 – FRIDAY: June 27<sup>th</sup>

Zechariah 2

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Zechariah 2 brings us to the third vision of the night (verses 1-13). Feinberg states: "If the second vision be seen as an amplification of the truth of [Zechariah 1:15](#), then the third vision is an elaboration of the promise in [Zechariah 1:16](#)" (p. 279). This seems entirely reasonable, as 1:16 related not only the temple being built but also a surveyor's line being stretched out over *Jerusalem*, signifying the future reconstruction and expansion of the city. This is also described in [Zechariah 2:1-2](#). Notice that Jerusalem will be like "towns without walls" (verse 4). The populace will overflow the city walls, the prophecy continues, as the people will not need to huddle within them. This is because God Himself will serve as the people's defense. Yet the absence of defensive fortifications has not characterized the city of Jerusalem from the time of Zechariah until now. Indeed, the setting is clearly the messianic age. "The wall of fire, indicating security and safety, is reminiscent of the pillar of fire in the Exodus. (Note [Exodus 14:24](#) [and verses 19-20, where the pillar stood between the Israelites and Egyptians], also [Isaiah 4:5](#) and [Zechariah 9:8](#).) God will be her wall of salvation and protection ([Isaiah 26:1](#)). The Shekinah glory is promised here" (Feinberg, p. 280).

The presence of God's indwelling glory also ties back to [Zechariah 1:16](#), which this section appears to be amplifying. It was there mentioned that God's house, His dwelling, would be in Jerusalem. Again, it seems likely that there is a partial fulfillment of this verse in spiritual Jerusalem, the Church of God, which experiences God's indwelling presence and miraculous protection in lieu of physical defensive fortifications. But clearly what is written here is mainly a prophecy for the last days. As Feinberg remarks: "Surely it will not be denied that the fulfillment of this prophecy is in millennial times ([Habakkuk 2:14](#)). The theme of the vision is the rebuilding and resettlement of Jerusalem,

bearing out the words of [Zechariah 1:16-17](#), and the full accomplishment of these words will be the establishment of Jerusalem in the earth as the city of God's dwelling. Blessed day for Israel and all the earth that will be" (p. 280).

The remainder of the third vision ([Zechariah 2:6-13](#)) gives more details regarding the future expansion of Jerusalem, both spiritual and physical, and its becoming God's permanent dwelling.

Verses 6-7 states that more people who are to be of Zion need to flee out of Babylon. This probably has several levels of meaning. First of all, there was an application for Zechariah's own time. Recall that when the Persian king Cyrus entered the city of Babylon he preserved it intact. But it would fare worse later. Darius had just crushed two rebellions there. And Darius' successor, his son Xerxes, would sack Babylon in 482 B.C. After later rebellion, it was conquered yet again by Antiochus III Ochus around 340 B.C. It seems reasonable to believe that, on some level, Zechariah was warning the Jews still dwelling comfortably in Babylon of these upcoming invasions and resultant destruction.

Additionally, consider that God is addressing those He has "spread...abroad like the four winds of heaven" ([Zechariah 2:6](#)). This may be speaking to Jews all throughout the Babylonian Diaspora (or Dispersion) from Zechariah's time until today—that they return from a Babylonian-rooted society to dwell in Jerusalem or its environs, thereby swelling its population. Quite likely there is also a sense of *spiritual* return to God intended here. Those who would be part of spiritual Zion, the Church of God, are to come out of the "Babylon" of this world's false ideologies and values. And there is clearly an end-time application to escaping from Babylon, just as with God's nearly identical admonitions to do so in other passages (see [Jeremiah 50:8](#); [Jeremiah 51:6](#); [Isaiah 48:20](#); [Revelation 18:4](#)). The terminology "daughter of Babylon" ([Zechariah 2:7](#)) may even imply the end-time counterpart of the earlier system.

In verse 8 we find the "Lord" saying, "He has sent Me..."—that is, evidently, the preincarnate Christ is saying that God the Father has sent Him—in this case to bring judgment on the nations that have acted against His people. Touching—harming—God's people is like touching the "apple of His eye," meaning the eye's pupil, one of the most important and guarded parts of a person's body. In short, God says, attacking His people is like poking Him right in the eye. God will give these nations as spoil to the ones they've oppressed, that is, to both physical and spiritual Israel (verse 9).

Yet this is not a hopeless message for the nations. For when God comes to dwell in Zion (verse 10), "many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day" and they will become His people too (verse 11)—thereby vastly expanding the "city of God," in both the physical and spiritual sense. Indeed Jerusalem, as in many prophecies, represents the entire nation of Israel, and all other nations must become part of Israel spiritually to be God's people and, ultimately, part of His Kingdom. In that Kingdom they will dwell with Him and He will dwell with them as one family for all eternity. Incidentally, the phrase "the Holy Land," though rather commonly used today, occurs in Scripture only in verse 12.

The conclusion in verse 13 for the world to be silent in anticipation of God's intervention and judgment is essentially repeated from [Habakkuk 2:20](#)." [END]

Day 686 – SATURDAY: June 28<sup>th</sup>

Zechariah 3

Daily Deep Dive:

The UCG reading plan states: "Zechariah's fourth vision of the night concerns the high priest of his day, Joshua or Jeshua, yet as a type of the entire nation, as we will see. Recall that the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel had led the initial effort in resuming worship



in Jerusalem and commencing construction on the temple—and later, after allowing the construction to lapse, responded in repentance to the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, leading the nation then in renewed effort.

In verse 1, the "he" showing the prophet the current scene is either the interpreting angel who has spoken to him in the previous visions or God Himself, who was referred to in the preceding verse ([Zechariah 2:13](#)) and who was earlier mentioned as showing images to him (see [Zechariah 1:20](#)).

The high priest Joshua stands before the Angel of the Lord ([Zechariah 3:1](#)). As this particular figure is able to remove iniquity (see verses 3-4), the reference is apparently to the preincarnate Christ. Indeed, in verse 2 we see the "Lord" calling a rebuke down from the "Lord"—evidently Christ calling a rebuke down from God the Father.

The rebuke is called down on Satan. "The Hebrew is literally 'the Satan,' meaning 'the Accuser'" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 1)—or, similarly, "the Adversary" or "the Opponent." The word "oppose" in verse 1 could also, in a legal setting, be rendered "accuse." "Satan's accusation invests [the scene] with a judicial character. The position of standing at the right side was the place of accusation under the law ([Psalm 109:6](#)). Satan knows the purposes of God concerning Israel and therefore has always accused the Jews and accuses them still.... Satan is the accuser, not only of Joshua (i.e., Israel), but also of all believers (Job 1-2; [Revelation 12:10](#))" (*Expositor's Bible Commentary*, note on [Zechariah 3:1](#)). It is interesting to recall that the Samaritans, as agents of Satan to thwart the restoration of Judah and its worship, had constantly brought the Jews before the Persian imperial court ([Ezra 4:4-5](#)).

The reason for Satan's accusation in Zechariah 3 is evidently Joshua's impurity, as symbolized by his defiled garments. *Expositor's* states in its

note on verse 3: "The Hebrew word *soim* ('filthy') is 'the strongest expression in the Hebrew language for filth of the most vile and loathsome character' (Feinberg...). Some interpreters maintain that Joshua was covered with excrement—only in the vision, of course! Such clothes represent the pollution of sin (cf. [Isaiah 64:6](#)). To compound the problem, Joshua (i.e., Israel), contaminated by sin, was ministering in this filthy condition before the Angel of the Lord."

Joshua had been guilty of sin, having previously abandoned the reconstruction of the temple while continuing in priestly service. "The high priest represented the people before God (see [Exodus 28:29](#)) and under no circumstances was to become defiled or unclean ([Exodus 28:2](#); [Leviticus 21:10-15](#))" (Nelson, note on [Zechariah 3:3](#)). It is interesting to consider the high priest as representative of the nation, for the figure of Joshua is clearly being used that way in this passage. The whole nation, this priestly nation (see [Exodus 19:6](#)), stood guilty before God.

The national identification is clear from verse 2. Responding to Satan's accusation against Joshua, the One who would later become Jesus Christ responds, "The Lord who has chosen *Jerusalem* rebuke you!" He follows with "Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" God had earlier told the people of Israel in [Amos 4:11](#), "I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, *and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning.*" That prophecy was dual, referring to both ancient and end-time Israel. The current vision is the same in this regard. *Expositor's* notes: "The reference to the burning stick snatched from the fire is an additional indication that Israel, not Joshua, is ultimately in view. Israel was retrieved to carry out God's future purpose for her (cf. [Amos 4:11](#)). The 'fire' refers to the Babylonian captivity. Metaphorically, Israel was snatched as a burning stick from that fire. However, this event may also look back to the deliverance from Egypt (cf. [Deuteronomy 4:20](#); [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](#); [Jeremiah 11:4](#))

and forward to the rescue from the coming tribulation period (cf. [Jeremiah 30:7](#); [Zechariah 13:8-9](#); [Revelation 12:13-17](#))" (note on [Zechariah 3:2](#)).

Satan is justly rebuked by God because his accusations are, as is always the case, the pinnacle of blasphemy, hypocrisy and twisting of fact. For one, Satan's accusations actually impugned God, calling into question how a perfect and just God could accept a defiled person or nation in His service—and perhaps implying that God's whole plan was a failure. Furthermore, Satan himself was the principal reason for the defilement! While the high priest and nation did in fact stand guilty—as do the people of all Israelite nations today and in fact all of mankind ([Romans 3:9-19](#))—Satan, as the "tempter" (see [Matthew 4:3](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:5](#)), is the main instigator of all the sin in the world, in fact the very father of sin ([John 8:44](#)). Ultimately, God intends to reconcile humanity to Himself and lay on Satan the guilt and condemnation for his leading role in mankind's sins (see "[The Day of Atonement: Removal of Sin's Cause and Reconciliation to God](#)" in our free booklet [God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind](#), pp. 35-39).

In [Zechariah 3:4](#), the Angel of the Lord (see verse 3)—again evidently the One who would become Jesus Christ—removes Joshua's iniquity. At the beginning of this verse, He tells "those who stood before Him" to take away Joshua's filthy garments. Many interpret the others standing here to be angels, tying back to the previous visions. Yet in what way they were the instruments of removing Joshua's defiled garments is unclear. It could be that God's other human servants are in mind here. It was through the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah that the high priest Joshua repented. In fact, it was through their preaching that the whole nation repented. God has always worked through such representatives. And yet, as the end of verse 4 states, it is Christ Himself who actually removes Joshua's iniquity and clothes him with

new garments—through His sacrifice (whereby He would actually bear the defilement of all of humanity's sins as the sin-bearer and take them with Him to the grave) and then living His resurrected life within those who will receive Him.

"Joshua was to be clothed with rich garments—God's representative clothed in God's righteousness. God's servant went from filthy garments to festive garments. The festive garments (the Hebrew word is used only here and in [Isaiah 3:22](#)) speak of purity, joy, and glory; but their chief significance is that they symbolize the restoration of Israel to her original calling ([Exodus 19:16](#); [Isaiah 61:6](#)). There is a contrast here: Joshua in filthy garments—Israel as a priest but defiled and unclean; Joshua in festive garments—Israel's future glory in reconsecration to the priestly office" (note on verse 4).

The beginning of verse 5 is often seen as Zechariah's enthusiastic expression of wish that the priestly restoration be completed. Yet this could be part of the quotation of God from the previous verse.

In verses 6-7, God promises Joshua (both the actual high priest and, in type, the nation of Israel) that faithfulness to His ways will result in authority and responsibility within God's house and courts—in Zechariah's day meaning the rebuilt temple but in an overall sense a reference to the Kingdom of God. Those standing with God are, again, either the angels or His human servants, the saints (such as Haggai and Zechariah), who will receive the Kingdom.

In verse 8, "Joshua and his companions were a *sign* because the reinstitution of the priesthood made public God's continuing intention to fulfill his promises to His people" (*Nelson*, note on verse 8). Indeed, God's restoration of Joshua and the priesthood was to serve as a powerful example of how God would restore the entire nation. The removal of Joshua's iniquity in verse 4 was meant to directly symbolize

the future removal of Israel's iniquity (verse 9)—at the commencement of the millennial Kingdom (compare verse 10).

And there is another aspect to this sign. God says Joshua and his fellow priests were "a wondrous sign, *for behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH*" (verse 8). The Branch is the Messiah, Jesus Christ (see also 6:12; [Isaiah 4:2](#); [Isaiah 11:1](#); [Isaiah 53:2](#); [Jeremiah 23:5](#); [Jeremiah 33:15](#)). "Now it is clear why Joshua and his fellow priests are typical [i.e., representational] persons: the act of forgiving grace and cleansing look on to that of the Messiah whereby the nation will be not only potentially but actually redeemed, and their iniquity forever removed" (Feinberg, pp. 287-288). Even the name Joshua (or Jeshua, as Ezra renders it) meant "The Eternal Is Salvation." It is from the later Greek form of this name that we derive the name Jesus—the very One through whom redemption and salvation would come, the ultimate High Priest of whom Israel's human high priest was only a type.

As we will later see, [Zechariah 6:9-13](#) makes it clear that Joshua was, on one level, a type of the Messiah. Indeed, there are striking parallels in chapter 3. As Joshua was defiled by sin (that of the nation and himself), so also would Christ (though perfect Himself) bear the defilement of sin as the sinbearer of the people. As Joshua was opposed by Satan, so also would Jesus be. And as Joshua was, in vision, reclothed in rich garments to serve as a fitting high priest for the nation, so would Jesus bear sin no longer and instead be clothed in glory as the perfect and ultimate High Priest. Joshua standing before the Angel of the Lord (Jesus) in the figure would represent Jesus Himself standing before God the Father. So we see in this amazing vision the redemptive work of Christ in both His first and second comings—similar to a later prophecy in the book of Zechariah (see [Zechariah 9:9-17](#)).

It should be stated that all this still fits with the aforementioned picture of Joshua as also representative of *Israel*—both physical and spiritual—since the "Servant" motif of [Zechariah 3:8](#) is used of both the priestly

nation and its Messiah (see the Beyond Today Bible Commentary on Isaiah 42).

The stone of [Zechariah 3:9](#) could be another reference to the Messiah. Feinberg remarks: "Many are the interpretations given to the stone mentioned here; it is said to be the foundation stone of the Temple, the capstone of the Temple, the jewel in Messiah's crown, all the stones of the Temple in building at the time, Zerubbabel, an altar, a jewel on the breastplate of the high priest or upon a royal crown, and the finished temple itself. The manner in which it is introduced, and because of what is stated concerning it, the reference can scarcely be to an ordinary material stone. We have already declared our position that this is the Messiah. Scripture proof will be found in [Genesis 49:24](#); [Psalm 118:22](#); [Isaiah 28:16](#); [Matthew 21:42](#); [Acts 4:11](#); and [1 Peter 2:6](#)" (p. 287).

The stone's "seven eyes" are thought by some to represent full or complete vision—omniscience—since the number seven often signifies completeness in Scripture. However, the seven eyes could be those referred to in the next chapter, the "seven...eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth" ([Zechariah 4:10](#)), possibly synonymous with or related to the angels who walk "to and fro throughout the earth" and report back to God ([Zechariah 1:11](#)). The phrase "these seven...eyes" in [Zechariah 4:10](#) could also refer to the "seven lamps" of [Zechariah 4:2](#), as Jesus later explained that "the lamp of the body is the eye" ([Matthew 6:22](#); [Luke 11:34](#)).

We will see more of this in our next reading, but consider for now that in the book of Revelation, the apostle John receives a vision of Jesus Christ amid seven golden lampstands with seven stars in His right hand ([Zechariah 1:12-16](#)). He is told, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands...are the seven churches" (verse 20). So perhaps the image in [Zechariah 3:9](#) is of the spiritual temple, the Church of God. It is built upon the foundational Rock, Jesus

Christ ([Matthew 16:18](#); [1 Corinthians 10:4](#); [Ephesians 2:19-22](#)). As the Church is the Body of Christ, the "lamps" of His Body would be "eyes." And these seven lampstands, these seven churches (constituting the whole), are each committed to the responsibility of one of seven representative angels—also referred to as "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God" ([Revelation 4:5](#); [Revelation 3:1](#))—who in this sense also serve as God's watchful "eyes."

We should also consider that while seven eyes "upon" the stone can mean that the stone has seven eyes, it could also mean that seven eyes are *looking upon* the stone—making it the focus of attention or the one looked to for direction and help (compare [Psalm 141:8](#)).

Many who identify the stone with the Messiah see the engraving on it as referring—especially given the mention that immediately follows of the removal of iniquity—to the cutting up of Jesus' flesh in His sacrificial offering to provide atonement. Alternatively, the engraving could perhaps relate to [Hebrews 1:2](#), where Jesus is said to be the "exact image" or "imprint" of the Father's person—the Greek here being the word *charakter*, meaning "engraving," from which we derive our English word "character" (Strong's No. 5481). God's character is also to be engraved into the hearts of all believers.

A further possibility regarding the engraved stone laid before Joshua is that it could parallel the reference in [Revelation 2:17](#) to the "white stone...[with] a new name written" given to believers who overcome. Such a stone could signify acquittal from legal charges or a reward for victory (see *The Nelson Study Bible's* note on this verse). We will examine this verse more when we come to the book of Revelation in the Beyond Today Bible Commentary. Suffice it to say for now that such a meaning would not preclude the concept of the stone also being the Messiah Himself, as He is the source of forgiveness, new life, victory and reward for all of God's people.



As already explained, the removal of Joshua's iniquity in verse 4 was meant to typify the conclusion of verse 9, where God says, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." What Judah experienced in Zechariah's own day was only a small forerunner of this prophesied event. What God is here referring to is the repentance of the whole nation at the return of Christ (see [Zechariah 12:10-14](#))—as well as the purging away of those who refuse to repent. The rebuke against Satan ([Zechariah 3:2](#)) will be fulfilled when He is banished at that time of national atonement and his accusations cease (see [Revelation 20:1-2](#)). "And so," Paul writes, "all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins'" ([Romans 11:26-27](#)).

The time frame is made clear in [Zechariah 3:10](#), which repeats the millennial prophecy of [Micah 4:4](#) (see verses 1-5). Yet now added is the element that not only will everyone sit under his own vine and fig tree, signifying personal prosperity, but all will invite neighbors to join them—signifying not just individuals reaching out to each other, but all nations of the world being invited to share in Israel's blessings. Israel will at long last be the righteous priestly nation God intended it to be.”  
[END]