

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 33, Chapter 14 Conclusion

Just as the viewpoint of the biblical Creation Story is earth-centric as though someone was standing on earth to record God's process of Creation, so as Zechariah winds down the viewpoint reduces further to Jerusalem-centric. Earth, so far as we know, is the cosmic center of physical life in the Universe in any form we can think of it or know of. And, please do not take this to mean that the Bible excludes the possibility of life elsewhere in the Universe, because the subject simply never comes up. Why? As I said, the Bible and the story of Creation revolves around planet Earth. Assuming that Earth alone has physical life (other than only some type of microbe), then God has declared Jerusalem as the cosmic center of **spiritual** life and the most holy place on Earth. It is the sole place where He chooses to put His Name. As we approach and enter into the Millennial period and then 1000 years later the New Heavens and Earth happens in a re-Creation event, still Jerusalem remains the center of redeemed and re-configured life, and of God's presence with us. And, I might add, this is all the more reason to support the modern State of Israel, the Jewish people who live there, and for us to pray continually for the peace of Jerusalem (which *is* God commanded).

I think it is helpful to occasionally pause and reflect on what was going on in the rest of the world at the time God is speaking through Zechariah. Judah and Jerusalem were not isolated; they were part of a huge Empire... the Persian Empire. The world was aware of the Judeans, and the Judeans were aware of the world. That said, the known world at that time pretty much ended at the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in Europe to the west, and the region of India and then China to the east. For those who lived in Judah (now called Yehud) and Jerusalem, the familiar part of the world generally amounted to whatever was the extent of the Persian Empire.

So, as we near the end of the Book of Zechariah, and prophecies about an End Times that could be anything from imminent, to near, to a very long time away from the first hearers and readers of his prophecies in 500 B.C and a little later, just realize that whatever they mentally pictured about what it may look like, it was only within the context of the known world and whatever level

of political, societal and technological development that existed for them. In all cases this has everything to do with the wording of all that Zechariah has to say. It is no different for us as we look to the future for when the events of the End Times strike in earnest. We can only envision those prophetic words according to the world, societies, and technology that exist and that we know of today, even though things might be very different by then.

Around Zechariah's era, 500 B.C., the world was undergoing profound cultural, political, technological, and philosophical changes that would alter and shape the course of history. In Greece, this was what is now called the early Classical period—a time of intellectual awakening. The city-states of Greece, especially Athens and Sparta, were rising in power. A form of Democracy was beginning to take root in Athens as they laid the foundations for modern political thought. At the same time, Greek philosophers such as Heraclitus were questioning the nature of the universe, setting the stage for Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

To the east, the Persian Empire was more or less at its peak, stretching from the Indus Valley to the Aegean Sea. The Persian kings implemented an efficient administrative system and built infrastructure like the Royal Road to unify their vast empire. However, tensions with the Greek city-states were brewing, on their way to soon erupting into the Greco-Persian Wars.

In India, the Mahajanapadas—large regional kingdoms—were flourishing, and Buddhism was emerging. Siddhartha Gautama, who would become the Buddha, was probably still alive spreading ideas of compassion, non-attachment, and enlightenment. Hinduism was also evolving during this same period.

In China, the Zhou Dynasty still ruled, but real power was shifting to feudal warlords during what became known as the Spring and Autumn period. Thinkers like the great Confucius were active, offering teachings on ethics, family, and governance that would define Chinese philosophy for centuries to come.

Europe in 500 B.C. was a mosaic of mostly tribal cultures, a few early civilizations, and a couple of emerging powers, with different regions

experiencing widely varied stages of development. The transition from the Bronze age to the Iron Age was well underway in the most advanced parts.

In Africa, the kingdom of Kush thrived along the Nile, trading with Egypt and other Mediterranean civilizations.

Communication between all of these regions was occurring and Zechariah was at least partially aware of it all, as were the typical common people. Let's keep that in mind as we work to bring the Book of Zechariah to a close.

We left off at verse 14, last time, explaining that the CJB translation is quite wrong as it has Judah fighting against its own capital city, Jerusalem. Other translations do a much better job with this verse and explain it as the residents of the territory of Judah fighting alongside the residents of Jerusalem. Frankly, to take this any other way makes no sense at all, and defies everything said before and after this verse. This in itself is a lesson to be learned for Bible students. When a verse makes no sense, or it defies the context or even logic, then be skeptical. Most likely it has been poorly translated. Often it is a matter of a translation team attempting to make passages compatible with whatever group or denomination is sponsoring them or represents the doctrines they personally believe in. Other times, it is just poor translating that isn't actually agenda driven.

Next as we proceed to the conclusion of the chapter and book, the general focus is about Jerusalem's, Judah's, and even the gentile nations' futures. There has been so much negativity and catastrophe for Jerusalem and Judah, all owing to their unfaithfulness to God, but now this turns joyous and positive with the negativity and catastrophe being turned away from Israel and towards the nations. As always in the Bible, the term "the nations" means every nation in the world except Israel. And the chief characteristic of the nations is that they are gentiles and that they worship false gods.

However, these immediate passages only concern the relatively few survivors of Armageddon and God's cosmic wrath being rained down on the entire planet. Yehoveh as a warrior God has been the emphasis thus far in Zechariah. This morphs, now, into Yehoveh as a more or less political King over a subdued earth with all its varied civilizations and populations. As Believers, we

are all acutely aware of the Lion and Lamb metaphors used to characterize Yeshua, His nature and His missions. That is, He is both a fierce Alpha predator, and a meek, humble sacrifice all rolled into one. And, the Bible, overall, depicts Yehoveh as both warrior and king rolled into one. This is part of the reason why David is so highly revered in the Bible, even God calling him a man after His own heart. Thus, just as Yeshua's first advent was as the meek sacrificial Lamb, His return will be as the fierce, ruthless Lion. And so, in Zechariah, God first is depicted as warrior, and now that the battle is won, as king.

As another reminder, we should take these various metaphors as concerns God, His Son, and even Heaven lightly and not too far or too precisely. Not the least because that is how metaphors work in any language; a metaphor is an approximation and not a synonym. All of these many terms in the Bible concerning the Godhead and Heaven are taken from the only sphere of reality we have to concoct our images and illustrations: the physical human sphere. So, they are limited and imprecise.

We also find in the final verses of Zechariah that holiness becomes the all-pervading condition of Jerusalem, and at least some parts of that holiness become extended to all nations. We are going to see that finally the remaining people... the survivors... will grasp what many of us have already come to understand; it is that all who want to worship Yehoveh necessarily must take on an Israelite identity. Why? Because it is only with God's covenants with Israel that mankind can have peace with God. This, as always, does not mean converting from being a gentile to a Jew. Nor does it mean taking up Judaism. It has nothing to do with our genetic makeup or our family line. It is a spiritual identity (for lack of better words) that God looks for. The ideal Israel... the Israel of God... has always been of a spiritual nature. Let's read more of Zechariah chapter 14 starting at verse 15.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 14:15 – end

The matter of a plague again surfaces, and it extends to domesticated animals. When it speaks of the plague, it likens it to the plague spoken about in verse 12. Recall that verse 12 said:

CJB Zechariah 14:12 *Yehoveh will strike all the peoples who made war against Yerushalayim with a plague in which their flesh rots away while they are standing on their feet, their eyes rot away in their sockets, and their tongues rot away in their mouths.*

So, something similar is going to happen to this list of animals. These animals are used in the gentile military camps of the nations... this isn't including Israel. This list of animals is limited to beasts of burden... not to livestock used for food or food production. So, these are animals that the gentile nations' militaries are using. That said, after this listing of beasts of burden the plague is also to affect the other animals in the enemy's camp. This indeed does refer to the food animals that militaries of that era always brought along with them. Bottom line: the means of the enemy nations for transporting soldiers and supplies will be wiped out, as will their food supply.

Verse 16 is a remarkable verse. It refers to all the survivors from Israel and from all the nations... that is, every still-living person on earth... that comes out of the War of Armageddon and God's wrathful judgments. The implication is that even the surviving heathens will turn to worshipping the God of Israel.

It is most interesting that despite what follows, most Christian commentaries from long ago to modern times will term what happens to the survivors as a mass "conversion" from whatever was their former beliefs to Christianity, thus making the entire earth Christian. And, it will be Jesus that they worship.

What the verse says is that annually there is to be a pilgrimage to Jerusalem by representatives of all nations on earth. And there, they will worship the King, Yehoveh of hosts, and do so at the time of the biblical feast of Sukkot. No mention of Jesus, and no mention of Christianity or anything like it. In fact, to the opposite, it is Sukkot, a biblical feast Christians long ago denounced and renounced, that is the occasion for the worldwide pilgrimage. Christianity has as its foundational creed that no Jewish Feast is to have any role in the faith, and in fact all those feasts, laws, commands, etc. found in the Bible were abolished by Jesus. As we go through Zechariah, and unpack the final chapter, all that manmade doctrine of Christianity is put to shame. But, it doesn't stop

Christian commentators and Pastors from simply deleting God's formal name from the chapter and replacing it with the word "Lord", which (of course) is then further declared to mean Christ.

Why is the Feast of Tabernacles singled out? While I cannot say with 100% certainty, it is my position that as the 7th and last of the biblical feasts, it will be the final one that Yeshua brings to fullest prophetic fruition. I have spoken before that it seems to me that Sukkot, which also goes by the name of the Feast of the Final Ingathering, represents the entry into the Millennial Kingdom era. And, this is the same as the final harvest spoken of in other prophecies and in the New Testament. This works well with the next verse (17) that says that if a nation does not send representatives, that nation will receive no rain.

One of the main purposes of the Feast of Tabernacles celebration is to beseech God for rain to ready the fields for the next planting. This was visibly depicted in what is called the water libation part of the ceremony. In this ceremony that occurred on the final day of the 7-day long Feast of Sukkot, the High Priest would go from the Temple Mount, down to the bottom of the hill where the Pool of Shiloam was located. There he would fill a vessel with water from the pool, go back up a quite long series of steps to the Temple Mount, and at the altar pour out the water as a Psalm was recited. It was this ceremony that was a plea to God for rains at the proper times for the next new agricultural cycle. No doubt, this is what is going to happen again in the Millennial Temple era.

There is much controversy about this passage because it flies in the face of 16 centuries or more of Church doctrines and decrees. But also because of the blatant erasure of the Father's name replaced with the standard Church-word for the Son, which is "The Lord". If you'll remember, we found this same thing at the beginning of chapter 14, when we hear that, literally, Yehoveh's foot will touch the Mt. of Olives causing it to split, but the Church has declared that it is not really speaking of Yehoveh the Father but rather of Jesus the Son.

Interestingly, in verse 18, the same issue is brought up (what happens if a nation doesn't send representatives to the Millennial Temple annually at Sukkot), however this time it singles out Egypt. The first thing I want to take from this is that despite all that has happened, disobedience and rebellion to

God will still exist among many human beings. Otherwise, there is no point in warning against disobedience. We must keep in mind that during the 1000-year reign of Messiah in Jerusalem, that there will basically be two kinds of people living on earth. There will be those who have returned with Yeshua from Heaven in glorified, incorruptible bodies. And there will also be people who are regular humans, born and never having yet died. Those regular humans will be no different than all those we interface with in our current lives each and every day. And, this will still be the same planet Earth that we are presently on. If anything, it will have become greatly scarred by war, and it will take several years for the cleanup, rebuilding, and for the land to heal itself, just as it does right now. To be clear: the Millennial Temple and Yeshua will be here on the same earth we now inhabit. Most humans will be the same, even if some have determined to worship the God of Israel. But, there will also be those who had died in the past, and came back with Yeshua in their new glorified bodies.

Egypt is a special case for a few reasons in Israel's history, and it would continue to be so in a time well after Zechariah, including Egypt providing a hiding place for Yeshua and His parents as King Herod the Great sent out searches for them that he might kill the young Yeshua. There's not a lot of point going into all the different scenarios where Egypt was involved with the development of Israel, both positive and negative. For God, Egypt sits in a slightly different category of nation... a bit above nations in general, and certainly below God's set-apart nation of Israel.

Notice, too, the awareness that while most nations in that era depended on rain to water crops, Egypt (at least on the surface) did not but, for that matter, neither did it for people who farmed between the Rivers in the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia as they drew most of their water from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. But Egypt depended on the Nile more than only for its water, it was also for its overflow. They had built canals and watered their crops out of the Nile River. The Nile was the most critical lifeline for Egypt, as it literally brought life out of the desert sands. The Nile was much more than only water; the overflow brought with it rich silt to nourish the crops because Egypt was mostly sandy soil and the production level of its crops would have been far smaller if not for that silt. It is said by historians that if there was no

Nile, there would be no Egyptian civilization. It would be like the middle of the Sahara Desert that sees only a few hearty souls traverse its width and length, as there is little water there and farming is fairly impossible. Population growth depends upon drinking water and food supply.

And yet, I must say this. When we recall that this was written around the 5th century B.C., for people living in the Middle East, the known world for them was most limited. And, they likely didn't understand that the Nile overflow also depended on rain at the right time, it's just that it had to rain in areas thousands of miles upstream at the headwaters of the Nile. The flow begins from the vast Lake Victoria that covers parts of modern-day Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and goes to the north, traveling over 4000 miles, before emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. So, it's complexity is far more than the Israelites and most other people groups were aware. Nonetheless, we should assume (rightly I think) that since God, who is the one giving the prophecy, of course knows this, then Egypt and its unusual way of watering crops can be taken as a "type". So, the overall idea is that whatever or wherever the source of water for agriculture might be, disobedience to the command for all nations to send representatives to Jerusalem for Sukkot would bring harsh penalties that would greatly affect that nation's food supplies. No exceptions and no ways to get around it. This is what is emphasized by verse 19.

One final thing just as something general to notice in the Bible when it speaks of nations or people going to Jerusalem. It is always in the manner of "going up". Yes, Jerusalem is at a high point in Israel, but there are places higher yet in Israel as well. And, for many mountainous nations, Jerusalem isn't very high at all. The term "going up" has a ritualistic sense to it, when speaking of Jerusalem. It isn't so much "going up" to Jerusalem the city as it is "going up" to the Temple where God dwells. Thus, for instance, in modern times where a God-worshipper can certainly travel to Jerusalem for the festivals, yet the city isn't the point: it's the Temple. And, since today there is no Temple, then the Torah commandment to go there for the pilgrimage feasts can't be met. Thus, in this passage it is about "going up" to what will be the newly built Millennial Temple.

What we cannot escape at this point in Zechariah is the universal nature of God's rules. It was several decades ago when, as a mainstream gentile Church-going Christian, I had the first realizations of this. And it wasn't from reading the Old Testament that I saw it (because per Church instruction I stayed pretty much away from it), yet, I knew I had a lot to reconsider. Listen to just a few of these New Testament passages that long ago caught my attention.

CJB Romans 2:12-16 ***¹² All who have sinned outside the framework of Torah will die outside the framework of Torah; and all who have sinned within the framework of Torah will be judged by Torah. ¹³ For it is not merely the hearers of Torah whom God considers righteous; rather, it is the doers of what Torah says who will be made righteous in God's sight. ¹⁴ For whenever Gentiles, who have no Torah, do naturally what the Torah requires, then these, even though they don't have Torah, for themselves are Torah! ¹⁵ For their lives show that the conduct the Torah dictates is written in their hearts. Their consciences also bear witness to this, for their conflicting thoughts sometimes accuse them and sometimes defend them ¹⁶ on a day when God passes judgment on people's inmost secrets. (According to the Good News as I proclaim it, he does this through the Messiah Yeshua.)***

This passage states that God will judge people, not just those who have the Law (Hebrews), but also those who have never heard of it. He will judge based on their deeds, because their deeds are judged based on the principles of that same Law that is written in their hearts. It also makes clear that even those who do not have the Law are judged by what they do, demonstrating that the standard of behavior (our morality) is from a universal source for all humanity: the Law of Moses.

CJB Romans 3:19-23 ***¹⁹ Moreover, we know that whatever the Torah says, it says to those living within the framework of the Torah, in order that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world be shown to deserve God's adverse judgment. ²⁰ For in his sight no one alive will be considered righteous on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, because what Torah really does is show people how***

sinful they are. ²¹ But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear- although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well- ²² and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Yeshua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, ²³ since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise.

These verses clarify that the Law's purpose is to reveal sin and to stop every mouth from making excuses. It emphasizes that while by the works of the Law, no one can be justified (no one can be saved) before God, yet it is the Law's rules and commandments that define what sin is, and is not. It defines what is good and evil. And, it matters not whether one is a Jew or a gentile. Sin (all judged from the same standard... the Law) condemns us all. Again, the effect of the Law is universal, and not only for Hebrews.

CJB Matthew 5:17-19 *¹⁷ "Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

This verse is among the most plain and explicit in all the Bible... Old or New Testament... about the ongoing and universally applicable nature of The Law of Moses to humanity. Even going so far as to make it clear that however much one embraces God's laws and does them, versus however much one rejects God's laws and does **not** do them, will have a significant effect on which Kingdom societal level one will be assigned to in the eternal future.

There are more verses about this matter of the universality of God's laws, but that's sufficient for my purposes. Here in the words approaching the end of Zechariah that are speaking directly of the time after Armageddon and in which the Millennial period has begun, we read that all nations are subject to

God's edicts... just as it has always been... but the nations also have always been rebellious against God's edicts. And finally, strict obedience to the Feast of Sukkot is used to point this out such that to not obey Him will have a drastic effect upon that entire nation.

The final 2 verses of Zechariah are these:

CJB Zechariah 14:20-21 ***²⁰ When that day comes, this will be written on the bells worn by the horses: "Consecrated to YEHOVEH"; and the cooking pots in the house of YEHOVEH will be [as holy] as the sprinkling bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every cooking pot in Yerushalayim and Y'hudah will be consecrated to YEHOVEH-Tzva'ot. Everyone who offers sacrifices will come, take them and use them to stew the meat. When that day comes, there will no longer be merchants in the house of YEHOVEH-Tzva'ot.***

Holiness is the subject and focus of these final verses. Holiness will pervade and guide everything to do with life and every obligation we have to God and our fellow man. This is a universal holiness that is being prophesied. The question (that I say is largely not answerable with a high degree of certainty) is whether this implies a worldwide universality of holiness, or just universally holy within Judah and Jerusalem.

It was most intentional that the End Times indicator that is used throughout Zechariah, which is "on that day", or "when that day comes" appears twice. Once to open this 2-verse stanza and the second to introduce the final sentence. The people of the Prophet's day needed to get it super-clear that this is speaking of the future, and so we also need to grasp this (even if that "future" probably is rather near at this point in history compared to what it was in 500 B.C.).

It doesn't help us that in the CJB we find the phrase "consecrated to Yehoveh"; that is, the word "consecrated" is used rather than the more straightforward "holy" that is the meaning of the Hebrew word we find here, which is **godesh**. It is important that in this ancient time, of all the fundamental guiding principles of the Hebrews it was that there is a large

distinction between that which is common and that which is holy. Therefore, "holy to Yehoveh" is mostly assigned to objects and items and sometimes to places that have to do with the Priesthood and/or the Temple. Recall that on the golden headplate that the High Priest wears, the phrase "holy to Yehoveh" is written.

In the first 8 chapters of Zechariah, the thought evolves of there being a connection between the holiness of the priests and the removal of peoples' sin. Here in the final part of Zechariah we find that idea carried over and applied to some of the most unlikely things, such as horses, bells and pots. It was meant that we notice how far from the expected sorts of sacred things that horses, bells and pots are. This is because, as we have seen in several places in Zechariah, there are these strange reversals that take place in the End Times. Here the reversal is so mammoth in scope that it is difficult to wrap our minds around. It is that the distinction between holy and common, sacred and profane, evaporates. Even the most common things such as clay cooking pots will bear the equivalent of the High Priest's headplate that says: "holy to Yehoveh". Yet, why horses, bells and pots in particular?

We need to focus more on the horse than the bells it wears as a decoration. In Zechariah's era, horses were nearly exclusively use for war... usually for pulling chariots. Thus, whereas the future age of the Millennial Kingdom will be characterized by universal peace and harmony, a horse is universally characterized (in that era) by war and political aggression. What is being symbolized here is the end of strife between nations, and the end of settling of differences or the playing out of the political ambitions of a ruthless national leader by means of war. That's not hard to see; but why the mention of bells? Because part of the High Priest's garb (in addition to the golden headplate with "holy to Yehoveh" written on it) were bells attached to the hem of his garment. This further cements the idea of a holiness that now exists within former battlefield instruments of war as much as it does on the High Priest.

The term "pots" is in Hebrew **sir**. Pots can be imagined as generally being divided into two categories: that which is sacred and used in Temple ritual by priests. Apart from that, are the pots that are common and used for all sorts of other reasons such as cooking food, or washing things, by everyone in Israel.

But even on a scale of holiness, holy pots assume the lowest level of holiness. Thus, the higher-level ritual pots are usually called “basins”... such as those used to catch the blood of the sacrifices... will no longer be above the holiness of the Temple cook pots.

As verse 21 continues this thought, it widens the scope to include ordinary cook pots in the homes of those living in Jerusalem and Judah, and by extrapolation, probably everywhere. It is most informative that ordinary cook pots unearthed from digs in Israel at places like Hazor, Megiddo, and Arad, occasionally were found with the word **qodesh** (holy) written upon them. It is believed by many archeologists that these were pots used to cook the remains of sacrifices that had been given at the Temple. That is, several kinds of sacrifices of animals allowed for the priests to have a portion of the meat, but also for the lay person who brought the animal to have some, too. It may be that the layperson’s portion of this sacrificed meat was cooked in a pot that had been specially set aside at home exclusively for this purpose. Again: this is not certain. Rather, it is an educated guess, but it *is* logical. If it is true, it goes a long way towards explaining why a seemingly ordinary cook pot would have the word “holy” written on it.

As for the holiness that all ordinary cook pots will have, it follows that all that is cooked in them will have the same holiness status as the meat that had been sacrificed on the altar. The holiness of pots becomes universal among God’s people rather than as it used to be when it was really only the Temple pots or pots set aside strictly for cooking sacrificed meat.

One final matter. The last sentence of this chapter and book says that there shall no longer be... and then depending on your Bible translation it will say merchant, or Canaanite, or trader or trafficker. The Hebrew word being translated is Canaanite. Very often in the Bible, Canaanite is a euphemism for merchant... which is a nasty epithet. Canaanite was essentially a dirty word because merchants were seen as so dishonest and money grubbing. But, here in verse 21, I doubt this is the intent. Rather, I think this indeed is speaking about the Canaanite ethnic group. Or better, likely all non-Israelite ethnic groups living in the Land. So, this probably is referring to foreigners who have

finally let go of their false gods and ungodly practices, and become followers of Yehoveh and His Son Yeshua.

This concludes the Book of Zechariah, which seems to be the middle book of a trilogy. That trilogy is Haggai, then Zechariah, and finally Malachi. Therefore, our next study of a Bible book will be the Prophet Malachi.