

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
Lesson 5, Chapter 2 Continued

At this point in our study, Zechariah's third vision in this long series of vision/oracles has been given. Now it is immediately followed with a warning. Have you ever considered why God announces warnings that can come anywhere from several months to millennia before the dangerous situation He is warning about actually comes to fruition? Rarely does Yehoveh give us a precise date or date-range that can be marked on a calendar for when the forecasted event is to happen. What if the weather news reported that in some undetermined time in the future, a tornado was going to directly strike your area. How would you react? What if that timeframe was even narrowed down to sometime in the next 5 years? Most people would do very little except to worry for a while, and in a short period of time if it didn't actually happen that concern would fade away into a distant memory. There would be a few that take action... perhaps by moving out of the predicted area of impact; or perhaps by having a sturdy tornado shelter installed in their home. Maybe just making sure their insurance will cover the expected losses and being a little more alert when bad weather approaches.

What I'm getting at is that God warns because He is allowing those who heed Him a chance to prepare. We have so many fables and children's stories about those who know a time of scarcity or trouble is coming, and how some will wisely prepare and others go right on living as they always have, putting action off because they don't want to face it, or assuming they will somehow be the exception. The reason those fables stick with us is because they represent sound judgment versus careless living. When God tells us what is going to happen, gives us some signs that it may be near, and warns us to prepare, then what does it say about us if we procrastinate indefinitely or blow it off altogether? It could say any number of things, but nothing very good.

As we have discussed numerous times in our study of several of the Minor Prophets, God *has* warned us of what is coming, He *has* given us signs to watch for, and He *has* told us to prepare. Each time a prophecy is given there is a relatively near-term effect in relation to when that prophecy was presented, and then a larger and wider effect of another fulfillment that could

come centuries later, and sometimes even a 3rd fulfillment that is even more into a distant future that will have a global impact. A global impact is by definition an End Times event and consequence.

I have mentioned numerous times that it is my opinion that we are either standing on the threshold into the End Times, or more likely, have recently stepped over it. Such a conclusion can only be proved in hindsight so I can offer no guarantee that I'm correct. But, several of the signs we have been told to watch for are there. So, if you believe as I do, then what are you going to do about it? Since you cannot change what is going to happen or when it happens, then I hope your decision involves serious tangible preparation to help you and your family through what is going to be some very tough times that will only get progressively worse. Intelligent, not hysterical, preparation. Preparation based on rational thought and not on fears. This is what God's intent is when He gives us warnings, otherwise He wouldn't do so.

Open your Bibles to Zechariah chapter 2; we'll begin reading at verse 10.

READ ZECHARIAH 2:10 – end

This is another challenging passage in Zechariah to untangle. Yet, I think part of the reason for this difficulty is the way it is typically translated into English, and what those English words mean to us in a modern Western culture versus what the original Hebrew meant 2500 years ago in an ancient and very different culture. The first two words of verse 10 are, in Hebrew, **hoy, hoy!** Except for one other place in the entire Bible, those words are found only in the Prophets. Probably for Western ears a better translation would be woe, woe... maybe alas, alas. That is, these are not words of excitement or positive anticipation. These are words of realization of trouble approaching. Therefore, **hoy, hoy** sets the tone for the words to follow. And, yet, as we read on we see that what is going to happen is not entirely a negative thing because when we arrive at verse 14 it tells Israel to rejoice.

Therefore, the troubles being spoken of are not against those fleeing Jews; rather it is against those who reside in the places the Jews are fleeing from.

So, it is a prediction of good things for God's true people, and of calamity for those who aren't.

So, what is this land of the north that the Judeans are to flee from? It is a common reference that we'll find in the prophecies dealing especially with the End Times. In Zechariah's day, the land of the north more succinctly meant those enemies who approach the Holy Land from the north in order to invade and conquer. Here, and in Jeremiah, it represents the place from where the exiles of the Babylonian conquest will return. Listen carefully to this passage from the 3rd chapter of Jeremiah that adds flesh to the bones that Zechariah gives us.

CJB Jeremiah 3:13-18 ***¹³ Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have committed crimes against Yehoveh your God, that you were promiscuous with strangers under every green tree, and that you have not paid attention to my voice," says Yehoveh. ¹⁴ "Return, backsliding children," says Yehoveh; "for I am your master. I will take you, one from a city, two from a family, and bring you to Tziyon. ¹⁵ I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and understanding. ¹⁶ ""And," says Yehoveh, "in those days, when your numbers have increased in the land, people will no longer talk about the ark for the covenant of Yehoveh- they won't think about it, they won't miss it, and they won't make another one. ¹⁷ When that time comes, they will call Yerushalayim the throne of ADONAI. All the nations will be gathered there to the name of Yehoveh, to Yerushalayim. No longer will they live according to their stubbornly evil hearts. ¹⁸ In those days, the house of Y'hudah will live together with the house of Isra'el; they will come together from the lands in the north to the land I gave your ancestors as their heritage.***

Because of what Jeremiah says, we can better understand the scope of what Zechariah prophecies. That is, Zechariah is talking about a near-term fleeing of Judeans back to Yehud, plus another fleeing that comes in some undetermined time into the future.

Jeremiah also incorporates both of these fleeing events, but more subtly. While this passage from Jeremiah focuses on an End Times event (Judah and Israel coming back together in their own land... something we are witnessing right now in the 21st century), it gets us there by first explaining in verse 16 that only after the numbers of Judeans have increased in their own land, then the nations will be gathered to Jerusalem as well as those descendants from the House of Judah and from the House of Ephriam/Israel will reunite. And, appropriately to our topic, they will be coming from the north! That is, the same direction the invaders had come from to attack Israel and Judah will also be the same direction from which the Hebrews return to their ancient homeland.

As concerns the time of Zechariah, very likely this warning to flee from the north is referring to places that Babylon took the Judeans, and not just Babylon proper. Equally likely it is because some type of great unrest in that region was coming. Remember: the door was already wide open for any and every Judean to come back to their former homeland. The Persians took down that iron curtain that Babylon had erected to keep the Judeans from coming home. Now the Persians, who took over the former Babylonian Empire, were urging the Jews to go back. However, only a relatively few did. For the vast majority that region of the world... that land to the north... was the only home they ever knew. Most living Jews had been born there, and even some of the old timers had grown quite comfortable living there; they had established new roots. This is the group whom God was warning... at least in the nearer term. What was the warning about? It was about God making those Judeans that had made the choice to stay where they were to understand that if they didn't leave, they would suffer the same fate as others in Babylon would. Think on that for a moment, because it repeats a principle that has been almost lost in the modern Church, if not outright denied.

The principle is that deliverance and judgment concerning humanity occurs on two levels: the individual and the national or corporate. On the individual level, our deliverance is granted person by person, and our judgment is therefore also pronounced person by person. On the national level, our deliverance is tied to the nation or group to which we are a member. On the individual level, our spiritual and eternal deliverance and judgment are determined. On a national level, our **physical** and **material** deliverance and judgment are determined.

So, while a Jew could be judged spiritually righteous by God, should that same Jew decide to ignore God's warning and stay attached to whatever nation or group they were a member of, then whatever disaster befalls the nation or group also befalls the individual who is a member of that group, regardless of his spiritual status.

Believers: the Bible tells us it matters greatly which nation you are affiliated with, just as it matters which social group, even which Believers' fellowship you are affiliated with. You may remain just as saved and eternally protected as you ever were no matter which nation or group you have joined yourself to; but whatever destructive judgment God hands down on that nation or group (on a physical, material level) will engulf you as well.

Notice the words that identifies those who are to flee (or escape) as the "daughters of Babylon". Later in verse 14 we'll read about a group called the "daughter of Zion". "The daughter of" is an idiomatic Hebrew expression. It means the residents of some place or some group or another. Perhaps even more than meaning only residents, it also expresses the notion of affiliation or a belonging-to. At least 2 generations of Judeans had been born by now in Babylon after the original generation of the exile had been hauled off. Indeed, these new generations of Jews saw themselves far more affiliated or belonging-to Babylon than to Judah... a place they had never seen. I personally know several secular Jews who feel no affiliation or affinity with the modern state of Israel. They see themselves as American and nothing else. They have no desire to move to Israel out of some sense of returning to an ancient historical homeland; America is their homeland. There are a growing number of European Jews who have felt no affinity or affiliation with Israel, but many have purchased homes in Israel and others are actively in process of moving there because of the rising anti-Semitism that has them very afraid. That is, Israel isn't where they *want* to be, but they feel it is someplace they *need* to be to avoid being persecuted or physically harmed. For them it is a purely practical decision that they'd rather not have to make. We can equate these American and European Jews to an extended meaning of "daughter of Babylon".

When this prophecy continues about the "daughter of Babylon" it refers to them as people God has spread out. This means the same thing as "scattered". So,

while on the one hand it is true that Babylon took their Judean captives back to Babylon more or less intact as a group, on the other hand later on many were sent to some places where their trades or professions were needed, or when enough freedom was given to them they moved on their own to other parts of the Babylonian (then later the Persian) Empire. Clearly none of this scattering or spreading out would have happened in the first place had God not enticed Babylon to be His instrument of wrath and punishment against Judah and the Judeans for their rebellious unfaithfulness to Him. Thus, it can be said that it was He who spread-out and scattered those Jews in the sense of God being the cause of it.

Notice that the act of spreading-out is embellished when the prophecy says it was like "the four winds of Heaven (or the sky)". Also notice the number 4. Four is symbolic of the idea of something that is everywhere, universal. It is another Hebrew expression akin to "the four corners of the earth". So, these exiles were spread out everywhere. The difference is that the four corners of the earth can only refer to the tangible, physical planet earth... terra firma... whereas the four winds refer to something non-earthly and not tangible; something that cannot be seen or touched. Therefore, the winds are equated with something that happens somewhere other than, and above earth (as it was conceived in the ancient mind). That other place would be the sky or Heaven where God lives (and to an extent, the ancients didn't make a great deal of distinction between the two).

Next arrives the term "Zion" as another reference to the people whom God wants to flee from the daughters of Babylon. This passage is pretty touchy to deal with, and so, it presents a temptation to gloss over it without addressing what it is actually saying. And, I'll say upfront that what I think it means is not the same as how it has traditionally be taken to mean. Let's begin by defining two terms we are given since they are the key to interpretation and since 99% of the time they are in my estimation misidentified. The first term, the daughters of Babylon, is speaking of the totality of all Jews still living in Babylon. That is, those Jews who remained in Babylon even though they could have come back to the Promised Land. Unlike the more typical interpretations of this passage, this is NOT speaking of gentiles. Later, when we get the term "nations" it is speaking of a different group of people: gentiles. The second term, Zion, is

referring to a remnant that exists among those daughters of Babylon. This remnant are Jews who still identify with the Hebrew faith, with Jerusalem as the Holy City, with the Torah, and with Yehoveh God of Israel. So, when it says "Move, Zion, you who live with the daughters of Babylon, escape", I see it as meaning this: Those of you Jews who still identify with the God of the Hebrews, the Torah and with the Holy City of Jerusalem, leave the group of those Jews who don't and perhaps won't for their own good reasons. It is a separating out of obedient Jews from Jews who aren't obedient in God's eyes. It is as we spoke of earlier. Which group you choose to belong to matters because how God views them, and what they will suffer in the way of divine wrath, you will suffer right along with them if you determine to remain with that group especially after you discover that they may not be faithful truth seekers.

But now I want to show you something that Kiel and Delitzsch (those famous German Bible scholars of the 19th century) say is the meaning of this passage. They say:

"The daughter Zion, or the church delivered out of Babel, is to rejoice with joy, because her glorification is commencing now." In other words, they are saying Zion means the Church, and Babel (Babylon) is everyone else. On balance, I'd have to say that this is indeed how it is most often taken to mean and well describes how the Church see themselves...and I cannot agree with it. Therefore, this entire passage is traditionally set up to be as the Church against the Jews and all others who are not the Church.

As concerns the prophetic fulfillment of this warning in Zechariah's day, Zion (the obedient Jews) are to come out of the daughters of Babylon (the sum of all the Jews still living in Babylon at that time). I'll say it again: the daughters of Babylon are Jews (not gentiles), and Zion is also Jews (and not the Church). But, Zion is the more obedient and faithful segment of Jews that God is calling out from the rest of them. Their obedience and faithfulness are demonstrated by separating themselves, at God's command, away from the entire group of Jews still residing in Babylon.

Let's shift gears a bit. While indeed in the End Times application of this prophecy... that is, yet another fulfillment of this same prophecy... I can only conclude that this *is* talking about the Church (which I call the Constantinian

Church); it is the Constantinian Church which *is* Babylon. Ironically enough, not long after the Protestants separated from the Catholic Church to begin a new branch of gentile Christianity, they charged the Catholic Church as being the Babylon of Revelation. The problem is, the Protestant branch can't see that if their accusation of the Catholic Church is true, then so are Protestants Babylon, since both are cut from the same cloth.

I think the Prophets make it clear that in the End Times application of this prophecy, that portion of the self-proclaimed followers of Messiah that accepts and is affiliated with a gentiles-only, doctrinal-based, New Testament-only faith, and who refuses to identify with the entire Bible including not only the New Testament but also the Prophets, the Law of Moses, the Sabbath, and Israel, they are those daughters of Babylon spoken of in Zechariah once we arrive in the End Times. It is they who stubbornly stay right where they are (in Babylon) even when the proof is right there in their hands that they are believing things that are not true to God's Word. Their fate is not for me to determine, but it may not be as good as they are certain it will be. I have little doubt that this Zechariah passage is at play within John's Revelation passage that I quote to you with some regularity (because I believe the conditions it speaks of are present...here and now).

CJB Revelation 18:4-5 ***⁴ Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues, ⁵ for her sins are a sticky mass piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.***

In the 12th verse of Zechariah chapter 2, we read the following:

CJB Zechariah 2:12 ***For Yehoveh-Tzva'ot has sent me on a glorious mission to the nations that plundered you, and this is what he says: "Anyone who injures you injures the very pupil of my eye.***

So, according to the CJB, Yehoveh sent someone among the angels on a magnificent mission to the gentile nations who plundered Judah. And yet, there is another way this is interpreted that sounds like this:

^{JPS} **Zechariah 2:8 (2-12)** *For thus saith Yehoveh of hosts who sent me after glory unto the nations which spoiled you: 'Surely, he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.*

What does it mean to be sent “after glory”? We have seen so far in Zechariah that the term glory almost always is used as a proper noun. Even though in Hebrew syntax it is not usual to put a preposition like “the” in front of a proper noun, nonetheless when translating to English when it is usual to put in a preposition in front of a proper noun, then it ought to be translated as “after The Glory”. The Glory is a specific manifestation of God.

Zechariah who understands The Glory as a specific manifestation of God, also understand that one of His jobs is to cause a Prophet to prophesy. The Glory is the impetus behind a Prophet’s prophecies. Not surprisingly, it is this divine presence of The Glory by which a portion of this message is sent to the nations that plunder Israel. The message is that whoever (meaning any nation) touches (that is, harms) Israel touches the pupil of God’s eye. Obviously the “pupil of God’s eye” is an expression that simply means God’s most sensitive part. God is going to punish the heathen because they have oppressed His people, and His people are a most sensitive issue to God. The message continues with whoever strikes Israel will be struck back because it is no different than striking God. It is another warning. So, now God, through Zechariah, has warned the obedient Jews living in Babylon to flee in order to separate themselves from the disobedient Jews living there so that the obedient aren’t collateral damage in God’s wrath, and here He is sending a second message, this time to the nations not to dare to harm God’s people. I want to also add a caveat at this time, which is not out of the realm of possibility. It is that the totality of Jews up in Babylon might include some segment of gentile society as well. And, it is equally possible that the message to the gentile nations might include some segment of Jews living there. But, we shouldn’t allow that to miscolor the fact that message #1 was primarily for the Jews, and message #2 was primarily for the gentiles. Things of such a nature in the Bible only rarely are ever perfectly black and white because societies and nations are never that perfectly segregated.

When we get to verse 15, we’re going to again encounter the word that is always translated as “nations”. However, I’m not sure it ought to be handled that way.

That is, the Hebrew **goyim** has a range of meanings, and it can be difficult to discern whether this is speaking about the political and territorial entity called a nation (a country), or it means that segment of the world's population that are gentiles (non-Hebrew people). This may play a role in how we're to understand verse 12.

Verse 13 opens with the Hebrew **hineni**, which means "indeed". It has the sense that what follows is 100% certain to happen, and is probably just about to occur. The verse says:

CJB Zechariah 2:13 *But I will shake my hand over them, and they will be plundered by those who were formerly their slaves." Then you will know that Yehoveh-Tzva'ot sent me.*

Even though for some reason the CJB skips inserting the word for **hineni** to begin the sentence, when God shakes His hand it is an expression that means to set into a motion a destructive action. So, what is happening is that Yehoveh is pledging that the nations that plunder Israel will themselves be plundered in return. Or, even more specifically, it will be Israel who plunders the nations who plundered them. It is a reversal of fortunes; it will make servants of those who were the masters, and masters of those who used to be the servants.

Verse 14 rather changes the mood and tone from serious and ominous to joyful.

CJB Zechariah 2:14 *"Sing, daughter of Tziyon; rejoice! For, here, I am coming; and I will live among you," says Yehoveh.*

This verse is nearly universally taken by Christianity to be a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah. That is, the Lord God promises to not only return to His people but to also dwell among them. Here we get another "daughter of " expression. The first time it was daughter of Babylon, now it is daughter of Zion. So, this is speaking about residents of Jerusalem who are identified with and affiliated with all that Zion is and represents. Once again the word **hineni** is skipped over by the CJB and replaced with "for, here". But this doesn't have the forcefulness of the word **hineni** brought forth. This is a pledge from Yehoveh that says that He is coming; everyone can be assured of it.

When we look at the closing verses, this can only be a far future event for Zechariah, and likely a future event to us in our time. When God says He will live among Israel it can mean only one thing: His presence in the Temple. Always the place where God dwells on earth for the purpose of fellowship with His worshippers is the Temple. We have discussed at length the importance of the Temple in God's economy, at least partly because it is the molten core of the Mosaic Covenant. I must tell you that this is just another issue that has been so terribly misinterpreted, sometimes covered-up, and regularly dismissed by the Constantinian Church because it destroys so many manmade doctrines concerning the Temple.

Ezekiel chapter 37 deals with this issue of God living with Israel. We won't read it all, but I do want to quote you a couple of verses.

CJB Ezekiel 37:24-28 ***24 My servant David will be king over them, and all of them will have one shepherd; they will live by my rulings and keep and observe my regulations. 25 They will live in the land I gave to Ya'akov my servant, where your ancestors lived; they will live there—they, their children, and their grandchildren, forever; and David my servant will be their leader forever. 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them, an everlasting covenant. I will give to them, increase their numbers, and set my sanctuary among them forever. 27 My home will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. 28 The nations will know that I am ADONAI, who sets Isra'el apart as holy, when my sanctuary is with them forever.'"***

I want to highlight that this seems to be speaking of the Messiah that comes from the line of David. Further, when He rules, it will be according to Yehoveh's rulings and regulations. The Covenant will be front and center, and apparently it will be renewed. This scene takes place in Israel. And finally, it is the sanctuary that will be with Israel forever, because that is where God will dwell with His people forever. The sanctuary is referring to the innermost chamber of the Temple.

Verse 15 explains that in the future many "nations" will join with Yehoveh. I am doubtful that "nations" is a good translation. Rather, I think the word **goyim** ought to be translated in this instance as "gentiles". When we look at the context, this seems to be talking about individual people, and not political entities. It is through the covenants of God with the Hebrews that the way has been made for humans to be part of God's Kingdom. So, I think verse 15 ought to read in English: "Many gentiles will be joined to Yehoveh on that day.... They will be a people to Me and I will dwell in your midst". "On that day" is just one of a few ways that the Scriptures speak of the End Times Apocalypse: the Day of the Lord, or Judgment Day. This concept of gentile individuals... not nations...being joined with God is also expressed very well in Isaiah.

CJB Isaiah 56:1-7 *Here is what Yehoveh says: "Observe justice, do what is right, for my salvation is close to coming, my righteousness to being revealed." ² Happy is the person who does this, anyone who grasps it firmly, who keeps Shabbat and does not profane it, and keeps himself from doing any evil. ³ A foreigner joining Yehoveh should not say, "Yehoveh will separate me from his people"; likewise the eunuch should not say, "I am only a dried-up tree." ⁴ For here is what Yehoveh says: "As for the eunuchs who keep my Shabbats, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant: ⁵ in my house, within my walls, I will give them power and a name greater than sons and daughters; I will give him an everlasting name that will not be cut off. ⁶ "And the foreigners who join themselves to Yehoveh to serve him, to love the name of Yehoveh, and to be his workers, all who keep Shabbat and do not profane it, and hold fast to my covenant, ⁷ I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house*

I want to open a can of worms just briefly, and we'll address it again later more than once. It is complex and much too much to try to swallow in one bite. Here we have read of God, by using His formal name Yehoveh, saying that it will be He who dwells in the midst of His people in the Temple, in the future. It is He that the gentiles will join with. It is He that will make Judah His special inheritance. It is He who will once again make Jerusalem His choice of where He dwells. But, then, once we get to the New Testament, it said that it is not Yehoveh but rather Yeshua who will do all these things. That is, all these End

Times things in Zechariah will be the Messiah enacting them, and not His Father Yehoveh.

Is this contradictory? The Church long ago tried to resolve this conundrum by purging God's name from the Bible, and replacing it with The Lord. And then making The Lord just another reference to Jesus. So, in English Bibles in this passage in Zechariah that mentions God by name in the original Hebrew, we find instead the words "The Lord" substituted. Immediately our minds say, oh, this is indeed talking about Jesus the Messiah. Yet, that is not at all what it says.

So, am I saying that these same acts will not be done by Yeshua in the End Times? No, I'm not. Yeshua makes it clear that there is unity between He and His Father. And, yet, He, His Father, and the Holy Spirit are all separately identified and spoken about in the Bible. They all exist at the same time, but yet Yeshua declares Himself subservient to His Father, and the Holy Spirit is sent on missions according to the directions of The Father. Yeshua and the Holy Spirit cannot be one in the same because Yeshua tells His disciples that He must go so that the Holy Spirit can come. Yeshua and His Father cannot be one in the same because Yeshua says we are to pray to The Father, and that He seeks to do His Father's will and not His own.

For today, the only point I want to make is this: we must take the Bible for what it actually says and not try to rework it, or substitute words, which reflect one doctrine or another that seeks to make God less of a mystery. Church Doctrines invariably attempt to define God in very rigid and simplistic terms that if not agreed with and accepted, makes one a heretic. My response is this: if we as humans can understand a unique being such as God so thoroughly, then what need have we for faith? Mystery is the best place to leave it until and unless God decides to reveal more to us about Himself.

Zechariah chapter 2 ends in the most appropriate way.

CJB Zechariah 2:17 Be silent, all humanity, before Yehoveh; for he has been roused from his holy dwelling."

What is left after we have learned all this than to be silent before The Father? How can anyone have a response that does anything but fall flat when God makes such nearly unfathomable pronouncements? The Father is roused from His Heavenly throne to bring about some of the culminating acts of His will for the Universe and for mankind's redemption. It may have appeared to the Judean exiles, and maybe even His Believers of our day, that He has been sleeping. But in reality He has been walking around like a devouring Lion and all humanity needs to kneel in submission.