

# WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



## LESSON 13 – ZECHARIAH (PART 2)

### FACILITATOR'S

Note

This lesson is part two of our exploration into the ministry and prophecy of Zechariah. As we saw in part one, Zechariah's initial visions/oracles were concerned primarily with encouraging Judah to complete the reconstruction of the Lord's temple (destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar at the fall of Jerusalem in 587B.C.) and reassure them that God had not forgotten them, had returned in mercy and compassion to Jerusalem, and would certainly bring their promised Messiah. These visions/oracles occurred during the first few years of Zechariah's ministry and comprise Section 1, Chapters 1-8 of his book, as discussed in part one of our lesson. Part two of our lesson covers Section 2 of his book which is comprised of the remaining Chapters 9-14. The text is very different in tone and literary style from Section 1 and is therefore thought to have been received (and recorded) by Zechariah later in his life. The oracles in Section 2 are apocalyptic in style and speak of the restoration of Israel, the triumph of Zion through the Messiah, days of darkness when Israel will suffer under a worthless shepherd, and the Day of the Lord during which Jerusalem will suffer much loss in an attack by an alliance of nations, but from which they will be delivered by God Himself who will intervene, crushing Jerusalem's enemies, and ushering in the final age when He reigns as the one and only king over all the earth with all peoples worshipping Him.

Through this lesson we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS).

**HEAD**  **→ HEART**  **→ HANDS** 

We hope that by this study your class participants will not only hear, know, and understand the Word, but that they will also be driven to become the "Living Word" to the world around us. Your role in this process as a class facilitator is very important. Go beyond these lessons to demonstrate how what the Minor Prophets teach us can and should be lived daily. Use your life and the lives of others as examples of this "Living Word" concept.

*As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for this lesson by digging into the Word and reading through the book of **Zechariah**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **Jeremiah 23:1-6; 25:1-14; 29:1-14; 33:14-26, Ezra 1:1-6:18, Haggai 1:1-2:23** as background to the book. As you move through **Zechariah**, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come*

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into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

## PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

## FOCUS

- Review introductory material on the prophecy of Zechariah.
- Understand that God's people, though they may suffer hardships and calamities, will ultimately prevail and emerge victorious.
- Understand that God does not require that we have perfect understanding of His Word to be saved (especially important in this lesson as the prophetic oracles are perplexing).

## DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- How do you typically approach hard times in your life? Do you approach them with a feeling of doom and despair, or hope and victory? Discuss why.
- Do you feel like you have to have God's Word all figured out before one can be saved? Discuss.

## KNOWLEDGE HEAD

### From God's Word through Zechariah

- THE TEXT
  - As seen in Part 1 of this study, the book of Zechariah can be divided into the major sections shown below. Part 1 covered Section 1; this lesson covers Section 2.
    - Section 1 – Oracles and Visions
      - Section 1A – The Call To Repentance (1:1-6)
      - Section 1B – The Night Visions (1:7-6:8)
      - Section 1C – A Coronation and the Advent of the Branch (6:9-15)
      - Section 1D – Questions About Fasting, What God Really Wants (7:1-14)
      - Section 1E – The Coming Peace and Prosperity of Zion (8:1-23)

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- Section 2 – The Return of the King and Zion’s Glory
  - Section 2A -- The Coming Messiah and Restoration of Israel (9:1-10:12)
  - Section 2B – The Good Shepherd and Worthless Shepherd (11:1-17)
  - Section 2C – Jerusalem’s Victory, Sorrow for the One Pierced (12:1-13:9)
  - Section 2D – The Day of the LORD, Zion’s Glory established with the LORD as King over All the Earth (14:1-21)
- **Preliminaries**
  - The text of Section 2 is very challenging to interpret
  - While Section 1 clearly relates to the issue of rebuilding the temple, Section 2 does not; the historical standpoint is very different
  - Much of the text is written in an apocalyptic literary style and seems to deal with final events in store for the Jews
  - The prophetic passages should not be assumed to be presented in a chronological fashion. For example, an oracle may present in textual order three key events to come, say A, B and C, but chronologically, the order of events could be different, where perhaps A occurs first, then C, then B.
  - The first person singular is not used here as it is in Section 1
  - Messianic themes are clearly present, some which seem to refer to the first advent (coming) of Christ, and some which seem to refer to the second (yet to occur).
  - Section 2 is really two oracles, each of which is introduced with the phrase, “The burden (or oracle) of the word of the LORD” (ESV); the first oracle is presented in Chapters 9-11 (Sections 2A and 2B); the second oracle is presented in Chapters 12-14 (Sections 2C and 2D).
- **Section 2A (9:1-10:12) The Coming Messiah and Restoration of Israel**
  - (9:1-8) The first oracle opens with a denunciation of Israel’s neighboring nations whose land lies within the boundaries of the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18-20). Their lands will be taken from them and reincorporated into Judah and they will never again harm Israel.
    - 1-2a: The oracle starts with the land of Hadrach, an area in Northern Syria that encompassed Damascus and the land of Hamath
      - Hadrach is thought to be the Hatarika mentioned in the annals of the Assyrian kings -- an Aramean country near Damascus and Hamath against which Assyria campaigned in 772, 744 and 733 B..C.
      - An 8<sup>th</sup> century stele of Zakar, king of Hamath, indicates that Hadrach was used as the name for a region that encompassed Northern Syria, including Damascus, Hamath, and more.

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- 2b-4: The oracle then calls out Tyre and Sidon, which were located to the south along the coast, with Sidon north of Tyre
  - Both cities were renowned for their wisdom
  - Tyre is explicitly condemned for its greed and despite its reputation as being impregnable, the LORD promises its fall
    - Tyre was essentially a city comprised of two parts: an offshore island fortress surrounded by a 150 foot wall, well-insulated and filled with wealth, which served as the main trade center, and 'old Tyre,' located on the mainland about a half mile opposite the island fortress.
    - The Assyrians under Shalmaneser III (circa 859-824 B.C.) besieged Tyre's island fortress for 5 years, to no avail
    - The Babylonians (Chaldeans) under Nebuchadnezzar tried for 13 years, also without success
    - Alexander the Great destroyed the fortress city in 332 B.C. in a campaign that took 7 months and which made use of naval ships and a frontal infantry assault made possible by a wide causeway which Alexander's forces constructed from the rubble and fallen timber of Old Tyre. (Alexander had already taken Sidon, prior to his reaching Tyre.)
- 5-7: The oracle then addresses the Philistine territory. Four of the five capital cities of Philistia -- Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod -- are mentioned while the fifth, Gath is not (perhaps because it had already been incorporated into Judah). While the capital cities will fall, a remnant of Philistines will be preserved who become part of God's people.
  - V5: *Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid ... Gaza too ... Ekron also:* All of Philistia, aware of Alexander the Great's military prowess and his assault on Tyre and Sidon, was terrified by the approach of his forces
  - V5: *The king shall perish from Gaza:* Gaza was under attack by Alexander and held up for 5 months before king Batis was dragged to death, 10,000 of the city's inhabitants were slaughtered, and the rest sold into slavery.
  - V7: Preservation of a Philistine remnant is reminiscent of the remnant of Canaanite tribes who were never fully expelled and were eventually incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel in the time of David and Solomon (see 1 Kings 9:20-21, 2 Samuel 24:18)

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- V7: *Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.* The Jebusites were a people that the Israelites could never dislodge (see Joshua 15:63, Judges 1:21, 2 Samuel 24:18)
- 8: The LORD, who is now watching over Israel as a guard, will allow no oppressor to march over them again
  - This passage is difficult to interpret and is perhaps hyperbole to mean that the LORD has not forgotten His people and is watching out for them but future troubles (which will be announced in subsequent chapters/verses) will occur
  - A literal interpretation must address the fact that Israel was certainly trampled on later by the Seleucids and the Romans, and arguing that the statement is yet to be fulfilled is hard to justify
- It should be noted that all these lands/areas fell to Alexander the Great as he passed through them on his way to conquer Egypt, so vv1-7 may have Alexander's conquest of Egypt in view. Jerusalem was also in his path but escaped destruction (miraculously per Josephus) so if v8 is restricted to mean protection from the invading forces and/or the neighboring regions to be destroyed, a literal interpretation holds.
  - Per Josephus, Antiquities, 11.8.3-6, Alexander requested tribute from Jerusalem (while engaged with the siege of Tyre) and was denied by Jaddua the high priest, who refused to break his oath to Darius. Enraged, Alexander promised severe punishment once he had destroyed Tyre and taken the Philistine strongholds.
  - Jaddua, in fear of Alexander's retribution, sought God's favor and protection and encouraged the people to join him in the offering of sacrifices and prayer.
  - God told Jaddua in a dream to have no fear of Alexander but to go out and meet him, with all the priests in their usual priestly garb, and to leave the city entirely open to Alexander
  - As Alexander approached Jerusalem, Jaddua led a venerable procession to meet him and when Alexander saw the priests in their vestments, he saluted the high priest, praised the name of YHWH, and said he had seen this in a dream at Dios in Macedonia. Alexander was subsequently shown Daniel, Chapters 7 & 8, saw himself as the prophesied Greek conqueror of Persia, and thus treated the Jews kindly, sparing the city, its people, and granting certain favors -- not his typical response to his victims

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- (9:9-10) The LORD announces Zion's triumph through her coming king, the Messiah, one who will rule all the earth, but this king is a humble man of peace, not a tyrant who rules by the sword
  - "... righteous and having salvation is he ..." : the king is a righteous man who brings salvation to His people
  - "... humble and mounted on a donkey ..." : the king is a humble man, as seen by his arrival on a donkey, as opposed to a war horse on which a typical warrior would be mounted
  - All instruments of war (chariot, war horse and battle bow) will be removed under the rule of the king and he "*shall speak peace to the nations*"
  - ... *his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth*" : the king/Messiah rules over all the nations, not just the Jews
  - v9 includes a reference to the Messiah's first advent, fulfilled in the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:1-11, John 12:12-16)
- (9:11-12) God promises Israel (Zion) that because of the blood covenant He has with them, He will free all the Israelite exiles so that they can return to Jerusalem where He will restore to them double what they've lost
  - The blood covenant between God and Israel includes the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15:7-21) and the Mosaic Law covenant (Exodus 24:1-8). See also Hebrews 9:18-22.
  - God promises to free the "prisoners" but this seems a clear reference to the exiles because the prisoners are commanded to return to their stronghold, i.e., Jerusalem
  - The "waterless pit" (v11) was a dry well in which one could be securely imprisoned (e.g. Genesis 37:24, Jeremiah 38:6). The exiles are currently trapped/imprisoned in an alien land.
  - The mention of Judah and Ephraim in v13 suggests a view of all Israel, not just Judah
- (9:13-17) God promises to make Zion (Israel) like a warrior's sword that will be used to defeat Israel's Greek oppressors. The LORD Himself will lead the battle and He will protect Israel, ensuring that they devour their Grecian foes, because His people are precious to Him, a treasured possession, like the jewels of a crown, and He will bless them with the covenantal blessings of abundant harvest (grain and new wine)
  - The mention of Judah (in the Southern Kingdom) and Ephraim (in the Northern Kingdom) indicates God is addressing all the tribes of Israel
  - 13: *I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece* -- this should be regarded as predictive prophecy. The time that Zechariah's

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oracle was received/written (circa 521-486 B.C.) was well before the rise of the Grecian empire. Alexander did not conquer Palestine until 332 B.C. and his rule over Palestine was basically peaceful as mentioned above. Conflicts between Israel and "Greece" (the Seleucids, actually, who were the Greek speaking successors that emerged from Alexander's rule) occurred in the Maccabean age (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.). In particular, the Jews battled the Seleucids for several years, circa 167-160 B.C. -- a period known as the Maccabean Revolt – during which they effectively employed guerrilla warfare tactics under the command of the Maccabee brothers in an effort to gain their independence, which was achieved circa 142 B.C. You can read about the Maccabean period in the books, 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees, which are not part of the Protestant OT or Jewish Bible but are included in Catholic canons (e.g. The Jerusalem Bible).

- **ASK:**
  - 9:9 seems to have been fulfilled, per Matthew 21:1-11 & John 12:12-16, by the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. What about 9:10? Has this been fulfilled? Discuss
- (10:1-12) The oracle continues with an admonition to seek counsel and blessings from the LORD, not from idols or diviners who are worthless. The leaders of Gods people have misused their power and God, who cares for His flock, promises they will be punished. God will strengthen Judah, transforming them from a helpless flock into a majestic battle horse. He will signal and call the exiles of Israel home from the nations to which they were banished, their return accompanied with signs similar to the exodus from Egypt under Moses.
  - 1-2: God is the one from whom His people should seek blessing and counsel, not household gods (leaders, especially family heads in the patriarchal age, used these, e.g. Genesis 31:30-34) or diviners, whose worthless guidance left the people to suffer and wander aimlessly
  - 3: God is angry with the shepherds (leaders) whom He calls "male goats" (an uncomplimentary term) because they care nothing for the flock, and instead, have abused their power, so He will punish them. The use of the term shepherd for leader by Zechariah's time was well-established, see Ezekiel 34:1-24.
  - 4-5: The LORD of hosts promises new leaders from Judah who will triumph over their foes because the LORD is with them.
  - 6-7: God promises to save the house of Joseph. *I will bring them back ... and they shall be as though I had not rejected them ...* The house of Joseph includes Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim was a prominent and centrally-located tribe within the Northern Kingdom. The use of the term

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*house of Joseph* and the explicit reference to Ephraim indicates God has in view all of the Northern Kingdom in His promise here to bring them back; i.e., all of Israel will be restored.

- 8-10: The LORD will whistle for his people to bring them home from the many nations to which they were exiled, including at least Egypt and Assyria which are explicitly named. See Isaiah 5:26 and Isaiah 7:18-19 where God whistled to summon Egypt and Assyria to judge Israel back in the time of Isaiah. The whistle here will be the signal for the exiles in Egypt and Assyria (and elsewhere) to return home.
- 11-12: The imagery used to describe the return of the exiles calls to mind the exodus from Egypt under Moses. God will pass through the sea, the waves will be struck down, and the Nile dried up. Assyria and Egypt, Israel's primary military threats to the north and south, respectively, will be laid low.
  - **ASK:**
    - Per 10:2, the people of Israel had at one time sought blessing and guidance from idols and diviners, rather than the LORD, and it brought them only suffering and aimless wandering. From what sources today do people seek blessing and guidance, and do these work? Discuss.
- **Section 2B (11:1-17) The Good Shepherd and Worthless Shepherd**
  - (11:1-17) The oracle now continues with a description of the first advent of the Messiah, his rejection by his people, and the horrible suffering that comes to them because of this rejection. The description is provided by a sign-act in which Zechariah is commanded to take on (act out) the role of the shepherd of a flock which ultimately detests/rejects him as their shepherd. He abandons his role and the flock endures suffering at the hands of a worthless shepherd who follows. The sign-act is clearly symbolic of Jesus' first coming, but portions of it as described are very difficult to interpret.
    - 1-3: The opening verses are a fable that announces impending doom for the Israelites. The beautiful cedars of Lebanon (which provided the timber for Solomon's Temple, 1 Kings 5:6) and oaks of Bashan (in northern Israel, the Golan Heights of today) will be felled. Shepherds wail because they are ruined and ravenous lions are roaring because the thickets of the Jordan (known lairs for lions) are ruined. It is not clear whether the announced doom in these verses is directed specifically to the leaders/shepherds of Israel (see 10:3) or to the people themselves, but most interpreters believe the leaders are in view.



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- 4-6: God commands Zechariah to become the shepherd of *the flock doomed to slaughter*. The sign-act begins. The current owners and shepherds are described as men who care only about themselves and the wealth they can obtain from the flock; they care nothing for the flock itself. The LORD makes the frightening announcement that He will no longer have pity on the Israelites but will leave them unprotected and open to attack from anyone. This announcement seems contrary to the LORD's word in the preceding passages, 9:1-10:12, but keep in mind that: a) Section 2 passages almost certainly include predictive prophecy that describes different periods of Israel's history, some that will be peaceful, some that will not; b) these periods are not necessarily presented chronologically; c) receipt of God's promised blessings is often conditional on obedience to Him (i.e. not all of God's promises are unconditional).
- 7-8: Zechariah takes charge of the flock as commanded and takes two staffs which he names "Favor" and "Union"
  - The word used for the first staff, Favor, means "grace, graciousness, pleasantness." The word used for the second staff, Union, has to do with making a covenant (to bind, pledge).
  - A shepherd often has two staffs, the first a rod or weapon for fighting off wild animals or those who try to steal the sheep and the second a crook used to keep the sheep in line.
- 8: In one month, while tending the flock, Zechariah destroys (cuts off or removes) three shepherds, but he becomes impatient, despairing of his task of governing the sheep, and the sheep detest him.
  - The identity of the three shepherds, most likely leaders of Israel, not literal shepherds, is unknown. Per [2], there are over 40 interpretations of the three shepherds, none of which is convincing. Speculation is pointless. The term shepherd as a figure of speech for the leader of God's people was well-established (see Jeremiah 23:1-8; Ezekiel 34; Ezekiel 37:24).
  - Zechariah's impatience with the flock suggests the flock was not responding to his governance and grew to detest him (making his job all the harder).
- 9: Zechariah throws in the towel, giving up the role of shepherd because the flock has rejected his leadership and so he leaves them to their fate. Now without the care of the shepherd, the sheep are exposed to attack and destruction by their enemies.

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- *What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another.*
- Josephus describes the horrible suffering, famine and cannibalism that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (e.g. Wars of the Jews, 6.3.1-5)
- 10-11: Zechariah (his patience exhausted) breaks his first staff, Favor, immediately revoking the covenant with the surrounding nations, and those watching Zechariah recognized this action to be a message from the LORD.
  - Apparently the first staff Favor implied an international covenant of sorts with all people, in particular, the nations surrounding Israel
  - The covenant in view may be God's restraint upon the nation's to prevent the decimation of His people Israel. With Favor broken, His protection and mercy are now withdrawn.
  - (Matthew 23:37-38) *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate."*
- 12-13: Zechariah asks for his wages, letting them set the price, and is given 30 shekels of silver, a paltry sum -- the value of a Hebrew slave (Exodus 21:32) -- and the LORD commands him to throw it to the potter, so he obeys, taking the 30 pieces of silver to the temple to throw them to the potter there.
  - This portion of the sign-act is of course symbolic of Judas' betrayal of Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, which Judas then discarded in the Temple prior to committing suicide, and which was subsequently used by the priests to buy the potter's field.
  - Matthew 27:9-10 states that Judas' receipt of the 30 pieces of silver for "selling out" Jesus and its subsequent use to buy the potter's field was the fulfillment of these passages in Zechariah. (Matthew attributes the quote to Jeremiah, following the rabbinic tradition of attributing a quote from any book in the "Prophets" section of the Hebrew canon to the first book in the section, which is Jeremiah. See the notes under "Metadata about the Book of Zechariah" in the previous lesson, Zechariah, Part 1.)
- 14: Zechariah then breaks his second staff, Union, to symbolize the annulling of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

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- Judah and Israel are to be brought back together per 10:6-12
- The union of Judah and Israel was also prophesied earlier by Ezekiel 37:15-28 (symbolically presented by the joining of two sticks).
- In spite of this promised union, Judah (southern kingdom) and Israel (northern kingdom) will eventually once again divide.
- 15-17: The LORD commands Zechariah to take up the equipment of a foolish shepherd, as an act to symbolize God's plan to rear a worthless shepherd (leader) over His people, one who cares nothing for them, feeding on them rather than feeding them, but who will in the end be punished.
  - It is not clear what Zechariah did with the "equipment of a foolish shepherd," if anything at all; the sign-act may have ended at that point as the lesson was complete with the pronouncement of woes upon the worthless shepherd
  - God takes ownership for raising up the worthless shepherd (leader), though it seems clear that this occurs only because the flock had rejected the leadership of the first shepherd (which Zechariah acted out)
  - Woes are pronounced upon the worthless shepherd who abandoned the flock (people), and include very specific curses on his body: *May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!*
    - Some interpreters take these curses in a general sense to mean, God will ultimately bring judgment on the worthless leader, striking his arm and right eye, body parts essential to effecting warfare and/or shepherding duties
    - Other interpreters (e.g. dispensational pre-millennialists) believe these curses provide a physical description of the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10 which they believe is yet to be revealed.
- ASK:
  - What do you believe is the covenant which Zechariah had made with all the peoples (11:10) which he annulled with the breaking of his staff, Favor? Why?

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- Section 2C (12:1-13:9) Jerusalem's Victory, Sorrow for the One They Pierced
  - This section begins the second (and final) oracle of Zechariah. As with Chapter 11, the passages in the second oracle are apocalyptic and challenging to interpret. The oracle consists of two parts, each of which deals with final events for Israel. Messianic references are present throughout, though which of the Messiah's advents is in view (first and/or second) is not everywhere obvious.
    - The first part, Section 2C, describes an attack on Jerusalem (and Judah) by many nations which results in victory for Judah/Jerusalem through the LORD's help, great sorrow and mourning in Israel for recognition of one whom they pierced, and cleansing of sin, including the removal of all prophets and idol's names, throughout Israel.
    - The second part, Section 2D, announces the coming Day of the LORD during which Jerusalem will be attacked by many nations and suffer much loss, but from which she emerges triumphant with the help of the LORD who arrives at the Mount of Olives to do battle on her behalf. His arrival includes an earthquake that transforms the land, the "holy ones" who accompany Him, and a disruption to the usual alternating cycle of day and night. The whole scene ends with a transformed earth where all worship the LORD and all things are dedicated to His service.
  - (12:1) The oracle opens with an emphatic statement: *Thus declares the LORD who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him ...* This introduction is an important reminder that the oracle's message, as unbelievable and difficult as it may be for the hearer (perhaps especially for Israel), it is nonetheless true as it comes from the Creator of the universe and of mankind.
  - (12:2-9) All the nations will turn their hand against Jerusalem and Judah, and gather to attack/destroy them, but the nations are defeated as the LORD intervenes, protecting Judah and Jerusalem, making them invincible.
    - 2-3: All nations will gather at Jerusalem and lay siege to it and Judah, but the LORD will make them like a stone which no one can move. Jerusalem will be a "cup of staggering" to all nations, i.e., the mechanism by which He effects judgment and punishment on the nations. The cup (and drinking of it) was a well-known symbol of God's judgment and wrath in OT Scripture, as seen in Isaiah 51:17,22; Jeremiah 25:15-29; 51:7.
    - V3 begins with the phrase, *On that day*; the phrase occurs 10 times in Section 2C (7 times in 12:3-9, and 3 times in 13:1-9). The Hebrew, 'bayyom hahu' is also used in Chapter 14 where the Day of the LORD is

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discussed so *on that day* throughout these final sections 2C and 2D may be synonymous with the Day of the LORD.

- 4-5: The LORD promises to protect Judah by striking enemy forces with blindness (their horses) and madness/confusion (their riders), and He will do so with His eyes open, meaning He will clearly distinguish between His people and their enemies, inflicting damage only on their enemies. All of Judah will recognize that is the strength of the *LORD of hosts* (a military title) and not their own which will save them. Striking with blindness and madness/confusion was a covenant curse (Deuteronomy 28:28) promised to Israel if they disobeyed the LORD; here, the curse will come down on Israel's enemies.
- 6: Judah will be invincible and mighty (like a flaming torch among sheaves) and Jerusalem will stand.
- 7-8: The LORD promises salvation/protection to Judah first, and also Jerusalem. Even the feeblest in Jerusalem will be a mighty warrior (like David), and the House of David will be a shield of protection for Jerusalem, like the angel of the LORD was for Israel in the exodus out of Egypt (see Exodus 23:20, 32:34, 33:2).
- 9: The LORD will "seek to destroy" all the enemies that came against Jerusalem. This Hebrew phrase is interesting, the same as is used in 6:7 of the strong chariot horses that sought to (were impatient to) patrol the earth. Though God protects His people by making Jerusalem immovable/invincible in the attack, it seems He now turns His attention to bringing down those nations.
  - Note that there are no known historical events to which vv1-9 can be tied.
- (12:10-14) God will pour out His Spirit on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and they will look on him, the one they pierced, and mourn bitterly. The sorrow and mourning is on a national level as all Israel mourns like a family does at the loss of a firstborn son, an only child whose death dashes hope for continuation of the family line.
  - 10: *And I will pour out ... a spirit of grace and pleas* – the Hebrew word for pour, *shaphak*, is used elsewhere in the OT to indicate a transforming spiritual event (see Joel 2:28-29, Ezekiel 39:29, Isaiah 44:3) where God pours out His Spirit. Note that God is the speaker in this verse.
  - 10: *when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced* – there is disagreement on the identity of the one pierced. Many believe this to be a clear reference to Jesus, the crucified Messiah, while others disagree. It should be noted that:

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- God is the speaker in v10 so the use of the first person (... look on *me* ...) indicates God is the one pierced
  - The intense mourning (vv11-14) in Israel that follows their recognition of the one they pierced is what would be expected from a people who finally realize that they had killed the very one in whom they had placed all their hope.
  - Per [2], the Hebrew text has an untranslated “word” between the “me” and the “whom” which is comprised of the two Hebrew letters Aleph and Tau (the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, analogous to Greek’s Alpha and Omega), suggesting a more insightful rendering could be: ... *when they look on me, the Aleph and the Tau, the one whom they have pierced* ... (You can see this in the Hebrew Interlinear Bible at: [http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Hebrew\\_Index.htm](http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Hebrew_Index.htm))
  - Some interpreters (e.g. dispensational pre-millennialists) believe that this recognition of and mourning for the one they pierced is an event yet to be fulfilled in which the Jews en masse will be converted to Christ per Romans 11:11-32.
  - Other interpreters see this as fulfilled at the Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ, when thousands of Jews, hearing Peter’s message that they had murdered their Messiah, were cut to the heart and turned to Him, accepting Him as Lord and Christ (Acts 2:22-41).
  - The Apostle John recalls this verse in the context of **both** Messianic advents -- at the actual crucifixion of Christ (John 19:34-37) and again later in connection with Christ’s Second Coming (Revelation 1:7).
- 11: The intensity of the mourning is compared to that which occurred for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo, a reference to the great sorrow and weeping that Judah experienced at the death of godly King Josiah who was slain in battle on the plains of Megiddo by Pharaoh Neco’s Egyptian forces (2 Chronicles 25:20-25).
  - 12-14: These verses describe the level of mourning for the one they pierced; all the families of the land (Israel) will mourn. The verses also mention specific families, including those of the house of David, house of Nathan (presumably David’s son through whom Christ was descended rather than the prophet), house of Levi, and house of the Shimeites (Shimei was the grandson of Levi). The reason for the mention of these specific families can only be left to speculation, though it is interesting to

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note that the lines of David and Levi include the kingly and priestly lines, roles fulfilled in the Messiah. One might argue that the families mentioned show that mourning will occur at all levels, from the highest (David) to the lowest (Nathan) in the royal house and from the highest (Levi) to the lowest (Shimei) in the priestly house.

- **ASK:**
  - Do you believe the siege of Jerusalem and Judah in 12:3-9 is to be taken literally or allegorically? Why?
  - With respect to the phrase in v10, "... when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced ...," do you believe this refers to Jesus at His first advent, at His second advent, or something else? Explain.
- (13:1-9) The oracle continues with the assurance that on that day (the day under discussion in 12:1-14), a fountain for cleansing of sin will be opened/available to *the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem* which seems to be a metonymy for all Israel. All (false) prophets and the names of idols throughout the land will be removed.
  - 1: The fountain as a figure of speech for cleansing/forgiveness and God Himself (or His Spirit) is found in both OT and NT; e.g. Jeremiah 2:13, Jeremiah 17:13, John 4:14, John 7:37-39.
  - 2a: The names of the idols (not just the idols themselves) will be removed from the land, so that they will no longer be remembered. They were supposed to be forgotten; that was the point of the command in Exodus 22:13. Some interpreters argue that what is in view here is the Messianic (church) age and that the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is what brought about the removal of classic idolatry. Other interpreters (e.g. dispensational pre-millennialists) argue that the text is addressed to the house of David and Jerusalem's inhabitants, for which no apparent problem with idolatry existed following the Babylonian exile, so what is in view is a time yet to come when Israel will lapse into idolatry again due to the influence of demonic forces that are allowed to reign for a time without the restraint of the Holy Spirit and the Church which both will be removed (the Church by rapture).
  - 2b-3: God declares that He will also remove prophets and a spirit of uncleanness from the land. The context indicates **false** prophets are in view, given the coupling of the term uncleanness along with the treatment that these prophets will receive from their own families who condemn them for their lies. This treatment (v3) is similar to (not identical) with Deuteronomy 13:6-10, 18:20 which condemns false prophets.

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- 4-5: The false prophets will be ashamed of their practice and deceit. Those who argue that the Messianic (church) age is in view here point out that this literally happened, as seen in Acts 19:13-20, where at the preaching of Paul, certain false prophets repented of their practices (including the practice of magic arts), burned their own books/scrolls, and became disciples of Jesus Christ.
  - 6: This verse is extremely difficult to understand. Some argue that the subject under discussion is still the false prophet of vv3-5, while others argue it is 'the one who was pierced' of 12:10 and the shepherd who is struck down in the verses that follow, vv7-9. No argument is convincing.
  - 7-9: The LORD of hosts calls on the sword to strike down His shepherd, scatters the flock, and then purifies them through trials to be His people.
    - 7: The shepherd that is struck down definitely includes the Messiah who was struck down by the Romans in the period of His first advent. Jesus tells us this conclusively by quoting this verse (and applying it to Himself) on the night of His betrayal (see Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27)
    - 8-9: God promises that of those in all the land, two thirds will perish and only one third will be preserved and refined. It should be noted that from the Book of Acts, it seems clear that while many Jews embraced Jesus as their Messiah once the preaching of the gospel commenced at Pentecost, the majority of Jews did not. Also, it is estimated that more than 1.5 million Jews perished during the course of the conflict with Rome (the battles, the siege and fall of Jerusalem, including the final destruction of the temple, in 70 A.D.). These verses can also be applied not to the literal Jews but to Christians, who were persecuted and put to death in large numbers (by Rome), yet remained faithful to God/Jesus as His people, demonstrating the power of Jesus Christ.
- **ASK:**
- What do you identify as "the fountain" that was opened to cleanse the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from sin and uncleanness? Explain.



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- Section 2D (14:1-21) The Day of the LORD, Zion's Glory and the LORD as King Over All the Earth
  - Section 2D (Chapter 14) closes Zechariah's second oracle and is perhaps the most interesting and difficult to understand. Almost all interpreters agree that Chapter 14 deals exclusively with eschatology (the study of last things, last times). And that's where the agreement ends. How to interpret the text to understand what happens in the last times yet to come varies widely with different schools of thought (pre-millennial, amillennial, post-millennial, etc.) No attempt will be made to present the different views as that is far beyond the scope of this study.
  - (14:1-21) On the Day of the LORD, Jerusalem will be attacked by many nations and suffer much loss, but she emerges triumphant with the help of the LORD who arrives at the Mount of Olives to do battle on her behalf. His arrival includes an earthquake that transforms the land, the "holy ones" who accompany Him, and a disruption to the usual alternating cycle of day and night. The whole scene ends with a transformed earth where all worship the LORD, the one and only king of the earth, and all things are dedicated to His service.
    - 1-2: Horrible things occur to the Jews:
      - Many nations gather at Jerusalem and attack it, summoned by God to do so
      - The city is taken and her inhabitants treated harshly:
        - houses are plundered
        - women are raped
        - half of the inhabitants are taken captive (go into exile or captivity) while the other half remain in the city
      - The enemy nations divide the spoil right there in the midst of Jerusalem
    - 3-5b: The LORD appears on the Mount of Olives to do battle with the nations. As He stands on the Mount, an earthquake splits the mountain in two, from east to west, opening a wide escape route for the inhabitants of Jerusalem to flee east out of the city along the valley all the way to Azal.
      - The Mount of Olives is the highest peak in a line of hills which is located less than a mile east of Jerusalem and ranges north and south for about a mile. It is separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron Valley. The Mount of Olives overlooks Jerusalem, is about 200 ft higher than Mount Zion, and about 300ft higher than Mount Moriah. To the east of the Mount lies the Judean wilderness.

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- The Mount of Olives is almost certainly the location from which Jesus ascended to Heaven, following His resurrection. It is not stated directly as the location but can be inferred as such from v12 of Acts 1:1-12.
- The location of Azal has not been identified by archaeologists; some conjecture that it is Beth-Ezel (Micah 1:11)
- If a very wide valley were to form literally as described (4:14), it would indeed make Jerusalem more accessible from the east
- Zechariah says that the inhabitants of Jerusalem will flee/escape via the valley that is formed. They will flee just like the Israelites fled during the earthquake that occurred during king Uzziah's reign, two centuries prior to Zechariah – a real/literal event (see Amos 1:1-2).
- This scene is reminiscent of the exodus out of Egypt: as God split the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Jews to escape Pharaoh's attacking army, He will split the Mount of Olives to allow the Jews in Jerusalem to escape the attacking nations.
- 5c: *Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him*
  - The word for "holy ones" or "saints" (qdshim) means separated ones, set apart for holy work. It is used of angels (e.g. Job 15:15, Deuteronomy 33:2) and holy people (e.g. Leviticus 11:44-45, Numbers 15:40, Daniel 7:18)
  - Jesus, on His return, will be accompanied by both angels (e.g. Matthew 16:27, 24:30-31, 25:31) and His saints (1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Thessalonians 3:13, 4:14-17)
  - This verse calls to mind Jude 14: *It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, ..."*
- 6-7: The Day of the LORD is a unique day known (only) to the LORD which will be characterized by cosmic changes – no cold or frost, no day or night (there will be light in the evening); i.e., the alternating cycle of day and night seems to be disrupted, presumably with permanent light prevailing.
  - If the text is to be interpreted literally, the mention of summer and winter continuing in v8 suggests that the physics behind earth's seasons continues so perhaps the disruption is temporal; however, it must be admitted that anything becomes possible with the Son of God on earth, including permanent light and the continuance of seasons.
  - (Matthew 24:36) *But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*

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- Language of this type describing cosmic effects on the Day of the LORD is seen elsewhere in Scripture:
  - (Isaiah 13:9-10) *Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.*
  - (Isaiah 24:23) *Then the moon will be confounded and the sun ashamed, for the LORD of hosts reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and his glory will be before his elders.*
  - (Joel 2:30-31) *And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.*
  - (Joel 3:14b-15) *For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.*
  - (Matthew 24:29-31) *Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.*
- The language in vv1-7 is succinct and matter-of-fact, including a reference to a real/literal event (the earthquake in Uzziah's time), making it is almost impossible to read these verses and not think of the Second Coming of Christ, especially given the NT descriptions of the Second Advent (e.g. Matthew 24:29-31,36; 25:31, Luke 21:25-28, Mark 8:38)
- 8-9: Living waters begin to flow out of Jerusalem, both east (to the Dead Sea) and west (to the Mediterranean Sea) and will do so all year around, forever, and the LORD will be the one and only king over all the earth.
  - The term "living waters" in Scripture often denotes the Holy Spirit

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- (John 4:14) *but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*"
- (John 7:37-39) *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*
- One can try to argue that vv8-9 are symbolic of the First Advent because living waters (the Spirit) did, in a sense, flow east and west out of Jerusalem at the Pentecost following Christ's resurrection when the preaching of the gospel began. Mapping the other aspects of Zechariah's description to Christ's First Advent and the beginning of the church age, however, becomes very difficult.
- Life-giving rivers are present in Scripture in the description of sanctuaries including the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10), the New Temple of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 47:1-12) and the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:1-2).
- V9: God has always been king over all the earth but the text implies that in the last times, he will be universally acknowledged as such. This echoes/fulfills the famous OT confession known as the Shema, Deuteronomy 6:4: *Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.* The fact that this acknowledgment clearly has not yet occurred indicates that Zechariah's Day of the LORD has not yet happened.
- 10-11: The territory of Judah undergoes topographical changes – no doubt as a result of the earthquake -- so that it is turned into a flat plain, from Geba, on its northern border, to Rimmon, about 35 miles southwest of Jerusalem, but with Jerusalem raised up, towering over its countryside. And Zechariah indicates that Jerusalem will never again be attacked or destroyed (quite a change from its bloody history).
- 12-15: On the Day of the LORD, when the LORD goes into battle (v3), He will strike the enemy nations with a plague and with panic so that they turn on one another. A plague also strikes all the animals in their camps. Judah, who is engaged in the battle (presumably against the enemy nations though it doesn't say), collects great spoil receiving back what it earlier lost (v1).

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- The plague is horrific, causing a person's flesh, eyes and tongue to rot instantly. Plague affects the animals too. Some interpreters posit the plague to be radiation poisoning from weapons (e.g. neutron bomb). Speculation like this, though interesting, is fruitless; the LORD is the one in control.
- Striking armies with panic and confusion, often inciting death by friendly fire, was used by the LORD in OT battles where He intervened on Israel's behalf (e.g. Exodus 23:27, Deuteronomy 7:22-24, 1 Samuel 7:10; 14:20)
- 16-19: The aftermath of the battle is that all the survivors of each nation that attacked Jerusalem must go up to Jerusalem each year to worship and present themselves before the King (the LORD of hosts) and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (aka the Feast of Tabernacles); otherwise, their nation faces punishment including drought and plague.
  - The Feast of Booths was one of 3 mandatory annual feasts which the Jews were commanded to keep (the other two were the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the Feast of Weeks, i.e., Passover and Pentecost, see Deuteronomy 16:1-16)
  - The Feast of Booths commemorated the pilgrim life of the Israelites while they journeyed between the Red Sea and the Jordan River. It celebrated entrance into the Promised Land but also acknowledged the harsh lesson learned from 40 years of desert wandering caused by Israel's rebellion against the LORD. The nations that attacked Jerusalem learned the same lesson as Israel in the days of Moses and will now keep the Feast of Booths to commemorate that learning experience. Obey the LORD.
  - 17: Drought is promised to any nation which does not comply
  - 18-19: Egypt is singled out in particular, not only for drought but also for plague (presumably because drought in Egypt is commonplace, with crops watered by the Nile rather than rain, making drought of little threat) but then the text says that drought AND plague will be visited on any non-compliant nation.
  - It is not clear if the threatened plague of punishment for Egypt is distinct from that applied to any other non-compliant nation, nor is it clear if these plagues for non-compliance are the same or different from the plague that was applied to Jerusalem's attackers in v12.
- 20-21: Everything in Jerusalem is now holy, even common artifacts. Horse bells have the inscription that once adorned the plate on the high priest's

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turban, "Holy to the LORD" (see Exodus 28:36-38) and common pots everywhere throughout Judah and Jerusalem are holy to Him as well, acceptable for use in offering sacrifices. And there is no longer a "Canaanite" present in the LORD's house, which seems to mean that everyone in His house is holy, undefiled. (The Canaanites were the first enemies the Israelites encountered in the Promised Land, whose pagan gods/idols turned Israel away from God. There are no longer such influences.) There is no secular vs. sanctified; everything/everyone is sanctified before the LORD.

- Zechariah's description of the aftermath of the battle, vv6-21, includes a Jerusalem where there is perpetual light, living waters which flow from the city, the LORD who reigns as the one and only King, and nothing unholy.
- **ASK:**
  - Summarize the common features that appear in the New Jerusalem of Revelation 22:1-5 and the Jerusalem of Zechariah's oracle in 14:6-21.

## UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What do the times of Zachariah have in common with our own times?
- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Zechariah today?

## WISDOM ✋ HANDS

- What messages did you hear in this lesson that need to be shared with people you know?
- Who in your group of friends or family do you need to share the message with TODAY? Think specifically.
- Commit to each other that you will have the courage to share the message. Pray NOW and then pray for each other through the week to have the boldness to share.

## PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Ask God to help you in sharing His Gospel message of Love, Grace, and Hope to a lost world. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts through this study so that we may know Him more and develop an intimate relationship with Him.

# WTF LIFE **PROPHETABLE** MAJOR LESSONS | *from the* MINOR PROPHETS



## SEMESTER OUTLINE (SPRING 2016)

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS – Why Study This? (January 3)
2. HOSEA – PART 1 (January 10)
3. HOSEA – PART 2 (January 17)
4. JOEL (January 24)
5. AMOS (January 31)
6. OBADIAH & NAHUM (February 7)
7. JONAH (February 14)
8. MICAHA (February 21)
9. HABAKKUK (February 28)
10. ZEPHANIAH (March 6)
11. HAGGAI (March 13)
12. ZECHARIAH – PART 1 (April 3)
13. ZECHARIAH – PART 2 (April 10)
14. MALACHI (April 17)
15. CONCLUSION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS (April 24)