

ZECHARIAH - A TEACHER'S GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. Is there anything special about the book of Zechariah? Why was it included in the Bible? Would you have voted for it? Who was Zechariah and what was his background? Who was he speaking to in this book?

Zechariah is the “Revelation” of the Old Testament. His name in Hebrew is *Zekaryah* [Heb *zĕkaryâ* (זְכַרְיָהוּ), *zĕkaryahû* (זְכַרְיָהוּ)]. Var. ZECHER.] which means “the LORD (Yahweh) remembers” or “Yahweh has remembered.” He was probably a Levite, (See Zechariah 1:1; Nehemiah 12:16) and was almost certainly born in Babylonia. He is described as “the son of Berechiah [“Yahweh Blesses”] (Zechariah 1:1) and also as “the son of Iddo [“The Appointed Time”] (See Ezra 5:1; 6:14) which is used loosely to mean son or grandson or at times even a more distant relative. Berechiah, Zechariah’s father, may well have died young, since Zechariah (rather than his father Berechiah) seems to have been the one to follow Iddo as head of his priestly family (Neh. 12:12–16). Zechariah’s ministry as a priest and prophet apparently began about two months after his older contemporary Haggai’s did. (Zechariah 1:1; Haggai 1:1) Zechariah 2:4 suggests he was a young man when he began. He worked alongside Haggai from 520/519 BC to 518 BC and probably continued to work to rebuild the temple until 515 BC when the temple was completed although neither of them mention the actual completion. The two prophet’s work was complementary. Haggai reproved the people for their failure to rebuild the temple, while Zechariah encouraged the people by presenting to them the coming glory of the Lord. Zechariah’s ministry probably continued until about 480 B.C.

“He is not to be confused with the Zechariah mentioned in Matthew 23:35, ‘Zechariah son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.’ That Zechariah lived much earlier (c. 825 B.C.), and his death is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20–22. [This point is important and helping us to determine how early the Bible was canonized.] Nor should Zechariah the prophet be confused with any of the 28 other men in the Old Testament who bore this name. ...The Talmud indicates that he was a member of the Great Synagogue along with Nehemiah and Ezra...” (*King James Version Study Bible*)

“Cyrus (see 2 Chr. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1–4) provided the opportunity for the Jews to return from exile and rebuild their temple. The foundations were laid in 537 B.C., but Samaritan opposition blocked all significant progress for nearly sixteen years. In 520 B.C., God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the completion of the work. The internal indications of date, translated to our modern calendars, are as follows: October-November, 520 B.C. (1:1); January-February, 519 B.C. (1:7); November-December, 518 B.C. (7:1). The two final ‘burdens’ (chs. 9–11; 12–14) are undated but seem to have been delivered in Zechariah’s later life, perhaps after 480

B.C., when the Persians were defeated by the Greeks at Thermopylae and Salamis, since Greece is mentioned in 9:13. Manuscript evidence is unanimously in favor of the unity of the book, and conservative scholars have shown a significant internal unity both in theological and stylistic terms. Zechariah's messianic prophecies are among the greatest and most comprehensive of all the Minor Prophets...

"In his youth Zechariah was greatly concerned with the rebuilding of the temple. The Lord gave him a message to show the people that the long-term result of their work was bound up with God's purpose to establish the messianic kingdom. Like John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1, 2), Zechariah was called first to preach repentance (1:1-6) and then to proclaim that the kingdom of God was at hand. All eight of the special revelatory visions (1:7-6:8) should be interpreted together as an organized unit of prophecy concerning God's chosen people. Each vision spoke significantly to the immediate needs of the feeble, post-exilic nation, but the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy awaits the return of the Messiah." (*Believer's Study Bible*)

Zechariah is noteworthy for his prophecies that seem to apply to Jesus. (See Zechariah 9:9; 11:12) and prophecies that may apply to the end of time. (See Zechariah 14:4,5) There are a number of other fairly specific prophecies that were apparently conditional since we still are not able to place their fulfillment at any known time in history.

Zechariah is also well known for two prophecies that have almost universal application: Zechariah 3:1-5 and 4:6.

2. What is implied by the statement made about the conquerors of Israel, "I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity?" (Zechariah 1:15; compare 2:8; Micah 4:11-13; compare Isaiah 47:6) How could God talk about Israel as He does in Zechariah 2:8 considering how they were behaving at the time? What about us?

Zechariah 1:15:

ynla} rva} syNha}h' sy/Gh'AI [' 1 xeqoyla} I /dG: 1 x,qw0⁵

(*Biblia Hebraica*)

.h [r;l] Wrz[; hMh0f [M] yTipxq;

¹⁵ kai; ojrghn megalhn egw; ojrgezomai epi; ta; eqnh ta; sunepitqemena ajqf wñ egw; men wrgisqhn oj iga, aujtoi; de; sunepqento eij' kakav (*LXX - Septuagint*)

¹⁵ et ira magna ego irascor super gentes opulentas quia ego iratus sum parum ipsi vero adiuverunt in malum. (*Latin Vulgate*)

¹⁵ And with great wrath I am wroth against the nations who are at ease, For I was a little wroth, and they assisted—for evil. (*YLT*)

¹⁵ and I am wroth exceedingly with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little wroth, and they helped forward the affliction. (*DARBY*)

¹⁵ And I am very sore displeased with the nations [heathen] that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. (*KJV, ASV*)

¹⁵ For a while I was angry at the nations, but now I am furious, because they have made things worse for Jerusalem and are not the least bit concerned. (*CEV*)

¹⁵ And I am [very; extremely] exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. (*RSV, NRSV, ESV, NASB, NASB95*)

¹⁵ but I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity.” (*NIV*)

¹⁵ and I’m very angry with the nations who think they are at ease. I was only a little angry, but they made things worse. (*God’s Word*)

¹⁵ I am very angry with the heathen nations sitting around at ease, for I was only a little displeased with my people, but the nations afflicted them far beyond my intentions. (*The Living Bible*)

¹⁵ and I am exceedingly angry with the complacent nations; whereas I was but a little angry, they added to the harm. (*NAB*)

¹⁵ And I am very angry with the nations that feel so safe. I was only a little angry at them, but they made things worse.” (*NCV*)

¹⁵ but I am deeply angry with the nations now at ease; before, I was only mildly angry, but they contributed to the disaster. (*NJB*)

¹⁵ I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped—but with evil intent. (*NKJV*)

¹⁵ But I am very angry with the other nations that enjoy peace and security. I was only a little angry with my people, but the nations punished them far beyond my intentions. (*NLT*)

¹⁵ and I am very angry with those nations that are at ease; for I was only angry a little, but they overdid the punishment. (*Tanakh*)

¹⁵ and I am very angry with the nations that enjoy quiet and peace. For while I was holding back my anger against my people, those nations made the sufferings of my people worse. (*GNB*)

¹⁵And I feel great wrath against the nations which rest securely with whom I felt but little wrath although they fostered evil. (*Anchor*)

This verse (be sure to look at the context) seems to suggest that God’s anger was to be expressed against His own people in some form of punishment. So He used these other nations to carry out at least a portion of that punishment, even calling them His servants (Jeremiah 43:10). But when the punishment was being administered these other nations went beyond God’s plan and carried out their own vengeful goals. Does this suggest that God is not really fully in control? Did Nebuchadnezzar think that he was doing Yahweh’s will when he went down to Jerusalem and conquered it three times? Or did he believe that he was being empowered by his own gods? If that is the case, what is the relationship between God’s anger and man’s ambitions?

Zechariah 2:8 is an interesting verse with considerable variation in translation: (Compare Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalms 17:8)

.Hk/tB] hmhb] da; brne] M]ry] bve] t/zrP] rma] ezLh' r [Nh]Al a, rB]D Åruwl ae rma]ve
dioti olaptomeno" umwn wl' aptomeno" th" korh" tou ofqalmou' aijtou, (*LXX-Septuagint*)

quia haec dicit Dominus exercituum post gloriam misit me ad gentes quae spoliaverunt vos qui enim tetigerit vos tangit pupillam oculi eius (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*)

For he who is coming against you, Is coming against the daughter of His eye. (*Young's Literal*)

For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." (*Geneva, KJV, Darby, ASV, NKJ, RSV*)

"...for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye—" (*Leeser, NIV, NAB, NEB*)

"...he who touches you touches the apple or pupil of His eye." (*Amplified*)

"...whoever touches my people touches the apple of my eye." (*Clear Word*)

"...(for whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye):" (*Jerusalem*)

"...for he who harms you sticks his finger in Jehovah's eye!" (*TLB*)

"...Anyone who harms you, harms my most precious possession." (*The Living Translation*)

"...Anyone who strikes you strikes what is most precious to me." (*GNB*)

"...Whoever strikes you also strikes at my open eye." (*The Anchor Bible*)

God clearly is trying to portray a very special relationship between Himself and "His people". As we have seen, the time came when God had to allow them to go into captivity as a way of disciplining them, but their enemies didn't see it that way at all. The enemies felt that they had conquered Jerusalem and Judah by their own might and power and they brought more trouble and heartache on the Jews than God apparently felt was necessary. (Zechariah 1:15) Judah's enemies no doubt felt that their "gods" were more powerful than Judah's since they had managed to conquer His people. Will God ever find it necessary to discipline His people—or those who think they are His people—in our day?

3. In the judgment scene depicted in Zechariah 3:1-5, who are the main actors in this drama? Who is accusing? (compare Revelation 12:9,10) Who is defending? (1 John 2:1; Romans 8:26,27; Job 1:6; 2:1) What role is God the Father playing? (John 5:27) Who is the "angel of the Lord?" **If you could be present as your case is presented in the courts of heaven, with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit present, your guardian angel present, and the devil and his angels present, and after all had been said and your case was put to a vote, could you honestly vote for yourself?**

This is one of the clearest places in Scripture where the judgment scene is portrayed. Notice that it is Satan, "the Accuser of the Brethren," who is accusing Joshua, and "the LORD" is

defending him. The angels are observing and helping. For those who do not recognize the “great controversy” or even the existence of an actual being known as “Satan” this vision presents some problems.

There are many references in Scripture to the “judgment.” But there are very different ideas about when and where it takes place. It must take place before the “rewards” are given out and in most people’s eyes that means eternal life. If you believe that people go immediately to their eternal reward at the time of death, and that the “soul” is immortal, then the judgment, whatever that means must happen for each individual at or before the point of death. If, on the other hand, you believe that the “soul” or “person” is mortal, and that they sleep in the grave as suggested by Jesus (See John 11), then the judgment can take place any time before the final rewards are given out at the second or third coming of Christ.

Note some of the verses in Scripture that talk of the final judgment:

Deuteronomy 1:17 “Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.” (NIV)

Psalms 1:5 “Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” (NIV)

Psalms 9:7 “The LORD reigns forever; he has established his throne for judgment.” (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 3:17 “I thought in my heart, ‘God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.’” (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 11:9 “Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment.” (NIV)

Ecclesiastes 12:14 “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” (NIV)

Isaiah 66:16 “For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment upon all men, and many will be those slain by the LORD.” (NIV)

Jeremiah 25:31 “‘The tumult will resound to the ends of the earth, for the LORD will bring charges against the nations; he will bring judgment on all mankind and put the wicked to the sword,’” declares the LORD.” (NIV)

Daniel 7:22 “until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.” (NIV)

Matthew 10:15 “I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.” (NIV)

Matthew 11:22 “But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.” (NIV)

Matthew 11:24 "But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." (NIV)

Matthew 12:36 "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." (NIV)

Matthew 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here." (NIV)

Matthew 12:42 "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here." (NIV)

Luke 10:14 "But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you." (NIV)

Luke 11:31 "The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here." (NIV)

Luke 11:32 "The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here." (NIV)

John 5:22 "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, " (NIV)

John 5:28-30: ²⁸ "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. ³⁰ "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (NIV)

John 8:15 "You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one." (NIV)

John 8:26 "I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." (NIV)

John 9:39 "Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind." (NIV)

John 12:31 "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." (NIV)

John 16:8 "When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:" (NIV)

John 16:11 "and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned." (NIV)

Acts 24:25 "As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and **the judgment to come**, Felix was afraid and said, <That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." (NIV)

Romans 2:2 "Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth." (NIV)

Romans 2:3 "So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?" (NIV)

Romans 2:5 "But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed." (NIV)

Romans 5:16 "Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification." (NIV)

Romans 14:10 "You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." (NIV)

1 Corinthians 11:29 "For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." (NIV)

1 Corinthians 11:31 "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment." (NIV)

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (NIV)

2 Thessalonians 1:5 "All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering." (NIV)

1 Timothy 3:6 "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (NIV)

1 Timothy 5:12 "Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge." (NIV)

1 Timothy 5:24 "The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them." (NIV)

Hebrews 6:2 "Instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." (NIV)

Hebrews 9:27 "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment," (NIV)

Hebrews 10:27 "but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (NIV)

James 2:13 "because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!" (NIV)

- 1 Peter 4:17 "For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (NIV)
- 2 Peter 2:4 "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;" (NIV)
- 2 Peter 2:9 "If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment." (NIV)
- 2 Peter 3:7 "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." (NIV)
- 1 John 4:17 "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him." (NIV)
- Jude 1:6 "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day." (NIV)
- Revelation 14:7 "He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.'" (NIV)

From all of the above verses it should be clear that:

- 1) All of us will be judged by God some day. (Eccl. 3:17; 11:9; 12:13,14; Isaiah 66:16; Jeremiah 25:31; John 5:28,29; Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- 2) God's judgment against the wicked is carried out with fire and sword. (Isaiah 66:16; Jeremiah 25:31; Hebrews 10:27)
- 3) When the righteous are judged they will inherit the kingdom of God. (Daniel 7:22)
- 4) The dead will rise from their graves to be judged. (John 5:28-30; Hebrews 9:27)
- 5) When the judgment is complete the devil (the prince of this world) will be condemned and driven out. (John 12:31; 16:11)
- 6) The judgment is spoken of as still future. (Eccl. 12:13,14; 2 Peter 2:4,9; 3:7; Jude 1:6)
- 7) Sodom, Tyre, Sidon, the men of Nineveh, and the Queen of the South had apparently not been judged yet in the days of Jesus. (Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31)
- 8) Satan is the one who accuses us. (Zechariah 3:2; Revelation 12:10-12)
- 9) The dead are in waiting to be judged. If this is true, they surely cannot be already in heaven or hell which would suggest that they have already been judged. (1 Peter 4:17; 2 Peter 2:4,9; 3:7; John 11:11-15) 2 Peter 2:9 is an interesting passage. It could mean the wicked are being kept for the day of judgment for punishment, or kept in punishment while waiting for the day of judgment. How it is interpreted by different translators seems to be influenced by their personal views of hell!
- 10) The angels who sinned are awaiting their judgment. (2 Peter 2:4)

It is especially important to note that it is not the One sometimes pictured as the harsh “Judge-Father” that is accusing!

4. Why does God seem to conduct the business of His government in the open like this, apparently before the entire universe? Who are the only ones who do not seem to be aware of what is going on? Do we have similar scenes elsewhere in the Bible? (See Job 1 & 2; Revelation 12; Daniel 7:9,10) In order to accuse God as he did back in the beginning, Satan had to be a deceiver and a liar, but in order to accuse us does he have to be a deceiver? **If we were to continually keep these matters in mind, would we live the sinful lives that we are currently living?**

The primary purpose of the great controversy is to answer the questions and accusations that Satan has raised against God. And these answers must be given so decisively and convincingly that sin will never rise again. God did not just eliminate His opposition as He easily could have, nor does He try to solve the problem by exercising His sovereignty as an authoritarian dictator might in secret rooms and then demand that we accept His decision. God wants us to be convinced of the correctness of the answers. In order to accomplish this He must make all the evidence as public as possible. The whole universe is currently involved in reviewing all of this evidence, including God’s plans to bring some of us former rebels back into His kingdom! But as God reviews our cases the whole universe can actually see our behavior and evaluate God’s judgment of us. The whole book of Job is focused on the question of whether God is able to correctly judge human character. God said that Job was a “perfect and upright” man and that Job could be trusted not to let God down no matter what the Devil did to him. The Devil was sure that he could break Job down, and at times it seemed that he was succeeding. But in the end, God was able to say—to the amazement of Job’s friends—“Job has said of me what is right!” (See Job 42:7,8)

But now look at our cases. The Bible makes it very clear that we are all sinners. (1 Kings 8:46; 2 Chronicles 6:36; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23) We shouldn’t have any trouble believing that! But if a criminal is in court and being tried for his life, should he slip out of the courtroom and continue publicly committing the crimes for which he is on trial!? Fortunately, God doesn’t judge us on our record! God does His judging based on our willingness to learn and change. He is looking for a “new heart and a right spirit.” (Psalms 51:10; Jeremiah 31:33,34; John 3:3-8) He recognizes that hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil may make change very difficult for us, but He is able to judge by reading the true intents and secret thoughts of our minds whether or not we are rebels. If we are so bound to our sins that we cannot or are not willing to give them up then He must turn away from us in loving disappointment! What a sad thing to have happen!

5. What makes a person savable? On what basis does God finally admit some to the kingdom and reject others? What is the ultimately crucial information about us that the universe (even our guardian angels) must see in order to feel it would be safe to live next door to us forever without keeping their golden doors locked all the time? If Jesus were to arise and say, “It’s true! This person is just exactly as Satan has described him, and he hasn’t really changed, but I have decided to forgive him,” would that be enough to satisfy the angels and our future neighbors? Or do the angels want to know that we have new hearts and right spirits? (compare Psalms 51:10; John 3:3-8)

Ultimately, the only thing that really matters is whether we are safe to live next door to for eternity. For that to be true, we need to be willing to listen and learn and change. We need to be absolutely convinced that the only safe path is to do what is right because it is right. We need to understand that every form of sin and evil has deadly consequences because it puts us out of harmony with the loving universe that God has created. He refuses (aren't you glad He does) to fill heaven full of unchanged cheats, liars, and murderers, etc. Furthermore, He refuses to operate jails or to have a huge police force to keep a constant eye on everyone! If you would like to live in a place that doesn't need all those things, you must agree to be an eternally safe neighbor.

It should be obvious that just pardoning or forgiving a cheat, liar or murderer doesn't make him safe to live next door to!

6. In light of the fact that the Investigative (or Pre-Advent) Judgment is going on at the present time is there any reason that you can think of that really makes sense for committing sin? Is there any sin that makes things better or more pleasant for a person, even here on this earth?

This is a thought question! Shouldn't we be absolutely convinced that the answer is a resounding no! So why do we keep on sinning?

7. Why should we be worried about the heavenly records? When choosing a neighbor to live next door to for eternity, would it be more important to know the complete details of his past life, or that he had a "new heart and a right spirit" and was humbly willing to listen and learn? The only ones who are emphasizing the records are Satan and legalists! How could we be comfortable living forever with God and our guardian angels, realizing that they know everything that we have ever done? **Even if we are going to be lost, do we have any reason to be afraid of God?** How did Jesus treat Judas up to the very end? (John 13:1-30) Isn't it easier in light of this to understand why Romans 1:29 includes "gossips" with the worst of sinners—people who are unsavable? Would God ever make someone uncomfortable by discussing some of his former sins in public?

Only legalists are worried about the records in heaven. God assures us that if we work with Him and allow Him to give us "new hearts and right spirits" then He will ignore the record books. It is not that He doesn't know, or that He forgets, or that Someone hides our sins by "covering them with His righteousness." The truth is that when a child comes home, no matter what he has done, if the parent really loves that child, all he wants to know is that he is home to stay and that he has chosen to be a new person. Fortunately for those of us who want to live with Him forever, God is fully able to understand the secret motives and thoughts of the mind (heart) and He knows who is being completely honest in their statements and who is not.

Repeatedly the Bible suggests that God will treat our sins **as if** they had never happened:

Jeremiah 31:34: "I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs." (GNB)

(See also Hebrews 10:17)

God would never embarrass one of His children by discussing their sins before the others! Their sins simply do not matter any more. The question is not what they did in the past, but what kind of lives they are living now and will live in the future.

8. Do we really need an intercessor? (John 16:25-27) Do we need an intercessor to plead with the Father for us? Do we need an intercessor to protect us from the accusations of the Adversary? Was there any type of intercessor between God and the disciples for those three and a half years? How did this whole system get started? (Exodus 20:18,19) Was it necessary for anyone to stand between God and His friend Moses on Mt. Sinai? Do you think God the Father is jealous when people, even small children act as if they are more comfortable with the Son? Or is He willing to wait?

Yes! We do need an Intercessor-Mediator-Intervener! But it is certainly not for the purpose of convincing the Father to accept us! Never! God loves us Himself. All Members of the Godhead are on our side. (See John 3:16, 16:25-27; Romans 8:14-17,26-39) Jesus lived with the disciples for those three and one-half years and they never needed someone to speak to Him on their behalf. (Even though James and John thought that maybe if they asked their mother to intercede for them it might give them some advantage in the kingdom they thought was coming! See Matthew 19:20-23; Mark 10:35-40) None of the great prophets of the Old Testament needed anyone to stand between them and their God.

God the Father is more than willing to wait while we grow up enough to understand the truth. He knows that those who are really determined to be on His side will come to understand that there is absolutely nothing to be afraid of, even if they were to be lost.

9. Who is able to read the human heart? Can angels? Or only God?

Only God can understand and read the secrets of our minds and hearts. Nothing is hidden from Him. (See Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Hebrews 4:13) We call this God's omniscience.

10. What is God trying to say to us in Zechariah 4:6—"Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord Almighty?" How does the Spirit work? Could God win the great controversy with might and power? Does He finally win because He has more power than Satan? Doesn't Satan admit God has more power? (James 2:19) If this was all that needed to be demonstrated, what has God been waiting for? Was God's might and power able to keep the loyalty of God's number one creature—Lucifer? How many were won by God's show of might and power at the time of the flood? At Sodom and Gomorrah? At Sinai? What were His "friends" doing a few days after "the Sinai experience"? (Exodus 32) When Jesus was here on this earth did He demonstrate a lot of "might and power?" Jesus sometimes worked miracles and fed the crowds but as soon as He perceived that they were following Him for this reason, what did He do? (John 6:25-69)

The work of the Holy Spirit is almost always done quietly behind the scenes. He has worked with humans since the creation of this earth to: 1) keep them alive by sustaining their very physiology; 2) influence them for God in the great controversy (this is called "wooing"); 3) convince them to do what is right and publically acknowledge their commitment to God; 4) give them special gifts to be used for ministry within and outside the church to attract others.

God is all-powerful or omnipotent as we say. If He could accomplish what He wants to accomplish by the use of power, it is a cruel trick He is playing on us not to do so. If that were the

case then all the suffering and misery in this world could be directly attributed to God because He hasn't stepped in to do what He is able to do!

It has been demonstrated repeatedly in Scripture that when God uses His power to get people's attention, this is what happens: 1) Nobody is ever really convinced of the truth about God by these demonstrations of power; 2) The attention lasts only a very short period of time; 3) Usually during that time the humans that are involved are scared to death! This is not what God wants! If all God had to do was scare us into being good, He could do that almost instantly. But if He were to use this method, He would have to keep doing it repeatedly throughout eternity, and the history of events in the Bible have shown very clearly that the response is very short-lived.

So God chooses to work quietly behind the scenes, trying to convince as many of us as possible that we should "do what is right because it is right." Then God doesn't have to do anything to keep us in line! The main work of the Holy Spirit down through the ages has been the inspiring of some of our fellow humans to produce the Bible. The evidence is spread out before our eyes if we can read it and are willing to study it. Then the Holy Spirit works with our spirits to lead us in the direction that we should go.

So many groups have suggested that if they could just have a little more "power" or "miracle" or some "supernatural manifestation" they would be able to influence many more people. One TV evangelist claims that he has seen a number of resurrections from the dead. He further claims that when He is able to capture one of these on TV he will win the world! If God could really convince people that easily He would have done so long ago!

11. What does Zechariah 6:15 imply about the nature of all these prophecies?

"...This will all happen *if* you fully obey the commands of the LORD your God." (*GNB*)

"...But none of this will happen unless you carefully obey the commandments of the Lord your God. *The Living Bible*

Many of the prophecies in Zechariah may seem impossible of fulfillment now. What about Zechariah 8:11-13,23; 12:6,9? These prophecies must be among those that we consider conditional. If they had fulfilled their side of the bargain God would have done His.

12. How could Jerusalem be called "the faithful city" (*RSV, GNB*) or "the city of truth" (*NIV*) in Zechariah 8:3,8? When did (will) this happen?

These two verses seem to be a part of a prophecy that was conditional. The only other explanation that seems plausible is that this applies to the New Jerusalem that is yet to come. Zechariah 8:1-8 describe the ideal condition that God (Yahweh) wishes He could have with these descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. Once again the whole scene describes God's plans if they will follow His will. We know however that they were on the brink of returning fully to the sins of their ancestors.

13. Who are the people and what is the time period being referred to in Zechariah 8:4—"men and women of ripe old age...each with cane in hand because of his age" and "boys and girls playing in the streets?" If this refers to heaven as we often suggest, why are these people getting old? How can anyone get old in the New Jerusalem? Will some remain children forever? If this

prophecy was not fulfilled in ancient times, does that mean it will never be fulfilled? Compare this to the statements in Isaiah 11:6-9, 35:1-10, and 65:17-25?

This verse needs to be contrasted with the terrible destruction described in Lamentations 2:21. The picture in Lamentations is that of complete destruction of the society. By contrast, God now promises the complete re-population of the society if they will obey Him. It was God's intention to do all of this for them in ancient times, if they would just follow His guidance. Instead, they have continued to have strife and bloodshed in Jerusalem until today.

This is not a direct prediction of things to be in the New Jerusalem. Only in the sense that family units will be complete once again, and everybody will be happily engaged in their favorite activities is this prophecy fulfilled in the New Jerusalem. There will never be anyone getting old, or any others who fail to grow up. This is pictured in terms that were familiar and very pleasant to the Jewish mind. The elderly would not need to worry about war and premature death. It would be forever safe even for small children to play in the streets. This is what should have been the condition of things in the former Jerusalem if the people had followed God's plan for them.

Wherever Yahweh is completely in charge and everyone lives in harmony there is perfect peace. This is the ultimate goal for God's universe. The blessings of long life and many children were and are considered by many in the Near East to be the ultimate blessings. There will not be "retirement centers" and no dangerous vehicles on the roads. Everyone of whatever age will live comfortably and happily together. No one would suffer the punishment of an early death for their "sins".

Some believe that these verses predict of time in the future when Christ will reign on this earth known as the millennial age. Notice this interesting comment from *The Believer's Study Bible*:

"Verses 4 through 8 clearly depict millennial blessings. This is a classic pivotal text regarding the whole question of the millennial era. There has never been a day when the Jews were re-gathered from the whole earth and restored in righteousness and truth. Either Zechariah was mistaken, an untenable proposition, or else these blessings are yet future and revolve around the reign of the Messiah in His earthly kingdom at the conclusion of the age." (*Believer's Study Bible*)

14. At what time in history do you think the prophecy of Zechariah 8:20-23 (compare Zech.14:16-20; Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-3; Malachi 1:5) was fulfilled or will be fulfilled? What time period is being referred to in Zechariah 14:4?

See #11 above. Zechariah 8:20-23 has clearly not taken place in any recorded history that we are aware of. Many people have suggested that this is a prophecy of future events and this may be correlated with Romans 11:25-27. Certainly it would be an ideal situation. Has our church had people come to any of us and say that they have heard that God is with us and blessing us? This would be particularly wonderful if it resulted from our speaking the truth about God! Is your church known for what it says about God?

Zechariah 14:4 is recognized by many as a prophecy that could perhaps have taken place in the past if the people of Jerusalem had proved faithful to the Lord, but it now will apply at least in part to the descent of the New Jerusalem at the third coming of Christ.

15. Is Zechariah 9:9 clearly a Messianic prophecy?

This is the kind of prophecy all of the Jews were hoping to be a part of. They were delighted when Jesus agreed to ride on the donkey's colt into the city of Jerusalem and many of them no doubt felt that the time of blessing for the Jews had finally come! Little did they realize that a few

days later their “King” would be dead, hanging on a cross. Both Matthew 21:4-7, and John 12:14,15 recognize this as a prophecy that was fulfilled in the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ.

16. What is implied about the responsibility of leadership in Zechariah 10:2-5?

There is a clear contrast between the useless and dangerous leadership of the heathen rulers and God’s leadership. Under God’s guidance the Jews were to be victorious in every battle.

17. Why are most of these messianic prophecies so mixed up with other equally impressive prophecies which apparently were never fulfilled? Do you think you could have written a paper back in Zechariah’s day and clearly picked out the prophecies that would refer to the Messiah to come? Why did the Jews seem to fail to put most of these verses together before they actually were fulfilled? How does this fit with John’s statements in John 13:19; 14:29?

It is not God’s purpose in giving us prophecy to make it possible for us to write the newspaper in advance! The purpose of prophecy is stated quite clearly in John 13:19 and 14:29. It is so that when the prophecies come to pass we will recognize that God was not caught by surprise! The purpose of the prophecies in other words is to build trust in God’s ability to foresee the future and thus to care for us no matter what may come. To the people who were carefully studying their Bibles with an open mind like Simeon and Anna (see Luke 2:25-38) the prophecies were fulfilled in a recognizable way. To the many others in the temple on the day when Jesus was dedicated He was just another child.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament that have never apparently been fulfilled. Many of these were no doubt conditional prophecies and the conditions were not met. There are others that may have been fulfilled in ancient times in a way and under conditions that we do not recognize today. There are some prophecies given even in the Old Testament that seem clearly in our day to apply to events that are still future. (See Zechariah 14:4,5)

One of the things that we should learn from taking this approach to Scripture is that we will never have a complete answer for ever question that could be raised. But we have more than enough evidence for the trustworthiness of God and so we can be comfortable even with some questions still hanging without clear answers.

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