

**1** *In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo the prophet:*

"This is Haggai's time period," Curious noticed. "The two prophets must have known one another—assuming Zechariah was also in Jerusalem or thereabouts."

Why two prophets at the same time?

"I'm curious to see how they differ. I notice a similarity in their introductions."

**2** *"Yahweh was sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore tell them, Thus says Yahweh of hosts: Return to me, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will return to you, says Yahweh of hosts."*

"Haggai was all about the temple," said Curious. "Zechariah apparently was given a broader point of view."

I think you mean Haggai had a practical, down-to-earth focus.

"But Haggai covered other matters too."

**4** *"Do not be like your fathers to whom the former prophets cried: 'Yahweh of hosts says, Repent of your evil ways and turn from your evil doings,' but they did not hear nor heed me, says Yahweh.*

*Now your fathers—where are they?*

*And the prophets—did they live forever?*

*But my words and my statutes, which I gave to my servants the prophets—*

*did they not make an impression on your fathers?*

*Yes, they finally repented, saying,*

*'It all came about just as Yahweh of hosts warned us it would;*

*he dealt with us according to our ways."*

"I continue to marvel at the patience God has with these people," said Curious.

Remember the promises, Curious, most notably the promise made to king David wherein God committed to a long-range plan which no human failing can derail. That by itself explains his patience.

**7** *On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month (the month Shebat) in the second year of Darius, the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo the prophet:*

*In the night I saw and beheld a man mounted on a red horse standing by myrtle trees down at the bottom of a ravine, and behind him were riders on red, sorrel, and white horses.*

"O my lord, what are these?" I inquired.

The angel who talked with me replied, "I will show you what they are."

Then he (the one standing near the myrtle trees) said, "These are they whom Yahweh sends out to roam the earth."

"We have gone to and fro throughout the earth," was the answer they gave the angel of Yahweh who stood near the myrtle trees, "and here is our report: all is still, and all is at rest."

There's a pretty puzzle for you, Curious.

"Ho! A prophet of visions!"

Yes, and curiosity such as yours was made for a book like this.

"Horses mean war," Curious began, as if he were an authority on the subject. "Red ones do, anyway. That's obvious because no real horse is absolutely red unless it's totally spattered with blood. So the colors have to be symbols. White would be peace. The other one—that's a horse of a different color."

You can't get by with that, Curious. The sorrel horse is the key you'll need later.

"Something between war and peace."

How about war within peace?

"Like warring factions within the empire after it has conquered the world—this dirty-looking horse means dirty politics."

All right, Mr. Leap-In-The-Dark. Now why are they down in a ravine where briars normally grow?

"These are agents of the Most-High power. Zechariah is getting a peek at them. It's Like a high-level meeting in a basement at a secret location behind closed doors."

Then what is the significance of the myrtle trees?

**"Wasn't there something in Isaiah about the myrtle tree? ... Here it is in chapter 55:**

*Instead of the brier, the myrtle tree will come up; it will be a sign for Yahweh, an everlasting sign that will never end.*

**So that's clear enough: Yahweh has planted himself in the land, never to abandon it—or at least not permanently."**

By the way, are they all angels? Zechariah said he saw a man.

**"This 'planting himself in the land' may explain the man who is also an angel. He may actually represent Yahweh."**

**12** *Then the angel of Yahweh said, "O Yahweh of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against which you have maintained your anger these seventy years?"*

How does this conform with the report of peace and rest that appeared in the previous verse, Curious?

**"The angel of Yahweh—this must be his incarnation, speaking as he does—is repeating Habakkuk's complaint!"**

*Hab 1:13: Since you are of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look upon perverseness, why do you look upon those who deal treacherously and hold your peace?*

That was earlier. Habakkuk was concerned about Assyria not being punished yet. Hadn't Cyrus and Darius been agents of Yahweh's mercy? That's why Zechariah and the rest of them were back in the land, trying to get the temple rebuilt.

(Curious hurried on, expecting to find confirmation of his hunch that the complaint here is similar; viz. nations not being punished for their religion and conduct that was worse than that of Israel.)

**13** *Yahweh answered the angel who talked with me: he answered with good words, comforting words. And the angel instructed me to cry out and say, "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great zeal,*

*and I am sorely displeased with the nations that are at ease.*

*For I was but a little displeased, and they overextended the affliction.*

*Therefore Yahweh says,*

*I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies,*

*and my house will be built in it, says Yahweh of hosts:*

*a line will be stretched forth over Jerusalem.*

*Cry out once again and say, Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*my cities will yet overflow with prosperity,*

*and Yahweh will yet comfort Zion.*

*He still chooses Jerusalem!"*

(Clearly Yahweh planned to bless Jerusalem and in that manner settle the balance. But Curious was not convinced that the angel's question had been fully answered, and furthermore he expected to find resolution of the horse colors. Thus he read on without comment.)

**18** *When I lifted up my eyes I saw and beheld four horns, and I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these?"*

*"These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem," he answered.*

*Then Yahweh showed me four carpenters.*

*"What have these come to do?" I asked.*

*"Those horns scattered Judah such that no man could lift up his head. Now these shake them, in order to cast down the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it."*

**"There it is!"** Curious said triumphantly. **"As soon as the horn rises up, the carpenters go to work remodeling and undermining the emperor's regime, and it becomes too weak to withstand the challenge of another rising empire."**

Just curious: what does that have to do with the horses?

**"The sorrel horse stealthily raises up the carpenters, the red horse builds up the next horn for war, and the white horse sustains peace for a certain time while the carpenters are doing their work. So this answers the question voiced by the angel."**

In other words, Zechariah is being told that the days of all the empires are numbered.

**"I haven't forgotten everything I read in Daniel,"** Curious grunted.

But have you forgotten what Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied about Babylon?

**"After reading the Prophets, one must wonder about certain predictions: like when did the utter destruction of Babylon take place."**

Does that mean the angel's question was *not* answered in a satisfying way?

**"I don't remember anything in Daniel about it. With all the detail about the rise and fall of empires there was no mention of the head of gold being reduced to a wasteland."**

Prophecies are for appointed times.

**"I guess we will have to wait for it."**

**2** *And I lifted up my eyes and saw and beheld a man with a measuring line in his hand. "Where are you going?" I asked him.*

*"To measure Jerusalem," he answered "—to see what is the breadth and length of it."*

**"This means the angel of Yahweh wants Zechariah to focus on the future of Jerusalem, not Babylon,"** Curious surmised.

Why is it being measured?

**"I love these symbols. What follows will be a revelation of what it will become, not simply its physical dimensions—things like length of time and size of population."**

**3** *And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said to him,*

*"Run, speak to this young man, and tell him, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited as are villages without walls because of the great number of men and cattle therein. For I, says Yahweh, will be to her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.'"*

(I think Curious remembered the physical evidence of God during the time of Moses: fire in the bush, the pillar of fire leading them in the wilderness, and later the glow in the tabernacle.)

**"The wall of fire means Yahweh is blessing and will protect this place,"** Curious remarked. **"That's in addition to being the glory in the temple."**

(Obviously, greater Jerusalem was seen to spread out beyond the walls, which Curious did not find so interesting because it's become that way already.)

**6** *Ho, ho, flee from the land of the north, says Yahweh; for it is I who spread you like the four winds of heaven. Ho, Zion, escape!—you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon. For Yahweh of hosts sends for riches from the nations who spoiled the apple of his eye.*

**"There's the full answer to the angel's question,"** said Curious.

Well, do you really think there's any equivalence between that and Jerusalem being leveled by Nebuchadnezzar?

**"Still, this must be an interim stage if Jeremiah really saw the future of Babylon."**

Have we seen any evidence that those returning from Babylon brought back plunder like what they were able to take when Israel escaped Egypt?

**"In fact, it sounds like this must be in the future too."**

What do you make of "the apple of his eye"?

**"Jerusalem, of all the cities in the world, was the one that caught his eye,"** said Curious. **"Like when a certain apple catches my eye, I reach for it through the leaves and branches and ignore other apples which may actually be larger."**

**9** *"For, behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they will become spoils to you who served them, and you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent you. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of you, says Yahweh."*

"I can't help it," said Curious. "I see apples falling when Yahweh shakes the tree. They land on the ground and Israel goes around picking up and consuming those cities, singing all the while."

**11** *"And many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day and will be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you. And Yahweh will inherit Judah as his portion of holy ground and will establish Jerusalem again."*

"That wording is curious," said Curious. "'Yahweh has sent me to you.' Sent himself? ... Apparently. Or is this the Son like in the second Psalm?"

**13** *Be silent before Yahweh, all flesh, for he arouses from his holy habitation.*

"Who said that?" Curious wondered. "It doesn't sound like the prophet's voice to me." Who else could it be?

"I get the sense that it goes with the previous 'sent me.'"

Why "be silent all flesh?"

"Something big is coming up."

**3** *And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh and Satan standing at Joshua's right hand ready to accuse him.*

Yahweh said to Satan, "Yahweh rebukes you, O Satan; yes, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebukes you, for is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

"Oh, I love the way Yahweh expresses himself," said Curious. "What a poet God is! He says in one short phrase what Zachariah would spend twenty words on and not say it as well."

For those of us who are not so poetically inclined, tell us why pulling a burning stick out of a fire is a rebuke to Satan.

"How elegant a way to say that it should have been obvious that he had a purpose for Jerusalem when he had them begin to rebuild the temple."

**3** *Now Joshua's garments as he stood before the angel were filthy. And he said to those standing before him, "Take those filthy garments off him." And to him he said, "See, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with rich apparel."*

And I said, "Let them set a clean turban on his head too." So they set a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments while the angel of Yahweh stood by.

"Maybe that was the root of their problem."

It certainly doesn't speak well of what the priesthood had become.

"So now that his past corruption is forgiven, what about the future? It's still the same man. Is he going to conquer sin in the land like Joshua of old attempted to do?"

**6** *And the angel of Yahweh charged Joshua:*

*"Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*If you walk in my ways  
and keep my requirements,  
then you will rule over my temple  
and keep my courtyards;  
and I will give you access  
to these standing here."*

"So there's hope for a clean start. But I wonder if that's realistic," said Curious.

**8** *"Hear now, O Joshua high priest and your fellows who sit before you: you men are but a sign.*

*Behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch."*

"Okay, there's the real deal," said Curious. Yes, now what are you thinking?

"Joshua and his buddies are placeholders for the Messiah who will be a priest as well as a king."

I suppose that would be a relief to them.

"But what incentive is that? Will their faithfulness even matter?"

**9** *"Notice the stone which I am setting before Joshua:*

*seven eyes are on it,  
and I will write an engraving on it,  
says Yahweh of hosts."*

**"So that's how their performance gets recorded."**

Now, Curious, think. I thought you liked symbols.

**"I mean, yes, their performance is remembered as if it were carved in stone."**

Seven eyes: isn't that significant?

**"Nothing is hid from the Spirit of God,"** declared Curious.

**9b** *"I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."*

*And in that day, says Yahweh of hosts,*

*every man will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree."*

**"Thanks to the Branch, no doubt,"** said Curious.

Are there no symbols in that?

**"I could read more into it,"** said Curious.

**"The vine and fig tree both could symbolize Israel. So in that day there will be peace with neighboring nations."**

**4** *And the angel who had talked with me came again and woke me up, just as a man is awakened out of his sleep.*

*He said, "What do you see?"*

*"What I see is a lampstand made of gold with its bowl on top. Seven lamps are on it, and a pipe goes to each lamp from the bowl on top. And two olive trees are by it, one on the right side of the bowl, the other on the left side."*

**"That rig would be perfect for the tabernacle where they had to use pure olive oil and keep the lamps burning continually,"** said Curious. **"In fact, I seem to remember that there were seven lamps, and the stand was an elaborate thing made of hammered gold according to the pattern Yahweh had given to Moses."**

That's good, Curious. But what does it mean?

**"What it has to do with the present situation is a puzzle, though. The thing that comes to mind is the oil anointing that David got when it said the Spirit of Yahweh came mightily upon David from that day forward."**

Why is the Spirit of Yahweh relevant?

**"That brings one possibility to mind,"** said Curious. **"David gave Solomon the plans for the first temple, so I assume the Spirit designed it, essentially."**

Who was the main leader in building this replacement temple?

**"Zerubbabel is the main guy running this project, as I remember."**

He certainly had many things to be concerned about.

**"Making the lampstand to symbolize the presence of the Spirit probably wasn't on his mind at that point. Apparently, they still needed to get out and quarry stones, which required might and manpower."**

**4** *I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"*

*"Do you not know what these are?"* he said.

*I said, "No, my lord."*

*He answered me, saying,*

**"This is the word of Yahweh to Zerubbabel, saying,**

**'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says Yahweh of hosts.**

*Is it a great mountain?*

*Zerubbabel will make it a plain!*

*He will bring forth the stone, shouting, Grace! Grace!"*

**"Gosh, that's beautiful! That's the stone of the quarry which the builders rejected, like in Psalm 118 where it was Yahweh's doing!"**

**8** *In Addition, the word of Yahweh came to me, saying:*

*"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it.*

*Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you.*

*For who despises the day of small things?*

*These seven will rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel—*

*they are the eyes of Yahweh that run to and fro through the whole earth."*

(Curious sat in silence for a good while. I think too many things assaulted his curiosity simultaneously, and he knew not where to begin to get his head around them.)

**"Zechariah put his reputation on the line in that one,"** he said finally.

Indeed. Would he say he risked his neck?

**"I would say he was very confident that he knew Yahweh's voice."**

Curious paused again. Then suddenly he got it:

**"Yahweh is saying, 'Don't minimize small beginnings; I don't, and I've seen everything.'"**

He likes to see someone step out and take the Spirit's leadership to accomplish the will of God.

**"The seven Spirits are like the eyes of God, which confirms the eyes on the stone: before the structure was even begun Yahweh saw the cornerstone being set."**

But something about that comprehensive analysis was bothering Curious.

**"Those eyes on the spirit-wheels that Ezekiel saw: there were more than seven. Why would the eyes of God's Spirit be limited to seven?"**

Could it be a symbol, Curious?

**"Wasn't there something in Job ... Here it is: He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven no evil will touch you. When I saw that, I took it to mean not limited to seven."**

What are you saying, Curious? What does "seven" mean in that case?

**"Seven is a lucky number."**

Okay. What makes it lucky?

**"Seven days in a week, and if you make it through a week you're lucky."**

Yes, and you're ready to start another week. How does that apply to God's eyes?

**"Seven could mean not seven but more than seven—you never know with luck."**

Stick to the subject, Curious, if you can.

**"Seven eyes could mean seventy times seven. Or—I don't know—I think as many as God wants there to be. And I like that because I don't have to decide for him."**

Sometimes I think you've worn out your curiosity. Just keep reading.

**11 Then I asked him, "What are the two olive trees on the right and left sides of the lampstand?" Also I asked, "What are the two olive branches beside the two golden spouts that pipe the golden oil out?"**

**"Do you not know what these are?"** he asked me.

**"No, my lord,"** I said.

**"These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth,"** he said.

**"That would be the priest and the king,"** said Curious.

Let's not be so hasty.

**"Well, it is curious that they're so integral with the lampstand."**

Can you tell which is which?

**"The priest replenishes the oil, so he would be the olive branch. And the olive tree represents the nation, so that would be the king."**

Are you sleepy, Curious? Where is the duality in your definition?

**"Or maybe I can't tell which is which. It was already said that the Branch was the king. It looks like these anointed ones are both king and priest."**

Hold onto that thought, Curious.

**5 Then I lifted up my eyes again and saw and beheld a flying scroll.**

**And he said to me, "What do you see?"**

**"I see a flying scroll,"** I answered. **"The length of it is thirty feet and the breadth is fifteen feet."**

(Curious didn't seem to be immediately challenged by this. He took "flying" to mean it was suspended above the ground as a scroll unrolled becomes a sheet.)

**"How did Zechariah know its size?"** Curious wondered.

Maybe he measured its shadow on the ground.

**"It doesn't say he measured it or even that those numbers were estimates."**

Remember the context.

"If it has something to do with the temple, like the previous one did, what would it be?"

Perhaps something that could fly.

"I remember the wingspans of those cherubim in Solomon's temple were fifteen feet, and the two of them wingtip-to-wingtip reached thirty feet."

What were the cherubim there to guard?

"They stood on that box they called the ark which held the two tablets of the law."

So the scroll could represent the law?

"I really don't quite get it, though," said Curious. "A sheet that big would have way more written on it than the ten commandments."

*3 Then he said to me, "This is the curse that goes forth over the face of the whole land. On one side, according to what is on it, everyone who steals will be cut off; and on the other side according to what is on it, everyone who swears will be cut off."*

"So the names of lawbreakers are written on the scroll," Curious stated.

Just those two laws out of ten?

"I wonder why those two were singled out. It must be to put down a particular plague. ... It means 'swears falsely,' no doubt. ... Sounds like stealing from God."

*4 "I will cause it to go forth," says Yahweh of hosts,*

*"and it will enter into the house of the thief*

*and into the house of him who swears falsely by my name,*

*and it will remain in the midst of his house*

*and will consume it, including the timber and the stones."*

"That is quite remarkable," said Curious.

I remember when you would have said it was curious. Now you say "remarkable." Has your curiosity lost its edge?

"To me it says both thieves and those who make insincere promises are going to be purged from the nation. I can't help it: all that comes to mind is dishonest politicians, but they're the tip of the iceberg."

Do you think that's realistic?

"I doubt that this has ever happened anywhere. It must be a prophecy about the future."

Remember the dual priest-king? And the Branch here and in Isaiah?

"Someone anointed to be both priest and king could be future too," said Curious.

*5 Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said, "Now lift up your eyes and see what this is that goes forth."*

"What is it?" I said.

*And he answered, "This is a measuring basket with the iniquity of all the land loaded into it."*

*And when the lead cover was lifted it revealed a woman in the basket.*

*And he said, "This is Wickedness," and he pushed her down into the basket and dropped the lead cover over it.*

"That I believe!" exclaimed Curious. "If wickedness is ever purged from the earth, it will be a miracle like that."

*9 Then I looked up and saw two women with wings like the wings of a stork, and the air stirred by their wings was like wind, and they lifted the basket up in the air.*

"Just like a helicopter," said Curious, shaking his head.

*10 Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they taking the basket?"*

*"To build her a house in the land of Shinar," he said, "and when it is prepared, she will be set there in her own place."*

"This has to be important," said Curious.

(He recognized here the origin of the stork-delivers-baby story, but it astounded him that anyone would associate a baby with wickedness so powerful that it had to be dealt with in this extraordinary manner.)

"There's something hiding in this picture," Curious mused. "I have a hunch where that house of wickedness was built originally, and that might be the context."

(He remembered the first time he encountered the geographical name Shinar, early in Genesis, where it spoke of Nimrod: *The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.*

Daniel, describing Nebuchadnezzar's raid on Jerusalem, had written, *The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand with part of the vessels of the house of God, and he carried them into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god.)*

**"I take it that 'the land of Shinar' is another name for greater Babylon,"** Curious said.

(No doubt he remembered he had seen Shinar in Isaiah too, and found this: *It will come to pass in that day that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the coast-lands.)*

**"If this is future, which it has to be, then people will be living in Babylon at that time."**

(We see by his next comment that he was quick to put the two pieces together: Babylon will rise again ("when it is prepared") and in it there will be a special place for wickedness.)

**"That's frightening,"** said Curious. **"If the wickedness in high places is to be concentrated in one place, that spells the end of liberty as we know it."**

He considered whether the stork-women might be simply symbols or if actual angels were intended:

**"I never saw where angels really needed wings before, but I don't remember them involved in heavy lifting, either. The cherubim are pictured with wings, though, and Isaiah saw seraphim hovering above the throne of God. Well, yes there is that chariot in Ezekiel."**

(As he puzzled this out and tried to get his head around it, he realized that this removal of wickedness could be realized in a physical event conducted by angels even though the basket and the woman in it were symbols.)

**"I would like to believe that,"** he said.

Are you avoiding the interpretation of the woman in the basket, Curious?

**"There were prominent wicked women—Jezebel and Athaliah come to mind—but many more wicked men."**

I thought you decided this is future.

**"More and more there are women in public life whom I would say are wicked."**

Wickedness in high places. But you decided the woman was a symbol.

**"I wonder if the idea of witches flying came from this,"** said Curious.

Let's get back to the symbol idea, Curious. You've observed personification before.

**"Cities are female,"** said Curious. **"I wonder .... No, this woman is wickedness, not a city or a country. But she might be a measure of the wickedness in Israel being exported to Babylon. It would go along with the scroll vision in that case."**

If this is future, then what about Babylon?

**"It's pretty specific,"** said Curious. **"Babylon could be symbolic, but Shinar is geographical."**

Isn't that a big problem?

**"If all these prophets speak for God, Babylon's story isn't finished yet."**

**6** *And again I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and beheld four chariots coming out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of bronze.*

**"Those are no earthly mountains. So I don't expect that the chariots are either."**

Both could be symbolic.

**"The bronze could be according to the metals in Nebuchadnezzar's dream—or Greece."**

That's pure speculation at this point.

**2** *The first chariot had red horses, the second black horses, the third white horses, and the fourth spotted horses—all of them strong steeds.*

**"Those horse colors again ... but this time, with the chariots and the strong horses. It forebodes action, and the black ones seem to mean death."**



**4** *Then I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?"*

*The angel answered, "These are four spirits of heaven going forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth—the black horses going to the north, the white going after them, and the spotted going toward the south. These strong ones were eager to go upon the earth, and he said, 'Go upon earth.' So they went to and fro upon the earth."*

**"Well, it looks like death and peace in the north,"** said Curious.

**8** *Then he called me and said, "Behold, those going to the north have quieted my spirit in the north country."*

**"That's the satisfaction of what Yahweh said at the beginning: 'I am sorely displeased with the nations that are at ease.' So Babylon is taken over by Persia."**

Still, you haven't explained the bronze mountains.

**"There's the clue!"** said Curious. **"Going forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth' or metaphorically going forth from the temple of Yahweh which had those two bronze pillars."**

Then what about the spotted horses going to the south?

**"The south would be Egypt. The spotted horses would mean an inconclusive outcome of the campaign."**

So does that complete the concern that was raised in the first chapter?

**"It looks like Zechariah and his remnant of Israel are set for a period of peace to allow them to finish the temple,"** said Curious.

**9** *And the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, "Take captivity earnings from some who have returned from Babylon, in particular, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah; and the same day go to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah, taking the silver and the gold, and make crowns. Set them on the head of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and say to him, Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*Behold, the man whose name is the Branch.*

*From his place he will branch out, and he will rebuild the temple of Yahweh.*

*Yes, he will build the temple of Yahweh,*

*and he will have the glory and will sit and rule on his throne.*

*He will be a priest-king upon his throne,*

*and his counsel will be in accord with both offices.*

*"For now the crowns will be for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of Yahweh. From far off in the future they will come and build the temple of Yahweh.*

*"Thus you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent me to you: this will come to pass if you will diligently obey the voice of Yahweh your God."*

What do you think, Curious? Put that in your own words if you can.

**"I always maintained that Yahweh's present is beyond time. He sees the temple differently. The temple is the temple, whether in Moses' day, Solomon's day, Zerubbabel's day, or in some future day of the Branch."**

But this is a tremendous prophecy—don't you think it is?

**"Zechariah seems to be a little nervous about it. He puts 'if you will diligently obey,' to give himself an out."**

All right, but do you see how the duality of the two olive trees and the two branches fits in here?

**"According to this it looks like someday the temple will be rebuilt by one who is both king and priest. But what about today? If the temple is continuous, where is it today?"**

You will encounter that question again, Curious; and there will be an answer.

**7** *And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius that the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah; it was on the fourth day of Chislev, the ninth month.*

Now Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of Yahweh and to speak to the priests of the house of Yahweh of hosts and to the prophets. They wanted to know, "Should we bewail ourselves in the fifth month, separating ourselves as we have done for so many years?"

"What good was that?" said Curious. "Couldn't they think of something constructive to do for the temple?"

They had it right about their failings but wondered if bewailing them was advised.

"I would suggest that they study Jeremiah during that month to remember why they got expelled."

**4** The word of Yahweh of hosts came to me, saying,

"Tell this to all the people of the land and to the priests: 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was your fast to me at all? Was it truly to me? When you ate and drank, did you not eat and drink for yourselves—ignoring the words that Yahweh cried out by the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities round about her were inhabited and prospering and the South and the lowland were inhabited?'"

The word of Yahweh to Zechariah continued:

"Remember how Yahweh of hosts told them to

execute true judgment and  
show kindness and compassion  
every man to his brother,  
to not oppress the widow, the fatherless,  
the sojourner, nor the poor,  
and not to devise evil in one's heart  
against a brother?

"But they refused to hearken. They pulled away the shoulder and stopped their ears lest they should hear. Yes, they hardened their hearts like adamant stone lest they should hear the law and the words Yahweh of

hosts sent by his Spirit to the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from Yahweh of hosts. When I cried they did not hear, so when they cried I did not hear, says Yahweh of hosts, but instead I scattered them among foreign nations with a whirlwind. Thus the land was left desolate such that no one traveled through it nor returned to it, for they had laid the pleasant land desolate."

"I think they're trying to avoid making the same mistakes," remarked Curious.

**8** Further, the word of Yahweh of hosts came, saying,

"Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

I am jealous for Zion with great zeal,  
and I am jealous for her with great wrath.

Thus says Yahweh:

I will return to Zion  
and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem will be called 'The City of Truth,'

and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts will be called 'The Holy Mountain.'"

"I've seen this idea before," said Curious.

I think you mean that as an understatement.

"Somehow it surprises me every time. But this one encompasses a lot. It seems that David didn't choose Jerusalem on his own."

**4** "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

There will yet be old men and old women

on the streets of Jerusalem,  
every man with his staff in his hand  
because of his very old age.

And the streets of the city will be full  
of boys and girls  
playing in the streets."

"One could derive a lot from that," said Curious.

Remember the walls hadn't been repaired yet when this word came to Zechariah.

"Old age must have been rare then."

Old citizens exist when there's peace and prosperity.

"I've been places with crowded streets where children were begging, not playing. This marvel I would like to see: streets with more happy children and fewer vehicles."

6 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

*If it be marvelous in your eyes, O remnant of this people,  
must it also be marvelous in my eyes?  
says Yahweh of hosts."*

"I'm putting that on a T-shirt," said Curious. "It will say, **Because it's a miracle to you doesn't mean it's a miracle to God.**"

7 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

*Behold, I will save my people every-  
where—*

*from lands of the sun's rising  
to lands of the sun's setting;*

*I will bring them to live in Jerusalem  
where they will be my people,  
and I will be their God  
in truth and in righteousness."*

"And there it is in a nutshell."

(I think he meant that this verse summarizes the prophecies about the future kingdom of God on earth.)

9 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:

*Let your hands be strong,  
you who have heard  
the words spoken by the prophets  
when the foundation was laid;  
for the house of Yahweh of hosts  
they said would indeed be built."*

"He must be referring to Haggai there," said Curious.

So there's your answer: one prophet compliments another.

10 "Prior to that,

*there was no hiring of men and no  
work for beasts to do,*

*and there was no relief from adver-  
saries when going out and coming in,*

*for I set every man against his neigh-  
bor.*

*But I will not treat the remnant of this  
people as in the former days, says  
Yahweh of hosts."*

This touches of one of those things that Curious never quite got his head around.

"Is there any natural consequence at all?" he said.

Isn't that good?

"But it must be good. It's like David said: **Let me fall into the hand of Yahweh, for his mercies are great, not into the hand of man.**"

12 "The yield of your seeds will be com-  
plete;

*the vine will yield its fruit,*

*and the ground will yield its increase,  
for the heavens will yield their dew.*

*I will cause the remnant of this people  
to inherit these things."*

Curious smiled but didn't say more. I don't blame him. What remark could rise to the level of this poetic gem?

13 "And it will come to pass,

*just as you were a curse among the  
nations,*

*O house of Judah and house of Israel,  
so I will save you and you will be a  
blessing.*

*Fear not;*

*let your hands be strong."*

"This should be emblazoned on the emblem of the nation," said Curious. "The whole nation—it sounds like—not just the southern kingdom."

(We see that this goes with "Let your hands be strong" above, so it refers to their current work on the temple. But Curious, by his remark, seemed to see it in a larger future context. Maybe he was right: it was primarily Judah that returned from exile.)

14 "For thus says Yahweh of hosts:

*As I purposed to injure you  
when your fathers provoked me to  
wrath,*

*says Yahweh of hosts,  
and I did not waver from it,*

*so now in these days  
I purpose to do good*

*to Jerusalem and the house of Judah;  
have no fear."*

"It seems a little odd," said Curious.

How so? Does the penalty for misconduct seem to have been omitted?

"But again, I'm learning that not as much depends on their behavior as I thought."

**16** *"Now do these things:*

*everyone speak the truth with his neighbor;*

*and carry out judgments of truth and peace in your gates.*

*Likewise, let none of you devise evil in your hearts against his neighbor;*

*and love no false oath,*

*for these are things I hate,*  
*says Yahweh."*

"If the whole world did that, all our problems would disappear," said Curious.

Notice the parallel verses.

"It boils down to telling the truth."

**18** *And the word of Yahweh of hosts came to me, saying, "Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*The fast of the fourth month,*

*and the fast of the fifth,*

*the fast of the seventh month,*

*and the fast of the tenth*

*shall be feasts of joy and gladness for to the house of Judah:*

*cheerful feasts, not fasts.*

*Therefore, love truth and peace."*

"Where did they get the idea to schedule fasts?" Curious wondered. "I don't recall regular fasts among the rules and regulations established during Moses' day."

Isaiah had something about fasts.

"They did have fasts, though. I remember in Isaiah ... here it is:

*Behold, you fast for strife and contention and to smite one another with the fist of wickedness. You do not use this day of fasting to make your voice heard on high. Is this a fast I would have have chosen? Is this a day in which a man submits his soul to me? Is it to bow down his head like a rush and spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to Yahweh?*

"I can well imagine it," said Curious. "Religion run amok."

And what was Yahweh's cure for it?

"The turnaround is stunning."

Explain that, please.

"It's exactly the opposite."

He could have told them to forget the occasion.

"Now all they need is something to celebrate."

Remember the context, Curious.

"Let me see. ... This could be about the future."

**20** *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts:*

*People from many cities will come;*

*the citizens of one will go to another, saying,*

*'Let us go quickly to entreat the favor of Yahweh,*

*and to seek Yahweh of hosts,'*

*and the other will say, 'I will go also.'"*

"Go where?" Curious asked Zechariah. "It sounds like an evangelistic event that could be taking place today."

No, this is not like today. It's not like any day that this world has ever been.

**22** *"Yes, many peoples and strong nations*

*will come to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem*

*and to entreat the favor of Yahweh."*

"Now that calls for a temple!" said Curious. "Indeed, it predicts another temple."

**23** *"Thus says Yahweh of hosts: In those days ten men will take hold—out of all languages and nations—they will take hold of the skirt of a Jew, saying, 'We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"*

"I like that," said Curious. "No compulsion."

Would you go?

"But what an attraction! Who would not want to go!"

What are you saying Curious? The house of Yahweh will not be a tourist attraction.

"Or rather, I would go if I were a pilgrim. But I'm not that, at least not yet. I don't know. It's an interesting idea."

**9** *The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning the land of Hadrach, Damascus being its center—the eyes of men and the tribes of Israel are looking for Yahweh to act—and Hamath, which borders thereon, and Tyre and Sidon too, who consider themselves so wise, for Tyre built herself a stronghold and heaped up silver like dust and gold like the mire of the streets.*

“Here we go,” said Curious. “Now he’s getting into the typical prophetic detail.”

What need would there be to go beyond that nice finale of the last chapter?

“Detail about what brings the languages and nations to bow to Yahweh.”

But Tyre’s wealth sounds like a warning.

“Reliance on wealth leaves God out of their calculation—if he wasn’t left out before.”

**4** *Behold, the Lord will seize her possessions,*

*and he will smite her power in the sea;*

*and she will be devoured by fire.*

“First to go is Tyre. No doubt some of its riches came at Judah’s expense.”

Such a shame. Tyre was once friendly to Judah’s kings.

“I recall Joel saying Tyre ‘delivered a whole people to Edom and forgot the covenant of brotherhood.’”

Yes, Joel said something about this too.

“Also in Joel, Yahweh said Tyre took silver and gold from him to add to their temples and sold people from Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks.”

In the same passage Yahweh said, referring to the Greeks, “I will stir them up.”

**5** *Ashkelon will see it and fear;*

*Gaza also will be sorely pained;*

*Ekron’s hope will turn to shame;*

*the kingdom of Gaza will die,*

*and Ashkelon will be uninhabited.*

“All down the coast they would know they’re next if they read this,” said Curious.

Remember the fast-paced Leopard in Daniel’s prophecy.

“It sounds like Alexanders work.”

**6** *A mixed people will dwell in Ashdod; I will have squelched the pride of the Philistines.*

*I will take away his blood out of his mouth*

*and his abominations from between his teeth,*

“Is this what Yahweh really thinks of the pagan diet?” said Curious, remembering the dietary rules that exclude various meats such as pork, and especially prohibiting blood.

*and he also will be a remnant for our God;*

*and he will be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.*

“This is interesting,” Curious said. “According to this the government in Israel will include Palestinians.”

Yes, and similarly the original occupants of Jerusalem ...”

“It’s the same kind of thing where David allowed the Jebusites to remain.”

**8** *And I will guard my temple against invading armies,*

*that they not be allowed to go in and out;*

*no oppressor will come into the land, for I will be watching with my own eyes.*

“A great comfort that must have been to those working to replace the temple,” said Curious.

But notice it doesn’t say there will be no wars in the meantime.

“With his own eyes—seems to imply the literal presence of God in a king.”

Well, why not? We’ve seen that promise many times.

**9** *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem, for behold, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious,*

*yet he rides a lowly donkey—a young donkey, a mere colt.*

**"This is the king entering Jerusalem after gaining the victory over Israel's foes, apparently,"** said Curious. **"So they're being warned of intervening war of some kind."**

**10** *And I will do away with chariots in Ephraim,  
and horses in Jerusalem;  
the battle bow will be discarded,  
because he will announce peace to the nations.*

**"So here is the end of war such as only God can bring about,"** said Curious. **"In that day their temple will be secure, but it will have to be a new temple if this is our future."**

In other words, this is letting Zerubbabel and the others know that there will be more trouble ahead.

*His dominion will be from sea to sea,  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

**"I suppose they weren't much concerned beyond the land Yahweh had promised Israel,"** said Curious.

But the "ends of the earth" tucked in there indicates that Yahweh has a larger vision.

**11** *As for you also, because of the blood of the covenant with you,*

*I have sent forth your captives from the waterless cistern.*

**"Referring to their release from Babylon, apparently,"** said Curious.

But they have already been released.

**"More will come from lands where the Word of God is absent."**

Yahweh refers to a promise he made.

**"The covenant was with Abraham and his descendants. It's interesting that it emphasizes the blood."**

Why is that interesting?

**"If the cistern is Sheol, it means resurrection from the dead."**

**12** *Return to the fortress, you prisoners who have this hope;*

*today I am declaring that I will restore double to you.*

**"I remember Yahweh saying this same thing through Isaiah,"** said Curious. ...

**"Here's an example in Isaiah chapter 61:**

*Instead of your shame you will have double;  
instead of dishonor they will rejoice in their portion.*

*They will possess double in their land,  
and they will have everlasting joy.*

**"But now Zechariah has it pinned to a particular event."**

As to when it will take place? Or what do you mean?

**"If he's speaking to the resurrection, that puts this in a different light!"**

**13** *For I will bend Judah for me,  
and I will fill the bow with Ephraim;  
and I will stir up your sons, O Zion,  
against your sons, O Greece,  
and will make you like the sword of a mighty man.*

**"Now here's the nation of Israel united to be Yahweh's army to defeat Greece."**

(Curious said it, but he did not understand it.)

**"This is clearly about the resurrection age, but it seems to mix in Zechariah's contemporary Greece,"** he mused.

It does say "sons." Does that help?

**"Well, in Zechariah's day Greece was a known western power which has turned out to be the foundation of western civilization."**

You leave me guessing how that applies.

**14** *Yahweh will be seen over them;  
and his arrow will go forth as the lightning;*

*the Lord Yahweh will blow the trumpet,*

*and will go forth like whirlwinds of the south.*

**"The angels at Yahweh's command will be joining in and making this battle completely one-sided,"** said Curious.

**15** *Yahweh of hosts will defend them;  
and they will devour and tread over them with sling-stones;*

*they will drink and make noise as though with wine;*

*and they will be filled like bowls, like the corners of the altar.*

"Isn't this an echo of Isaiah too? Let me see. ... Well, at the end of chapter 49 it's somewhat similar. And its gruesome:

*I will feed those who oppress you  
with their own flesh;  
and they will be drunken with their  
own blood as with sweet wine;  
and all flesh will know that I, Yah-  
weh, am your Savior  
and your Redeemer, the Mighty  
One of Jacob."*

You might be right. "The corners of the alter" makes it sound like blood in the bowls and not wine. The wine here seems to be blood metaphorically. But in this case it's not their own blood. The key is that "devour" and "drink" mean the same here.

"I wish these prophets weren't so graphic. It's more pleasant to breeze through and not examine the metaphors too carefully".

**16** *And Yahweh their God will save them  
in that day*

*as the flock of his people;  
for they are like stones of a crown  
arrayed over his land.*

"Now there's the kind of metaphor I prefer," said Curious.

Isn't this an amazing turnaround? Notice it's "in that day."

"Perfected in the resurrection, I should say," said Curious.

**17** *Goodness and beauty!*

*grain to make young men flourish,  
and new wine for the maidens.*

"In other words, they can expect to live well in the resurrection ruled by Yahweh."

Remind me: where have you found resurrection mentioned explicitly?

"The reference to resurrection I remember most clearly is Isaiah 26:19:"

*Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who dwell in the dust, awake  
and shout for joy.*

Even more significant is Daniel 12:2:

*And many of those who sleep in the  
dust of the earth will awake, some to  
everlasting life, and some to shame and  
everlasting contempt.*

**10** *Ask Yahweh for rain in the season of  
the latter rain,*

*for it is Yahweh who makes thunder-  
heads,*

*and he will give you showers of rain,  
everyone will have grass in the field.*

*For the household idols have spoken  
in vain,  
and the diviners have seen what is a  
lie;*

*the dreams they tell of are false,  
and they comfort you in vain.*

"In other words, ask Yahweh for his blessing, not idols and diviners," said Curious. "But I thought they had learned that lesson in Zechariah's day, so it must be future."

*Therefore the people stray like sheep;  
they suffer because they have no true  
shepherd.*

**3** *My anger is kindled against false  
shepherds,*

*and I will punish the chief ones.*

"I know there are various sects of Jews," said Curious. "I guess this is why."

False shepherds (priests, rabbis) upset the spiritual balance of Judaism.

*Yahweh of hosts will visit his flock,  
the house of Judah,*

*and will make them his vigorous  
horse in battle.*

"Here comes that promise to be with them, regardless. Sounds like Israel's six-day war."

Remember the time period here.

**4** *Out of him comes the square corner,  
out of him the peg,*

*out of him the battle bow,  
out of him every exact press.*

"The Messiah plans every detail, so again, this has to be future still. And this verifies that he will be from Judah."

**5** *And they will be as mighty men,  
treading down enemies as the mire of  
the streets in the battle;*

*and they will fight, because Yahweh  
is with them;*

*and the riders on horses will be con-  
founded.*

"I think they must get help from Yahweh's heavenly hosts," said Curious.

**6** *And I will strengthen the house of Judah,*

*and I will save the house of Joseph,*

*and I will bring them back,*

*for I have mercy on them;*

*and they will be as though I had not cast them off;*

*for I am Yahweh their God, and I will hear them.*

"It looks very much like a return to the land of the whole house of Israel."

**7** *Ephraim will be like a mighty man,*

*and their heart will rejoice as through wine;*

*yes, their children will see it, and rejoice;*

*their heart will be glad in Yahweh.*

*I will whistle for them, and gather them;*

*for I have redeemed them;*

*and they will increase*

*as they have increased before.*

*When I have sown them among the peoples,*

*they will remember me in far countries,*

*where they have lived with their children,*

*and they will return.*

"This is remarkable," said Curious. "It clearly predicts that they will not assimilate into the cultures of the nations in which they live. It may refer to the faithful remnant."

**10** *I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt,*

*and gather them out of Assyria;*

*and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon;*

*until no more room be found for them.*

"It's being likened to the Exodus," Curious noted.

I think you do not mean that on the same literal level as the Exodus.

"Only this is making a figurative parallel to emphasize its importance."

**11** *And they will pass through the sea of affliction,*

*and will smite the waves in the sea,*

*and all the depths of the Nile will dry up;*

*and the pride of Assyria will be brought down,*

*and the scepter of Egypt will depart.*

"The Nile drying up? That can't be literal."

Note the poetic parallelism.

"It's predicting that their departure from these nations will coincide with their governments collapsing."

**12** *And I will strengthen them in Yahweh;*

*and they will walk up and down in his name, says Yahweh.*

"There will be no secular Israelites in that day," said Curious.

Yes, and who is Yahweh referring to here when he says "in his name?"

"Finally! They finally are wholly focused on him," exclaimed Curious.

**11** *Open your gates, O Lebanon,*

*that the fire may devour your cedars.*

*Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen;*

*the high ones are destroyed.*

*Wail, O you oaks of Bashan,*

*for the mighty forest is fallen.*

*A voice of wailing shepherds!*

*Their glorious mantle is utterly ruined.*

*A voice of the wicked roaring from within their walled village!*

*Their arrogance is devastated.*

"Seems to be a warning of a calamity especially in the north, but it doesn't specify," said Curious. "I wonder what it is or was or will be."

Those cedar trees could be metaphors.

"Since when is the shepherd's outfit glorious?" Curious wondered.

Is anyone who is not a shepherd called a shepherd? Read it again.

"It actually sounds more like the fall of corrupt leadership that considered itself beyond reproach."



**4** *Yahweh my God told me, "Pasture the flock of slaughter."*

"Zechariah seems to say he received his priestly office from Yahweh. But something is killing his flock."

Okay, but that fits Judah before its destruction, so this could be reviewing history.

**5** *"Those who own them slay them without feeling guilty; and those who sell them say, 'Blessed be Yahweh, for I am rich.' Yes, their own shepherds have no pity on them."*

"There it is," said Curious. "It really is about priests fleecing their flock."

Well then he might be drawing a parallel with history.

**6** *"And I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land," says Yahweh; "but, lo, I will deliver every man into his neighbor's hand, and into the hand of the king; and they will smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them."*

"Okay, that describes the future destruction of the nation," said Curious. "But are the people responsible for the corruption of the priesthood?"

This fits their history, does it not?

"Yahweh brings the nation down by internal division, which leads to foreign attack—or their Persian overlords in this case."

It stands as a warning in any case.

**7** *So I pastured the flock that was doomed to be slaughtered, the afflicted flock. I acquired two staves: one I called Favor, and the other I called Union; and I fed the flock. And I cut off the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was weary of them, and their soul also loathed me.*

"Apparently Zechariah got rid of three of his corrupt priests."

Are you sure this is Zechariah's experience and not a prophecy?

"If Zechariah was a priest as well as a prophet, evidence of that would be here."

But it sounds a bit like what happened to Judah's kings before Babylon invaded.

**9** *Then I said, "I will not feed those who are dying; I will let them die; and those who are to be cut off, let them be cut off; and let them that are left eat the flesh of the others."*

This is rather surprising. Why would a faithful priest not care about people dying?

"Still too many priests, apparently. No one has enough to eat because the people aren't bringing sacrifices. So they take meat from one another."

Well, that does explain it your way. But it sounds like the fall of Jerusalem too.

**10** *And I took my staff Favor, and cut it in two, that I might break my agreement which I had made with the nation. And it was broken in that day; and thus the poor of the flock who listened to me knew that it was the word of Yahweh.*

"Zechariah resigns. He uses a prophet's object-symbol though—to advertise it."

Resigns as priest? You could be right. Prophets never resigned that way. But what is the significance of the name of the staff?

"The staff has to represent something more than that, though. Oh, I get it! Zechariah parallels his experience to the history of Yahweh ending his kindness to Israel. Like this is a warning to them that it could be repeated."

**12** *Then I said to them, "If you please, give me my wages, but if not, forget it." So they weighed thirty pieces of silver for my wages.*

*And Yahweh told me to cast to the potter the generous price that I was valued at by them. And I took the silvers, and cast them to the potter, in the house of Yahweh.*

"Thirty pieces of silver meant he was virtually a slave of the other priests. Back in Exodus the rule was thirty silver coins compensates for a bull killing a slave. Dare I say they were bullies?"

We need to know what "casting to the potter" means.

"That mention of the potter recalls the object-symbol Jeremiah used. 'Casting to the potter' would mean throwing away something that didn't meet the specs."

So he threw the silver pieces onto the floor like the potter throws down and breaks the pot that hasn't turned out well.

"Zechariah didn't accept the payment he was given, like Yahweh didn't accept the insincere worship he was given and so broke the promise to defend Israel."

*14 Then I cut in two my other staff, Union, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.*

Now this is clearly about their history, Curious, because Judah and Israel broke up long before Zechariah's day.

"Okay, this clears it up," said Curious. "Zechariah is illustrating his own frustrating career as a priest by making allusions to history, but in no strict historical order."

*15 And Yahweh said to me, "Take again the articles of a foolish shepherd."*

"Now it sounds like he's extending this pattern to the future," said Curious. "Putting on the priest's outfit again after resigning would be sure to get some attention."

*16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not visit those that are cut off, neither will seek those that are scattered, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that which is sound; but he will eat the flesh of the fat ones, even tearing off their hoofs."*

"It sounds like someone with a lot of power. I suppose if there is no king, the priests will eventually become quite powerful and forget their original purpose."

*17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaves the flock!*

*May the sword be upon his arm,  
and upon his right eye;*

*may his arm be entirely withered  
and his right eye be utterly darkened.*

"Now here's a curious prophecy," said Curious. "The right-eye blinding ties it to a particular someone."

That's possible, but you must know that the arm and the right eye are symbols for military strength and discernment.

"If its metaphorical, I could name a worthless shepherd who fits it," said Curious.

**12** *The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel:*

*Thus says Yahweh, who stretches forth the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him: "Lo, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling to the peoples round about; Judah will be included in the siege against Jerusalem."*

"So Jerusalem is the object but a wider area will feel the staggering impact of some war," said Curious. "I wonder if that worthless shepherd has anything to do with this. No, Yahweh claims responsibility. But on the other hand, he could be using the worthless shepherd like he did Nebuchadnezzar."

Isn't this contrary to earlier prophecies, Curious?

"If Yahweh doesn't come to Jerusalem's aid, I don't know what to think of this."

*3 And it will come to pass in that day that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples; all will be sorely wounded by that burden, for all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it."*

"Now there's no mistaking this for something that has already happened," said Curious. "But there's no sense in it either."

Do you mean you can't think of any reason all the world would come to attack Jerusalem?

"What threat could a city be to the whole world that they would all attack it?" Curious asked himself.

Obviously, Jerusalem wields more significance at that time than it ever has.

"Oh, I see. ... The answer was given at the start of this chapter," Curious observed. "It's Yahweh himself they're wanting to defeat!"

Do you mean Yahweh will be in Jerusalem in person?

"It must be that they try to nullify the prophecy of the Messiah ruling the world."

**4** *"In that day," says Yahweh, "I will smite every horse with terror and his rider with madness. I will open my eyes upon the house of Judah and will smite every horse of the peoples with blindness."*

"The weapons of his warfare are supernatural, as one would expect," said Curious. "All the attacking forces lose their minds."

What minds will they have in that day?

"Probably in that day armies will be robotic," said Curious. "If their navigation signals were scrambled they would go mad!"

**5** *"And the generals in Judah will say in their heart, 'The citizens of Jerusalem are my strength because Yahweh of hosts is their God.'"*

They will realize that Messiah is about to come in power to Jerusalem.

**6** *In that day will I make the generals of Judah like a pan of fire among wood, and like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they will devour all the nations round about, on the right hand and on the left; and the citizens of Jerusalem will yet again dwell in their own place, even in Jerusalem. Yahweh will also save the buildings of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem be not magnified above Judah. In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he who is feeble among them at that day will be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of Yahweh before them."*

"What a picture," said Curious. "It's too glorious for the way things are at present. It sounds supernatural."

Resurrection glory is to come.

**9** *"And it will come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem."*

"So the put-down of the nations that the prophets speak of so often occurs after Jerusalem is taken by Yahweh's servants."

Both the sanctification of Jerusalem and the subjection of the nations could be going on for some time.

**10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they will look to me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and will be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born."*

Although Curious had not read the New-Testament Gospels yet, he knew enough of the story of Jesus Christ to recognize this as a prophecy about him.

"This verse is amazing," said Curious.

How will they know it is him?

"Yahweh instills in them a recognition of the Messiah they crucified, so this has to be still in the future."

That which they have resisted for so long.

"He is, in fact, their son in a sense."

**11** *"In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddo."*

There's a challenge for your memory, Mr. Curious.

"Good king Josiah was pierced by an arrow there in that valley, and all Jerusalem mourned for him. Hadad-rimmon is the name of the place where it occurred."

**12** *And the land will mourn, every family apart: the family of the house of David apart and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart and their wives apart; the family of the Shimeites apart and their wives apart; plus all the other families, every family apart and their wives apart."*

"Every Jew in the resurrection comes to realize how he or she personally has pierced Messiah, including kings, prophets, priests, and soldiers," said Curious. "This could mean there will be no marriages during that time."

What is meant by the mention of "Shimeites"?

"Who could forget Shimei?" said Curious. "He cursed King David, but David forgave him, and Solomon spared his life on the condition that he not leave Jerusalem. After three years he did go out after runaway slaves and so broke the king's command."

Yes, and so there is hope for those who rejected Jesus if we obey his commands.

"If they suddenly become obedient servants of Yahweh and give up consorting with evil spirits, it will be a miracle," said Curious.

**13** *"In that day there will be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."*

"This belongs at the end of the previous chapter," said Curious.

It does indeed provide what was needed for their repentance to have a lasting effect.

"It seems to be a special dispensation for Jews in that resurrection day," Curious added. "I say it's an improvement over their burnt sacrifices."

**2** *"And it will come to pass in that day," says Yahweh of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they will be remembered no more; and also I will cause their prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land."*

So is this what the fountain is about, Curious? What do you think?

"And there we have the visible results. They will give up their demon gods—though never before had their reforms lasted long. But if they actually get rid of false prophets, the temptations would be less."

However, notice that it is Yahweh who determines that it will be done this time.

"Let's see if they'll follow through."

**3** *"And it will come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, his father and his mother that begat him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of Yahweh.' And his father and his mother that begat him will thrust him through when he prophesies."*

"So that's how Yahweh gets rid of the deceiving spirits," said Curious. "They really will follow through. There will be no freedom of religion in that day."

Curious was turning pages, looking back near the beginning of the Book.

"It's straight from the law, really," he said. "False prophets and promoters of idolatry were supposed to be executed. Here it is in Deuteronomy thirteen:

*That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to death. ... If your brother or your son or your daughter or the wife of your bosom or your friend who is as your own soul entice you secretly to serve other gods ... you must not consent or listen to him and neither may your eye pity him ... but you must kill him: your hand shall be first upon him to put him to death .... And you must stone him to death with stones because he has sought to draw you away from Yahweh your God."*

It's the same thing. Only the method of execution is updated.

"Apparently stoning will be unlawful in the resurrection day," said Curious.

A false prophet can claim to be speaking for Yahweh as an exception to the rule. So how will they know the difference?

"Failed prophecies will not be swept under the rug like they were in the past."

Right, and unlike today.

"But I wonder if there will be any prophets at all if the risk is so high," said Curious.

Then how will people hear from God?

"I don't see why this Book can't take the place of any contemporary prophets."

That would mean the Bible will never become obsolete! But didn't Joel say there will be prophesying in that day?

"However, there is something about this in Joel," said Curious. ... "Here it is in chapter two:

*And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.*

Interesting. How does this fit in, I wonder."

4 *“And it will come to pass in that day that every one of the prophets will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies (neither will they wear a hairy coat to deceive) but he will say, ‘I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground, for I have been a slave from my youth.’”*

“Clearly this about false prophets,” said Curious, “because they lie to distance themselves from their lies.”

6 *“And if someone says to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ then he will answer, ‘Those are wounds I received in the house of my friends.’”*

Curious paused without comment.

“There’s more to this prophesying business than I know about,” he said finally.

(He remembered the prophets of Baal in their contest with Elijah:

*And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances till the blood gushed out upon them.)*

“I should think they could simply keep their shirts on,” said Curious, “and they wouldn’t have to lie about it. This is an additional lie by the same bad actor because it flows right after the lie in the previous verse.”

Could it be that these false prophets will be strictly eliminated in the resurrection age, while the event Joel predicted when Spirit of the Lord is poured out comes before the resurrection?

“The focus here has been on Jerusalem in the resurrection when the law is strictly enforced,” said Curious. “But the term ‘that day’ includes events just prior as well.”

In Zechariah’s later days the law was not enforced because the priesthood was corrupt, as we saw in chapter eleven.

7 *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd,*

*against the man who stands next to me, says Yahweh of hosts.*

*Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered;*

*and I will turn my hand upon the little ones.”*

“Now I take it this is a flashback to Christ being killed as a false prophet by corrupt politicians,” said Curious, “and his wounds are therefore truly significant and not to be hidden.”

8 *“And it shall come to pass in all the land,” says Yahweh,*

*two parts therein shall be cut off and die;*

*but the third shall be left therein.*

*And I will bring the third part into the fire,*

*and will refine them as silver is refined,*

*and will try them as gold is tried.”*

“That’s 70 A. D. being predicted here,” said Curious. “The survivors will sustain their trust in Yahweh for thousands of years in spite of persecution.”

*“They will call on my name, and I will hear them;*

*I will say, ‘It is my people,’*

*and they will say, ‘Yahweh is my God.’”*

“There is no permanent rejection because he sees to it that they get to a place where they will be faithful—in the resurrection,” said Curious.

Does this apply to everyone?

“This is about Israel, though,” said Curious.

14 *Behold, a day of Yahweh will come when the wealth of a number of persons will be divided up.*

*For I will gather all nations to battle against Jerusalem:*

*the city will be seized,*

*the houses plundered,*

*the women raped,*

*and half the city will be exiled,*

*but the remainder of the people will not be cut off from the city.”*

“This isn’t like previous military conquests,” Curious declared.

Can you expand on that?

“The city isn’t destroyed, for one thing. It sounds like a United Nations redistribution operation.”

**3** *Then Yahweh will go forth  
and fight against those nations,  
as when he fought in the day of battle.*

*"Like the angel of Yahweh who thwarted  
the attack on Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day,  
killing 185,000 Assyrians before they shot  
an arrow," said Curious.*

**4** *And in that day his feet will stand on  
the mount of Olives,  
which is east of Jerusalem;  
and the mount of Olives will split,  
making a great valley east to west:  
half of the mountain will move north  
and half of it will move south.*

*"Opening a valley through that hill on the  
east is like parting the Red Sea!" Curious  
noted.*

**5** *And you will flee by my mountain  
valley,  
for the valley between the mountains  
will reach to Azel.*

*You will flee like you fled from the  
earthquake  
in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.  
And Yahweh my God will come,  
and all the holy ones with him.*

*"There it is: those who remained in the city  
now flee to safety and Yahweh comes with  
his holy angels (that is, not the other angels  
called sons of God)."*

*(Let him have it. It's the best he can do  
since he has not yet read Revelation.)*

**6** *And it will come to pass in that day  
that there will be no light:  
the bright ones will diminish;  
but it will be one day  
as that which Yahweh knows—  
neither day nor night,  
for there will be light at evening time.*

*"Jerusalem will be lit up at night like in a  
modern city," said Curious.*

*It's like what Isaiah wrote in chapter 60:  
The sun will no longer be your light  
by day;  
neither will the moon be your light at  
night;  
but Yahweh will be to you a continu-  
ous light,  
and your God will be your glory.*

**8** *And it will come to pass in that day  
that living waters will flow from  
Jerusalem;*

*half toward the eastern sea,  
and half toward the western sea,  
in summer a well as in winter.*

*"That new cut through the mount of Olives  
will allow the river that Ezekiel spoke that  
originates under the new temple to flow east  
to the Arabah and make the Dead Sea be  
alive. And also going west it will easily flow  
from the higher elevation of Jerusalem to the  
Mediterranean Sea."*

**9** *And Yahweh will be King over all the  
earth:*

*so it will be in that day;*

*Yahweh is one,  
and his name one.*

*Again, the end of false religions; no  
more pagan deities.*

*"So Satan will be banished from the earth.  
What a difference that will make!"*

**10** *All the land will be made like the  
Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south  
of Jerusalem, while she will be lifted  
up and will remain in her place, from  
Benjamin's gate to the place of the first  
gate, to the corner gate, and from the  
tower of Hananel to the king's wine-  
presses.*

*"It looks like the surrounding territory sinks,  
leaving Jerusalem in her place, relatively  
lifted up at least," muttered Curious.*

**11** *And they will live in her,  
and there will be no utter destruction;  
Jerusalem will be safely inhabited.*

*"Like Isaiah wrote .... Here it is in in chap-  
ter 40:*

*Proclaim comfort to Jerusalem  
and announce to her  
that her warfare is ended  
and her iniquity is pardoned."*

**12** *And this is the plague by which  
Yahweh will strike all the peoples that  
have warred against Jerusalem:*

*the flesh decays while they stand on  
their feet,  
the eyes decay in their sockets,  
and the tongue decays in the mouth.*

"I wish it had concluded before that verse," said Curious. "Unfortunately, this detail sounds like symptoms of radiation poisoning: sloughing skin, mouth ulcers, cataracts."

**13** *And it will come to pass in that day that great confusion from Yahweh will come among them:*

*everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor,*

*and his neighbor will lift up his hand.*

"If they're unable to see with their eyes and speak with their tongues, how else would they interact?"

*And Judah also will fight at Jerusalem.*

"I take it this means the whole Jewish population helps defend Jerusalem."

*The strength of all the nations will have been gathered together round about:*

*gold, silver, and fine apparel in great abundance.*

"It sounds like an international bazaar in Jerusalem," Curious said.

**15** *Such also will be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the beasts in those camps; so will this plague be.*

"That must refer to places where international investments in Israel are located," said Curious. "Wait a minute. This list is a lot like what was listed for the livestock plague in Egypt. ... Here it is: Exodus chapter nine:

*If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them, behold, the hand of Yahweh will be upon your cattle in the field, upon the horses, upon the donkeys, upon the camels, upon the herds, and upon the flocks—a very grievous plague. And Yahweh will make a distinction between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: nothing will die of all that belongs to the children of Israel. And Yahweh appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow Yahweh will do this thing in the land. And Yahweh did that thing the next day, and all the cattle of Egypt died, but not one of the cattle of the children of Israel died."*

**16** *Then everyone who is left of the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

"Like the Passover," Curious noted. "Those who prayed for the peace of Jerusalem will escape the plague!"

**17** *And it will come to pass that drought will strike any family of the earth that does not go up to Jerusalem to worship King Yahweh of hosts. If the family of Egypt fails to go up, they get no rain. Thus there will be this plague by which Yahweh will smite nations that do not go up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and all nations that do not go up to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Curious turned back and found the origin of the Feast of Tabernacles:

*On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto Yahweh. [Lev. 23:34]*

"Lest they forget who their God is and what he has done," said Curious.

**20** *In that day there will be engraved on the bells of the horses,*

**HOLY TO YAHWEH**

*and the pots in Yahweh's house will be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy unto Yahweh of hosts; and all those who sacrifice will come and take of them, and boil in them.*

"Like the engraving the priest's wore," said Curious. "Here's from Exodus 28:36:

*And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave on it, like the engravings of a signet,*

**HOLY TO YAHWEH.**

*And in that day there will be no Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts.*

This means the end of false religion and metaphorically a successful conquest of Canaan. What do you think, Curious?

"Is this Zechariah's psalm? There are no quotation marks in his last chapter."

Zechariah was a man of many curious visions, and the book he wrote was a feast for Curious. First came a vision of globe-trotting horses of different colors. Another vision saw carpenters whose job it was to dismantle certain horns. There was a flying scroll, and in another vision a flying basket transporting a woman to the land of Shinar.

As diverse as these symbols were, it turned out that every one of them concerned Israel's future prosperity: *My cities will again overflow with prosperity; I will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem. ... He who touches you touches the apple of his eye. ... Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for I will come and dwell in the midst of you. ... In those days ten men out of all languages of the nations will take hold of the skirt of him who is a Jew, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."*

The last chapter included a startling preview of a horrendous attack on Jerusalem that preceded Yahweh's descent, after which the nations involved in it were to be punished with an unspeakable plague.

Curious tried to take this in stride; while it was very direct and graphic, it was not the first prediction he had encountered of a terrible time preceding the establishment of the earthly kingdom of God. But he had to admit to himself that this book was beginning to frighten him even though he did not believe it—or did not want to believe it. Current events made it seem possible that a multi-national coordinated attack on Jerusalem could take place, but he felt better keeping that separate and guessing that Zechariah was being apocalyptic, not literal.

However, it was curious that while God never appeared in today's headlines, the city he espoused was always in the news. Suddenly, everything came

together for Curious: it was not about whether the Jews or the Arabs or the United Nations should own Jerusalem; Jerusalem belongs to God. He raised up the children of Israel not simply so they could possess the land, but in order to reserve the land for himself—because his seat of government will be there.

"I get it!" said Curious. **"The Promised Land did not turn out as expected because God was using them to reserve a place for himself from which to rule the world. The temple was his stake, and the reborn nation of Israel is wanting to renew his stake today."**

In other words, the fulfillment of the promise would be experienced "in that day" and not necessarily by them personally, but at least by their offspring at some future time.

This fit with the national purpose that was emphasized over personal fulfillment and the apparent lack of awareness about a personal afterlife. But it seemed unfair to Curious: that the children of Israel were being used to accomplish a victory over demons, a victory that they might not live to see, and had no hope of seeing unless there were a resurrection from Sheol—and he had found evidence of that only in isolated verses. As a result, his feeling toward the children of Israel began to change; he did not blame them so much for seeking pleasure at the expense of obedience. Had they hope of personal reward beyond the grave, there would have been less dissipation in their lives. But, on the other hand, to the degree that the promise was personal, so their dedication to the national purpose would tend to be diluted and their desire to hold onto Jerusalem forever would become secondary. Curious saw that this issue was too big to get his head around. He chuckled at the thought that his head may not be as big as it used to be, and he turned the page.