

Zechariah 5-8

INTRODUCTION

Let's do a brief historical recap of the time in which Zechariah lived and served God as a prophet.

The scene is Jerusalem, after the Babylonian exile.

A small group of some 50,000 Jews have returned after 70 years of captivity, to rebuild the capital of Israel which lies in ruins.

The walls and buildings of the city are rubble, but even worse, the temple of God is destroyed.

Though the people had started work on the temple – they broke off after laying the foundation and turned instead to work on their own homes.

By the time Zechariah starts his ministry, 16 years have passed since the first return of the exiles in 536 BC – so it's now 520 and God is gravely displeased that the people have such badly misplaced priorities.

He sends 2 prophets to them to stir them to repentance and faithfulness in rebuilding the temple.

Though the people have been investing themselves so diligently in their own affairs, they seem to be able to see a pay-off.

God told them the reason why was because they needed to put Him first and rebuild the temple.

The 2 prophets God sent were Zechariah and Haggai.

Haggai was older and spoke in short, fiery sermons.

Zechariah was many years younger and spoke a message that was more of an encouragement than a rebuke.

The outset of Zechariah's message to the people of his time was a series of 8 visions all of which he received in one night.

In several brief vignettes, he sees things that baffled his mind.

But an interpreting angel was there to give him the meaning.

Each of these visions was intended to fill, first Zechariah, and then the people, with hope – knowing that God was sovereign and would protect and provide for them if they would only faithfully follow Him.

We looked at the first 5 visions last week:

- 1) The vision of the horses – which spoke of a period of global peace.
- 2) The vision of the 4 horns and 4 smiths – which spoke of God’s judgment on the nations who oppressed Israel.
- 3) The vision of the man with the plumb line – which referred to the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem.
- 4) The vision of Joshua and the devil – which pictured the re-establishing of the role of the high priest.
- 5) The vision of the Oil lamp and two olive trees which fed it – the lamp symbolized Israel’s role as being a light to the world and the two trees pictured the governor, Zerubbabel and the high priest, Joshua, who would provide supernatural assistance to the nation to help it reclaim it’s illuminating role.

In chapter 5 we have the 6th vision – and if the first 5 have been strange, wait till you take a look at this one.

ZECHARIAH 5

1 Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll.

2 And he said to me, “What do you see?”

So I answered, “I see a flying scroll. Its length *is* twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.”

3 Then he said to me, “This *is* the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: ‘Every thief shall be expelled,’ according *to* this side of *the scroll*; and, ‘Every perjurer shall be expelled,’ according *to* that side of it.”

4 “I will send out *the curse*,” says the LORD of hosts; “It shall enter the house of the thief And the house of the one who swears falsely by My name. It shall remain in the midst of his house And consume it, with its timber and stones.”

Okay – just what is going on here?

First of all, Zechariah sees a scroll flying through the air.

Don’t picture this as a rolled scroll with wings; the dimensions that

are given suggest it's an unrolled scroll that's doing this (undulate the hand) through the air.

The fact that it can be *read* also tells us it's unrolled.

The scroll is 30 by 15 feet in dimension and is written on each side.

On one side it announces a ban on theft; on the other it bans deceit.

The angel then announces the word of the Lord and says that God's judgment will come on those who steal and those who swear falsely by God's name.

The dimensions of the scroll are the same size as the holy place and the porch of the temple, which is where the law was read to the people.

Careful students of scripture have noted that the two curses mentioned here are the middle of each of the two tablets of the 10 commandments.

Remember that on the *first* tablet were commands relating to God.

The command not to use God's name in vain, which also puts a ban on swearing falsely by His name – is the 3rd commandment.

The second tablet contained 6 commands relating to our relationship with other people.

The command not to steal is #8.

Because of this, many scholars think this scroll is symbolic of the entire 10 commandments, which is the heart of the entire law of God – and so represents all the law.

It is flying above the earth which pictures it's rapid dispersal among the people.

And in v. 3 the angel says that it goes out over the whole earth.

Coming as it does right after the vision of the lamp, which symbolizes Israel's illumination of the world – we ought to understand this vision as referring to God's use of Israel to spread the knowledge and influence of His Word and Law to the four corners of the earth.

We know that in the Millennium, much of the Law of God will be enforced, as is pictured here.

Thieves and perjurers will be swiftly judged.

I hope you can see that there is a progressive nature to these 8 visions. We'll see that progression in a moment when we get to the last one.

5Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, "Lift your eyes now, and see what this *is* that goes forth."

6So I asked, "What *is* it?" And he said, "It *is* a basket that is going forth."

He also said, "This *is* their resemblance throughout the earth: **7**Here *is* a lead disc lifted up, and this *is* a woman sitting inside the basket"; **8**then he said, "This *is* Wickedness!" And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. **9**Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there *were* two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven.

10So I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they carrying the basket?"

11And he said to me, "To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, *the basket* will be set there on its base."

Okay – talk about strange! This one is going to take some real digging to unravel.

Zechariah has a vision of a basket and a woman in it.

The woman clearly symbolizes evil, and the interpreting angles pushes her down inside it and seals it with a lead lid.

Then two other women with stork's wings arrive and fly off with it to Shinar – which is another name for Babylon, and there place it on a pedestal.

Understanding the Hebrew words used here will give us a clue as to what all this symbolizes.

1) In v. 6, the word *basket* is *ephah* and is a unit of measure.

2) The lead disk was also a unit of measure.

Both of these units were symbols of business and commerce. Stuffing down and hiding wickedness inside these symbols speaks of corruption, greed, and materialism.

The two women with wings who come to take the basket to Babylon are portraying God's removal of materialism and greed from the holy city Jerusalem and depositing it in Babylon.

There we read a house is being prepared for it and it will be set on a base; the word meaning a pedestal that was used to elevate an idol.

Here's how we ought to understand all this . . .

When the Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon, they knew it was for the generations of idolatry they had committed while living in the Promised Land.

When they arrived in Babylon, they were horrified by the abundance of idolatry.

The sickening decadence of idol worship was all around them and they pledged themselves to reject idols.

Like immersion-aversion-saturation therapy, they were forever cured of idols worship.

To stop smoking, some treatment centers will make a person smoke 30 or 40 cigarettes in a row without stopping. This is supposed to force an abhorrence of smoking – and for some it works.

It worked for the Jews – and when they returned to the land, from then on they had little problem with idol-worship.

But they brought a new problem back with them from Babylon – *materialism!*

The prosperity of Babylon had spoiled them and they had grown soft.

Since prosperity comes with a booming commerce, the people came back to Jerusalem with a new appreciation for their ethnic ability to handle money and investments and run profitable businesses.

They began to define their lives, not by faithfulness to the Lord but by the abundance of their possessions.

Materialism began to mark their mindset.

Here Zechariah sees that the day will come when the spiritual infection of wicked materialism will be rooted out of the people and sent back to Babylon where it came from.

What incredibly provocative about his is what we read in Revelation 18:9-20.

John has a vision of the end times judgment of commercial Babylon.

In the last days, the entire world will be infected with the lust of crass materialism and there will be one world center which will function as the global capital of commerce.

From this center the influences of greed and materialism will pollute the world and will result in God's fury being visited from heaven.

From the description of this last days commercial Babylon, not a few students of scripture have wondered if it isn't a description of modern America – specifically New York or Los Angeles.

Read Rev. 18:9-20 and see if there aren't some amazing parallels to things today.

ZECHARIAH 6

Now we have the 8th and final vision of the night visions Zechariah had.

¹Then I turned and raised my eyes and looked, and behold, four chariots were coming from between two mountains, and the mountains were mountains of bronze. ²With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, ³with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses—strong steeds. ⁴Then I answered and said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?”

⁵And the angel answered and said to me, “These are four spirits of heaven, who go out from *their* station before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The one with the black horses is going to the north country, the white are going after

them, and the dappled are going toward the south country.”⁷ Then the strong steeds went out, eager to go, that they might walk to and fro throughout the earth. And He said, “Go, walk to and fro throughout the earth.” So they walked to and fro throughout the earth.⁸ And He called to me, and spoke to me, saying, “See, those who go toward the north country have given rest to My Spirit in the north country.”

Since the first and last visions are of horses, what we have at bookends to all that lies between.

Zechariah sees 4 chariots, each chariot being drawn by a team of different colored horses.

The first is drawn by red horses; the second by black.

The third by white, and the fourth by dappled horses.

These horses are strong - meaning they are warhorses!

They emerge from between 2 bronze mountains.

Mountains represent government and bronze is a symbol of judgment.

All of this together is a picture of the emergence of a war of judgment.

The chariots are vehicles of war that go to and fro throughout the earth at God’s bidding.

The various colors of the horses are no doubt meant to picture the various forms God’s judgment will take.

Red symbolizes war and bloodshed.

Black stands for famine and death.

White represents victory and dominance.

Dappled refers to spots of different colors which speak of plagues and pestilence.

Zechariah sees the chariots going north and south – toward Babylon and Egypt.

Of course, if judgment is proceeding out of the land of Israel, those are the only directions it can go at first.

But after that it can turn and go anywhere.

What’s interesting, is that only 3 of the chariots are mentioned as going forth – the red horses aren’t mentioned.

It may be that the chariot with the red horses stays in the Holy Land to bring judgment on any who dare come against it.

Zechariah's vision of the 4 chariots with their different colored teams of horses dovetails nicely with Revelation 6 and the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse – which also refer to God's end times judgment. What Zechariah seems to be showing us is God's final visitation of judgment on the Christ rejecting nations and peoples of the world.

Progression of the Visions

So think about the progression of the 8 visions.

- 1) The vision of the horses speaks of a time of global peace in which the Jews will have the ability to rebuild their nation.
- 2) The vision of the 4 horns and 4 smiths speaks of God's ultimate control of the nations.
- 3) The vision of the man with the plumb line reveals that Jerusalem will be rebuilt and restored to its place as the center, not only of the nation, but prepared for its role as future capital of the earth.
- 4) The vision of the high priest and the devil speaks of God's restoration of the priesthood and their consecration to their role and ministry.
- 5) The vision of the Oil lamp and two olive trees which fed it speaks of God's supernatural intervention to ensure the Jews are restored to their place as being His people and their success in the task of bringing His Word to the World.
- 6) The vision of the flying scroll refers to the infiltration of God's Word into all the affairs of life in every kingdom.
- 7) The woman in the basket represents God's purging His people of the sins of materialism and greed and then materialism's enshrinement as a god in the last days, with her eventual judgment as seen in the 8th vision -
- 8) which is of God's war chariots going forth to crush all sin and rebellion wherever it may be found – starting in Babylon and Egypt, but eventually spreading to the 4 corners of the earth.

9Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

10“Receive *the gift* from the captives—from Heldai,

Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon— and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. ¹¹Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ¹²Then speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying:

“Behold, the Man whose name *is* the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD;

¹³ Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

The interpreting angel has some instructions for the prophet.

He is to receive a gift of gold and silver from men who’ve recently come from Babylon.

He’s to go to the home of Josiah and fashion an elaborate crown for the head of the high priest.

Then, when he sets the crown on his head, he’s to utter some words that are actually directed at the Messiah who will come to sit in the high priest’s place.

Joshua the high priest is a fore-runner of the Messiah to come, and as such, God will anoint Joshua with a similar anointing.

Joshua will preside over the rebuilding of the temple, just as the Messiah will preside over the rebuilding of the final temple.

¹⁴“Now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the LORD for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. ¹⁵Even those from afar shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And *this* shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

The crown Zechariah made for Joshua is to remain in the temple as a memorial until the day when the Messiah comes and consummates the office of high priest.

Where that crown is today is a mystery, but wherever it is, it will be brought out and restored when Christ comes again.

Now – here’s what’s unusual about all this – up till this point, the high priest NEVER wore a crown.

Who wears a crown? A king!

Why didn’t Zerubbabel wear this crown?

Because the line of Jehoiakim from which he had descended, had been banned by God from sitting on the throne of Israel. Though Zerubbabel was the rightful heir to the throne, God’s curse had exempted him – so he’s called the governor, not king.

The next descendant to sit on David’s throne will have to be a descendant of David’s but not through the kingly line of Jehoiakim.

Christ is a descendant of David’s through David’s son Nathan, not Solomon.

And as Messiah, he will unite the roles of King and Priest – the only priest or king of Israel to do so.

ZECHARIAH 7

¹Now in the fourth year of King Darius

So this is 2 years after the previous 6 chapters.

it came to pass *that* the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, on the fourth day of the ninth month, Chislew, ²when *the people* sent Sherezer, with Regem-Melech and his men, to the house of God, to pray before the LORD, ³and to ask the priests who were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and the prophets, saying, “Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?”

A little historical background is needed here.

There were 3 days of fasting the Jews had begin observing when they were taken into exile in Babylon.

- 1) In the 4th month they fasted in memory of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem.
- 2) In the 5th month they fasted in memorial of the *destruction* of

the temple.

- 3) in the 7th month they fasted in mourning for the death of the governor Gedaliah, which was the last act of defiance against the Babylonians.

Here we read that on December 4, 518 BC, a delegation came from the city of Bethel to inquire of the priests about fasting. – should they keep it up now that they are back in the land and the temple is being rebuilt?

4Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,
5“Say to all the people of the land, and to the priests:
‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *months* during those seventy years, did you really fast for Me—for Me? **6**When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink *for yourselves*? **7**Should you not *have obeyed* the words which the LORD proclaimed through the former prophets when Jerusalem and the cities around it were inhabited and prosperous, and the South and the Lowland were inhabited?’”

God rebukes the people for their question about ending the fasts – He had never ordained them in the first place!

The people had felt bad about their spiritual failure that had resulted in their defeat and exile, but instead of genuinely repenting and returning to the Lord, they had come up with their own ways of showing penance – and fasting was it.

God says to them, “I never asked you to fast! If you really want to repent, then stop doing the things you were judged for!”

Isn't it interesting how people will realize they have been wrong and seek to do penance for their sin – but they will still avoid coming to God on His terms?

Many people are very religious – but it's a religion of their *own invention*!

Much of modern Churchianity is nothing but a house built by an attempt to salve a stained conscience.

Many people think that the act of just going to church and being bored to the point of tears for an hour a week is

sufficient penance to undo their guilt.

So much of religion is nothing more than man's attempt to expunge himself of the sense of guilt by acts of contrition.

But no one can remove guilt but the offended party.

It is the task of the one offended to release the debtor of his or her guilt – and that comes through forgiveness.

God has made it clear that He is ready and willing to forgive.

All he waits on is our sincere repentance and request for forgiveness.

Sincere repentance is demonstrated by a real change – which is what He calls for here.

Fasting is merely a religious act if it is not accompanied by a genuine change of behavior.

So this delegation had come with questions about fasting.

God rebukes them for having their hearts in the wrong place.

Did they just want to quite fasting? Had it just become a routine, a ritual void of meaning?

Apparently!

8Then the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying,

9“Thus says the LORD of hosts:

**‘Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion
Everyone to his brother.**

**10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, The alien
or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart
Against his brother.’**

Here God tells the delegation exactly what they ought to do.

These words can be summed up aptly by the prophet Micah –

“He has shown you, O man, what is good and what the Lord requires of you. To do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

11But they refused to heed, shrugged their shoulders, and stopped their ears so that they could not hear. **12**Yes, they made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law and the words which the LORD of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets. Thus great wrath

came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³Therefore it happened, *that* just as He proclaimed and they would not hear, so they called out and I would not listen,” says the LORD of hosts. ¹⁴“But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations which they had not known. Thus the land became desolate after them, so that no one passed through or returned; for they made the pleasant land desolate.”

The nation of Judah had been destroyed by the Babylonians, not because they had failed to fast, but because they had rejected the Word of God.

Zechariah’s challenge to the men from Bethel was unspoken but clear – are you going to go down the same path as your forefathers?

ZECHARIAH 8

¹Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying,

Take careful note of this now . . .

²“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.’

The Hebrew word for “zeal” means to become *intensely red*.

It pictures someone who is so moved by emotion it shows in the face no matter how composed the person is trying to be.

The Greek word for zeal mean to be hot!

This is the most intense kind of *passion* - and God is speaking of His own affection for Jerusalem!

Our God is not dispassionate in His love for us!

He is fervent – zealous – His love shows in His face.

He is hot for us!

Listen – we need to understand that God is passionate about this thing called love!

Remember when you had your first crush and it felt at times like you just had to be with the object of your affection?

You got butterflies and sweaty palms just thinking about that guy or gal.

Remember your first love! It was so intense you ached!

Some of us married our first love.

But as the years passed the feelings changed, maybe cooled.
They at least matured – and that’s good because if we maintained
the kind of *burning desire* that marked our initial love, we’d
have burned up long ago.

That is all just a tinnie-tiny taste of the kind of passion and desire
God has for us.

It’s but a hint at the kind of zeal and longing He has toward you
and me.

And His love never dims, never matures, because it is already
perfect.

**3“Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, And dwell in
the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the
City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The
Holy Mountain.’**

Today Jerusalem is called the City of Trouble; the City of Unrest.
Three religions vie for it as the spiritual center of their faith – Islam,
Judaism, and Christianity.

And all three make an exclusive claim to truth.

Judaism and Christianity claim it is the mountain of Yahweh while
Islam claims it’s the mountain of Allah – the moon-god of the
ancient Arabic tribes.

God says the day will come when He will return to Jerusalem and it
will be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the Yahweh of
hosts!

**4“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Old men and old women
shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with
his staff in his hand Because of great age.**

**5 The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls
Playing in its streets.’**

Remember that when Zechariah spoke this the streets of Jerusalem
were choked with rubble and debris.

On the two tours of Israel we’ve done, we always approach Jerusalem
via the ancient route that comes up out of the eastern Jordan Valley
and Jericho.

The route leads up the back side of the mount of Olives and passes
by the site of ancient Bethany, the home of Mary, Martha and

Lazarus.

It's an inordinately depressing site because the guide tells you you are about a mile or less from the summit where you will get your first view of the Holy City, yet the streets you are driving through are literally choked with garbage, rubbish, trash, refuse, debris and junk.

In some places it's piled 6 ft. high!

In fact, last time, I was so disturbed by the scene of disrepair so close to the city of Jerusalem I wept.

The neighborhood is run by the Palestinians, and it seems they are making some kind of a political statement by trashing the area.

It's a reminder the City is divided and wracked by conflict; a conflict that results in turmoil and loss.

God here tells the prophet that all the debris and junk that lies around as mute testaments to the failure of the past will be swept away and once more, children will be playing in the streets.

The elderly will sit around in little groups and jaw about the good old days.

In other words - life will return to normal.

6“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?’ Says the LORD of hosts.

These promises might seem like too much for the returned exiles – but is anything too hard for God?

If in October of 1982 anyone would have spoken prophetically about CCO meeting in a place like this in 1999, I would have been the first to guffaw.

And just like the Lord does here – I would have been due a serious rebuke!

Our God is a God of the impossible!

In fact, He delights to do what appears impossible so that people will know He is at work.

7“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east And from the land of the west;

8 I will bring them *back*, And they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people And I will be their God, In truth and righteousness.'

God will call forth His people from wherever they are and they shall return to the land of promise.

9“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Let your hands be strong, You who have been hearing in these days These words by the mouth of the prophets, Who *spoke* in the day the foundation was laid For the house of the LORD of hosts, That the temple might be built.

10 For before these days *There were* no wages for man nor any hire for beast; *There was* no peace from the enemy for whoever went out or came in; For I set all men, everyone, against his neighbor.

11But now I *will not treat* the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ says the LORD of hosts.

12 ‘For the seed *shall be* prosperous, The vine shall give its fruit, The ground shall give her increase, And the heavens shall give their dew— I will cause the remnant of this people To possess all these.

13 And it shall come to pass *That* just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, Let your hands be strong.’

14“For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Just as I determined to punish you When your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’ Says the LORD of hosts, ‘And I would not relent,

15 So again in these days I am determined to do good To Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear.

God is saying that if the recent history of the Jews for the past several generations has been one of judgment and loss, their future is one of blessing and peace.

Now that they had set their hands to the task of rebuilding the temple

– God will move to ensure the rest of life is taken care of.
This is a perfect OT picture of what Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 –
Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness – and all the
things that people usually strive for will be taken care of.

16 These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace;

17 Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the LORD."

There are some simple ethics God wants them to live by.
Let's take a look at them . . .

- 1) Tell the truth!
- 2) Be just to all people – treat all equally and fairly.
- 3) Treat others as you want to be treated.
- 4) Don't cheat!

18 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,

19 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'The fast of the fourth month, The fast of the fifth, The fast of the seventh, And the fast of the tenth, Shall be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts For the house of Judah. Therefore love truth and peace.'

Forget fasting and instead – celebrate a life marked by integrity and honesty.

That phrase – "Love truth and peace" will be my text for this Sunday.

20 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities;

21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, And seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also."

22 Yes, many peoples and strong nations Shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, And to pray

before the LORD.'

23“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard *that God is with you.*”’”

Zechariah is given a glimpse of the future Millennium when Jerusalem is the capital of the earth and all the nations look to it as the place to be.

Gentiles, who once worshipped many gods will all look to Yahweh as the only Lord.

The Jews, so long despised by the world, will become the most popular people on earth.

People will take hold of them as they pass by and plead with them to allow them to tag along just so they can experience the thrill of being close to the covenant of God.

The word grasp in v. 23 means to hold something you dare not let go of.

It's used of taking a snake by the tail or grabbing a lion by its beard.

You know if you let go, you're in for a world of hurt – so you hold on with every ounce of strength and then some.

The point is that God is making is that in the Day when Jesus rules from Jerusalem over the kingdoms and peoples of the world – only one thing will be important – and that is God!

Those who are closest to God will be esteemed as special.

Oh that it might be that way now!

Instead, generally the genuinely godly are mocked and made fun of.

Holiness is despised – purity is called naivety.

I think the Lord today wants Christians to be the kind of people who the lost can see are close to Him.

They may mock and scorn us when things are going well, but when they're in need, they will come, grab our sleeve and say, “Tell me about this Jesus.”