

“The Restoration of Israel”

INTRODUCTION: Interpreting the Old Testament Prophets is not easy.

1. In fact, preaching through the OT prophets is the *most difficult* exposition a pastor may undertake.
2. And this is why the prophets are the *least preached* genre in the American Pulpit. Pastors simply don't know and are unwilling to study hard in order to learn *how* to preach and teach the Prophets.
3. And yet, Jesus and the Apostles put great emphasis on *the Prophets* of the OT:
 - a) Jesus held the Prophets in great esteem ...
 - (1) *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. (Matt. 5:17)*
 - (2) *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt. 23:29-39)*
 - (3) *And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:25-27)*
 - (4) *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, (Luke 24:44-45)*
 - b) St. Peter spoke of the prophets often ...

- (1) *Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."* (Acts 3:22-26)
- (2) *And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21)*
- (3) *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, (2 Peter 3:1-2)*

c) St. Paul rooted his gospel in the Prophetic word ...

- (1) *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, (Rom. 1:1-2)*
- (2) *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen. (Rom. 16:25-27)*
- (3) *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Eph. 2:19-21)*
- (4) *When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (Eph. 3:4-5)*

d) **Remember:** "The Bible" for Jesus and the Apostles was made up of 3 parts –

- (1) A Total of 24 Books
- (2) *Torah* (Law): the 5 Books of Moses (Gen.- Deut.)
- (3) *Nabhim* (Prophets): 8 Books in all:

(i) The Former Prophets –

- *Joshua*
- *Judges*
- *Samuel* (one book)
- *Kings* (one book)

(ii) The Latter Prophets (Writing Prophets) –

- *Isaiah*
- *Jeremiah*
- *Ezekiel*
- *The Minor Prophets* (all 12 in one book)

(4) *Kethubhim* (writings) or in Greek *Hagiagrapha* (sacred writings) – 11 Books in all:

- *Psalms*
- *Proverbs*
- *Job*
- *Ruth*
- *Lamentations*
- *Ecclesiastes*
- *Ezra-Nehemiah* (one book)
- *Esther*
- *Daniel*
- *Chronicles* (one book)
- *Song of Solomon*

(5) Jesus and the Apostles referred to the OT Scriptures, sometimes, by the names of the 3 major books of each section: *The Law, The Prophets and the Psalms ...*

(6) *Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” (Luke 24:44)*

4. The Prophets find their **reference point** in three OT voices: *Moses, Samuel and Elijah*

a) **Willem VanGemenen:** *Interpreting the Prophetic Word*

b) **Moses** was the *fountainhead* of all prophecy: The Law giver

(1) God’s first spokesman

(2) *As fountainhead of the prophetic tradition, Moses saw more of God’s glorious self-revelation than anyone else in the Old Testament. He spoke by God’s authority. Whoever questioned Moses challenged the Lord. Israel could find comfort, grace, and blessing because in Moses the roles of covenant mediator and intercessor came together. (p. 32)*

(3) *“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— just as you desired of the Lord your*

God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' And the Lord said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him. (Deut. 18:15-22)

(4) Moses called Israel to a Covenant with God

Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'” And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. (Ex. 31:16-18)

The Lord said to Moses, “Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. And he said, “Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you. (Ex. 34:1, 10)

(5) **Note:** The OT Book the prophets reference the most is Moses’ *Deuteronomy: The Book of the Covenant*

These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb. (Deut. 29:1)

c) **Samuel** was “*the rapids*” of the prophetic revelation.

(1) He became God’s first *guardian of the Theocracy*

(2) i.e., God’s rule over His Kingdom: Israel

(3) *Samuel bridges the epochs of Moses-Joshua and that of David-Solomon. After the death of Moses, the word of the Lord came to Joshua, and Israel received continual reassurance that the Lord was with them. (p. 34)*

Samuel became the role model for the prophet as the guardian of the theocracy. He showed a pastoral concern for all twelve tribes, brought revival to Israel, led Israel in worship, and guided the tribes with his counsel. He also led Israel into a period of international stability and national peace and prosperity. In his position

as God's spokesman to the people and to the theocratic king, Samuel defined the role of the prophets as guardians of the theocracy. (p. 35)

- (4) He served as both a *Prophet* and a *Judge* of Israel.
- (5) *And Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established as a prophet of the Lord. And the Lord appeared again at Shiloh, for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel at Shiloh by the word of the Lord. (1 Sam. 3:19-21)*
- (6) *No Passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the prophet. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as was kept by Josiah, and the priests and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel who were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (2 Chron. 35:18)*

d) **Elijah** became the *mainstream* of the prophetic voice –

- (1) *Elijah has a distinct role in the history of redemption. Though he left no prophetic book, Elijah has a special place next to Moses. If Moses is the fountainhead and Samuel the rapids of the prophetic stream, the Elijah shaped the course of the classical prophets. (p. 36)*
- (2) Elijah is the beginning of a long line of prophets who charged God's people with breaking the covenant and pronounced God's judgment of them. He was God's first covenant prosecutor, for he charged Israel with its failures to conform to the covenantal expectations. The prophet no longer warns and threatens; he proclaims judgment and the reality of the covenantal curses. This is the essence of the prophetic lawsuit. (p. 37)
- (3) Elijah was God's first *covenant prosecutor*

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken." (1 Kings 18:21-24)

- (4) Elijah set the *course* of all subsequent prophecy so that Malachi and Jesus referred to "*the spirit of Elijah*"
- (5) *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction." (Malachi 4:5-6)*
- (6) John the Baptist was to possess this spirit of Elijah

But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.” (Luke 1:13-17)

(7) Jesus attested to this truth ...

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written,

*“Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way before you.’*

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. (Matt. 11:7-15)

(8) *Elijah is a significant individual in redemptive history. The Holy Spirit empowered him and gave him a concern for the spiritual condition of his people. Elijah longed for a people whose heart would be loyal to the Lord as he discerned the necessity of judgment and purification (see Mal. 4:5-6). His ministry is continuous with Moses and with all the prophets who served after him as “covenant prosecutors,” including the literary or classical prophets. The spirit of Elijah was with Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and with all the other prophets before, during, and after the Exile. He was with John the Baptist and the apostles, and he is still present with all who proclaim God's Word faithfully. (p. 38)*

5. **Zechariah** stood in that glorious, God-centered and grace-filled tradition of the Prophets. He was the *second-to-last* of the OT prophets, and the “spiritual grandfather” of John the Baptist ... and Jesus!
- a) He upheld God's *Law* as revealed in the OT.
 - b) He reminded people of God's *Covenant*, and Israel's duties and privileges under that covenant.
 - c) He promised God's *blessings* on those who were loyal to God.
 - d) And he foretold of *God's Kingdom* yet to come in glory.

- e) To understand Zechariah you must keep in mind those four concepts: *Law, Covenant, Blessing and Kingdom.*
- f) *The prophetic message of the classical prophets includes a statement of God's legal suit against his people, an announcement of judgment, a call for repentance, and a proclamation of the good news of God's deliverance. They affirmed that Yahweh is faithful in his commitment to renew the covenants, to usher in his kingdom, and to fulfill his promises. The prophets were God's appointed covenant prosecutors, but in this function they did not cease praying that God's people might turn to the Lord, undergo a transformation by the Spirit, and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom. (p. 39)*

6. One more thing to remember: *The OT prophets were real, historical persons with their heart, mind and message in four eras of time –*

- a) Their *immediate historical context*: the events of their days.
- b) The *promised restoration* of Israel from exile to the promised land.
- c) The *coming of the Messiah* – they all “looked to Jesus”
- d) The *eschatological vision* of the end times and the Heavenly City of God.

7. **Note:** we will *never* understand the historical context and restoration the prophets spoke to as well as their contemporaries, centuries before Christ ...

And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.” (Rev. 22:6)

8. **But** we will always understand better their statements about the Messiah to come and His eternal Kingdom if we understand their historical context!

But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. (Matt. 13:16-17)

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

9. Zechariah preached during the early days of the *Restoration.*

- a) He was but a boy when his father and he returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.
- b) He was in his early 20's when he began to preach alongside *Haggai.*
- c) He preached to *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua* while they led the Jews to build the Second Temple.
- d) And he preached in the days of Esther, 1200 miles away from Susa and the Court of Xerxes.
- e) ... *and his messages encouraged deeply the people of God.*

(1) 8 *Visions* about a restored city and temple (1-6)

(2) 2 *Words from the Lord* about heart-felt religion (7-8)

(3) 2 long “oracles” (*burdens*) about the Restoration of Israel, the Coming Messiah, and His Eternal Kingdom.

10. Oracle #1 was a long “*burden*” from God: Zechariah 9-11

- a) Judgment on Israel’s Enemies (9)
- b) The Restoration of Israel and Judah (10)
- c) The Flock Doomed to Slaughter due to poor leadership (11)

11. In *Zechariah 10:1-12* we examine part 2 of the first oracle ...

- a) **ESV subtitle:** *The Restoration for Judah and Israel*
- b) 10:1-2 = The historical context: drought.
- c) 10:3-12 = The Reason: ungodly leadership

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF ZECHARIAH’S MESSAGE (Zech. 10:1-2)

*Ask rain from the Lord
in the season of the spring rain,
from the Lord who makes the storm clouds,
and he will give them showers of rain,
to everyone the vegetation in the field.
For the household gods utter nonsense,
and the diviners see lies;
they tell false dreams
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander like sheep;
they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. (Zech. 10:1-2)*

1. In Zechariah’s day there were years of on-and-off *drought* that severely damaged Israel’s economy:

- a) *You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors. (Haggai 1:6, 10-11)*
- b) a situation not totally remedied by God until after Zechariah’s death ...
- c) In the days of Revival under Ezra:

Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin assembled at Jerusalem within the three days. It was the ninth month, on the twentieth day of the month. And all the people sat in the open square before the house of God, trembling because of this matter and because of the heavy rain. (Ezra 10:9)

2. In fact, in *prophetic imagery* rain took on a spiritual significance:

- a) Rain symbolized God’s blessings, favor, grace and even God’s Spirit upon His people ...

b) *“Be glad, O children of Zion,
and rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given the early rain for your vindication;
he has poured down for you abundant rain,
the early and the latter rain, as before.
“The threshing floors shall be full of grain;
the vats shall overflow with wine and oil.
I will restore to you the years
that the swarming locust has eaten,
the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter,
my great army, which I sent among you.
“You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
and praise the name of the Lord your God,
who has dealt wondrously with you.
And my people shall never again be put to shame.
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
and that I am the Lord your God and there is none else.
And my people shall never again be put to shame. (Joel 2:23-27)*

c) *early rain:* in October-November, to soften the ground.

d) *latter rain:* in March-April, when the crops are planted

e) *“I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
and lack of bread in all your places,
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the Lord.
“I also withheld the rain from you
when there were yet three months to the harvest;
I would send rain on one city,
and send no rain on another city;
one field would have rain,
and the field on which it did not rain would wither;
so two or three cities would wander to another city
to drink water, and would not be satisfied;
yet you did not return to me,”
declares the Lord. (Amos 4:6-8)*

f) Zechariah would later prophesy:

*And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the
Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. (Zech. 14:17)*

3. Zechariah is drawing upon the *Book of the Covenant* (Deuteronomy)

*For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which
you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land
that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from
heaven, a land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it,*

from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. “And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you. “You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth. (Deut. 11:10-21)

4. **Anthony R. Peterson:** *Zechariah: AOTC*; p. 230

Times of drought increased the temptation to turn to other gods, as earlier generations of Israelites demonstrated.

5. Remember God “shut the skies” at the word of Elijah in order to turn Israel from Baal Worship, under Ahab and Jezebel.
- a) *Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.” (1 Kings 17:1)*
 - b) *After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth.” (1 Kings 18:1)*
 - c) *And Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain.” So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” And he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go again,” seven times. And at the seventh time he said, “Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.’” And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. (1 Kings 18:41-45)*

6. This is a prophetic practice: to see God’s judgments in the natural calamities and disasters of their day –

The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the drought:

*“Judah mourns,
and her gates languish;
her people lament on the ground,
and the cry of Jerusalem goes up.
Her nobles send their servants for water;
they come to the cisterns;
they find no water;*

*they return with their vessels empty;
 they are ashamed and confounded
 and cover their heads.
 Because of the ground that is dismayed,
 since there is no rain on the land,
 the farmers are ashamed;
 they cover their heads.
 Even the doe in the field forsakes her newborn fawn
 because there is no grass.
 The wild donkeys stand on the bare heights;
 they pant for air like jackals;
 their eyes fail
 because there is no vegetation.
 “Though our iniquities testify against us,
 act, O Lord, for your name's sake;
 for our backslidings are many;
 we have sinned against you. (Jer. 14:1-7)*

7. Israel tended to turn to *idols* in such desperate times:

- a) The “*teraphim*” (ESV renders that word “*household idols*”)
- b) and “*divines*”: pagan fortune-tellers and seers.
- c) But all is lies and deception
- d) *For the household gods utter nonsense,
 and the diviners see lies;
 they tell false dreams
 and give empty consolation.
 Therefore the people wander like sheep;
 they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. (Zech. 10:2)*

8. We in America are too “sophisticated” to turn to idols and soothsayers. We prefer the god “*Science*” and the prophets known as “*meteorologists*”

9. Look back at how chapter 9 ended ...

- a) *For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!
 Grain shall make the young men flourish,
 and new wine the young women. (Zech. 9:17)*
- b) contrast that with the way chapter 10 opens ...

*Ask rain from the Lord
 in the season of the spring rain,
 from the Lord who makes the storm clouds,
 and he will give them showers of rain,
 to everyone the vegetation in the field.
 For the household gods utter nonsense,
 and the diviners see lies;*

*they tell false dreams
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander like sheep;
they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. (Zech. 10:1-2)*

c) **Barry G. Webb:** *Zechariah: BST; pp. 138-139*

But grain and new wine come only with good harvests, which depend on good rains. Of course the people Zechariah is exhorting must look to the Lord for the seasonal rains they need year by year, but over and above that, they must keep looking to him for the fulfilment of his kingdom promises. Every harvest, and the celebration of God's goodness that comes with it, is to be an anticipation of the final 'harvest home' they will celebrate in the new Jerusalem of the future kingdom of God – as described in the closing couple of paragraphs of the book. Every prayer for rain is also to be a prayer for the coming of his kingdom.

- d) The prophets will not allow us to *compartmentalize* our faith, to separate science from Faith, to divide the secular from the sacred, to drive a wedge between heaven and earth, or to divorce our present lives from the Kingdom of God yet to come!
- e) *"I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord God. (Ezekiel 34:25-30)*

II. THE SPIRITUAL CAUSE OF ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS (Zech. 10:3-12)

*"My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;
for the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah,
and will make them like his majestic steed in battle.
From him shall come the cornerstone,
from him the tent peg,
from him the battle bow,
from him every ruler—all of them together.
They shall be like mighty men in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
they shall fight because the Lord is with them,
and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.
"I will strengthen the house of Judah,*

*and I will save the house of Joseph.
 I will bring them back because I have compassion on them,
 and they shall be as though I had not rejected them,
 for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.
 Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior,
 and their hearts shall be glad as with wine.
 Their children shall see it and be glad;
 their hearts shall rejoice in the Lord.
 "I will whistle for them and gather them in,
 for I have redeemed them,
 and they shall be as many as they were before.
 Though I scattered them among the nations,
 yet in far countries they shall remember me,
 and with their children they shall live and return.
 I will bring them home from the land of Egypt,
 and gather them from Assyria,
 and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon,
 till there is no room for them.
 He shall pass through the sea of troubles
 and strike down the waves of the sea,
 and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up.
 The pride of Assyria shall be laid low,
 and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.
 I will make them strong in the Lord,
 and they shall walk in his name,"
 declares the Lord. (Zech. 10:3-12)*

1. What was the cause of all these spiritual problems? One word answer: **Leadership!**
 - a) specifically the *shepherds* of Israel. (*Leaders*)
 - b) literally: the "*male goats*" or "*he goats*"
 - c) Probably meaning the *rulers of Persia*
 - d) "*shepherd*" was a title used of Ancient Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian kings.
 - e) *The dogs have a mighty appetite;
 they never have enough.
 But they are shepherds who have no understanding;
 they have all turned to their own way,
 each to his own gain, one and all.
 "Come," they say, "let me get wine;
 let us fill ourselves with strong drink;
 and tomorrow will be like this day,
 great beyond measure." (Isa. 56:11-12)*
 - f) a perfect description of Xerxes and Haman

(1) Xerxes to poor *shepherd*

(2) Haman the wicked leader (“he goat”)

g) **Joyce Baldwin:** “While ‘shepherd’ usually denoted ‘king,’ it included all in positions of authority, whether Israelites or foreigners occupying the land” (TOTC; p. 172)

h) The Persian rulers over the Jews, in Zechariah, Ezra, Esther and Nehemiah’s time: **Tattenai, Shether-bozenai, Tobiah, Sanballat, Geshem, Haman, Xerxes and Artaxerxes**

2. But it could **also** apply to all the poor and compromised *elders* and *noblemen* of Jerusalem and Judea who gave Ezra and Nehemiah a hard time.

3. **Barry G. Webb:** *Zechariah: BST; pp. 135-136*

Leadership is not a new issue in Zechariah. When we were looking at the eight visions of chapters 2-6 we saw that the pivotal fourth and fifth dealt with the two leaders of the community, Joshua and Zerubbabel. During the time the temple was being built the community had good leadership. But it had not always been so. The scattering of Israel, culminating in the exile to Babylon, had been largely due to the bad leadership of the rulers of both the northern and southern kingdoms. Now, with his eye on the future, Zechariah sees that the restored community will again be troubled by leadership problems. After Zerubbabel and Joshua will come other leaders of a very different kind. Not all the leaders who arose in the period after the temple was built were bad, of course. There were great men, like Ezra and Nehemiah. But, sadly, they were the exception rather than the rule. Malachi, in the mid-fifth century, was already faced with a deteriorated situation, for which he laid the blame largely at the feet of the priests. In the more prosperous times that followed the completion of the temple a new wealthy class arose who oppressed the poor and continued to enrich themselves at their expense – forcing them into debt, and even slavery. Worst of all, the governors themselves became involved in these abuses.

4. Zechariah’s message about leaders falls into 3 parts:

a) **First:** God promises to judge the wicked gentile leaders and raise up godly leaders from within Israel.

(1) “*My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;
for the Lord of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah,
and will make them like his majestic steed in battle.
From him shall come the cornerstone,
from him the tent peg,
from him the battle bow,
from him every ruler—all of them together.
They shall be like mighty men in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
they shall fight because the Lord is with them,
and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.* (Zech. 10:3-5)

(2) He uses three *metaphors* to describe them ...

(3) *cornerstone* (lit: *keystones*) – a capstone or a cornerstone that finishes and gives stability to a building

(4) *tent peg*: the stake that secures a tent

(5) *battle bow*: picturing prowess in military affairs.

(6) **Note**: These leaders are presented in the *plural*; but among them will be the Messiah of Zech. 9:9

(7) *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation is he,
humble and mounted on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech. 9:9)*

b) **Second**: God will stabilize and build up Jerusalem and Judea, so that they become a strong nation again.

(1) *“I will strengthen the house of Judah,
and I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I have compassion on them,
and they shall be as though I had not rejected them,
for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.
Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior,
and their hearts shall be glad as with wine.
Their children shall see it and be glad;
their hearts shall rejoice in the Lord.
(Zech. 10:6-7)*

(2) *Judah*: The Southern Kingdom of Judah and Benjamin

(3) *Joseph ... Ephraim*: The Northern Kingdom (Israel); 10 northern tribes

(4) a *united kingdom* once again

c) **Third**: God will gather the exiles from all over the Persian Empire and bring them home to Jerusalem and Israel ...

(1) *“I will whistle for them and gather them in,
for I have redeemed them,
and they shall be as many as they were before.
Though I scattered them among the nations,
yet in far countries they shall remember me,
and with their children they shall live and return.
I will bring them home from the land of Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria,
and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon,
till there is no room for them. (Zech. 10:8-10)*

(2) a *Reverse of the dispersion and exile* ...

(3) a *gathering to a homeland*: The Promised Land

(4) This is likened to a **Second Exodus!**

(5) *He shall pass through the sea of troubles*

*and strike down the waves of the sea,
and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up.
The pride of Assyria shall be laid low,
and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.
I will make them strong in the Lord,
and they shall walk in his name,”
declares the Lord. (Zech. 10:11-12)*

(6) **Brevard Childs:** “*The entire redemptive history of Israel repeats itself in the eschatological age, there is to be a redemption again from Egypt and a passing through the sea*” (Word B. Com.; vol. 32; p. 266)

5. **Note this:** The people of God do **not** rise in their own strength, prosper by their own leaders, or find blessing their own plans. All that Zechariah mentions in chapters 9-10-11 come purely and solely from the Lord!

6. **Thomas McComiskey:** *Minor Prophets: EEC; Vol. 3; p. 1186*

The text does not say that he will strengthen his people “in himself,” but “in the Lord,” allowing this revered name to ring in the people’s ears, reminding them of all the attributes his name entails. He does not strengthen them in themselves because he takes from them everything in which they might find strength or of which they may boast. Rather, as the people continue in the world, participating in the kingdom of Messiah, they enjoy the strength of their God, empowered by a power greater than their own.

7. Just as Moses had taught Zechariah ...

*Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying,
“I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.*

*The Lord is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

*The Lord is a man of war;
the Lord is his name.*

*“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?*

*“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.*

*You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.*

The Lord will reign forever and ever.” (Ex. 15:1-3, 11,13,17-18)

Conclusion: Over the years I’ve learned a few things about *Leadership* ...

1. ... and therefore, a few things about the *people* leaders lead.

2. I've studied *Leadership* all my life –
- a) *Manpower and Industrial Relations* at The Ohio State University, in the School of Administrative Sciences (B.S., B.A.)
 - b) Two years in the U.S. Army as an *officer* overseeing a “troop” of 200+ men and women.
 - c) An MBA in *Management and Organizational Development*.
 - d) 5 years in *management* in a Fortune 500 Company
 - e) 10 years as a *Church planter*; 14 years as a *senior pastor*; these past 11 years as a *revitalizing pastor*
 - f) *40th Moderator* of the PCA; moderator of Presbytery four times in 3 different presbyteries, and *chairman* of who knows how many committees, and *moderator* of 3 sessions and two senior staffs.
 - g) *Husband* (spiritual leader) of one wife; *Father* (shepherd) of 4 children, and *Grandfather* (senior statesman) for 8 grandkids
 - h) Plus, I'm a *male* upon whom devolves *federal headship*.
3. I've come to see that the *greatest virtue* and the most *important strength* a leader can possess are these two –
- a) His greatest virtue: *humility* before God
 - b) His most important strength: *faithfulness* to God's Word.
4. I've found both *inspiration* and *instruction* in one of the Psalms of Israel's greatest king – David.
- a) Psalm 20: *A Psalm of David*, with four major lessons
 - b) **First:** 7 Blessings to pray for God to give His people
 - (1) each beginning with the word “*may*”
 - (2) *May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble!*
May the name of the God of Jacob protect you!
May he send you help from the sanctuary
and give you support from Zion!
May he remember all your offerings
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah
May he grant you your heart's desire
and fulfill all your plans!
May we shout for joy over your salvation,
and in the name of our God set up our banners!
May the Lord fulfill all your petitions! (Ps. 20:1-5)
 - c) **Second:** A remembrance that God is the Savior of His people, and the leader is not!

Now I know that the Lord saves his anointed;
he will answer him from his holy heaven
with the saving might of his right hand. (Ps. 20:6)
 - d) **Third:** A focus of faith that is aimed at God and not in our own plans, powers and programs:

*Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.
They collapse and fall,
but we rise and stand upright. (Ps. 20:7-8)*

e) **Fourth:** One lesson the leader must never forget:

- (1) The *first person* who needs God's favor, Christ's salvation, and the Spirit's providential power is the Leader himself!
- (2) *O Lord, save the king!
May he answer us when we call. (Ps. 20:9)*
- (3) Look! "*O Lord, save the **king** ...*"
- (4) Dear God, be a shepherd to the under-shepherd. Save the pastor who is the most sinful man of all!
- (5) *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (1 Tim. 1:15)*

5. Option #1: Proud, boastful, self-reliant, gifted and assertive pastors leave only a legacy to their own pride and vanity –

- a) Consumed with their own *vision*
- b) Obsessed with their own *name; reputation* and *legacy*
- c) The *hero* of every story in the sermon.
- d) The *Person* with a big name who left his church is a big mess!

6. Option #2 is the "Pattern of Paul," David, and John the Baptist ...

- a) the legacy of faithfulness in a spirit of humble service ...
- b) Paul's leadership legacy ...

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God. (1 Cor. 4:1-5)

c) David was not the natural leader Saul was nor as gifted as Solomon was, but God said this about Him ...

Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.' For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his

own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, (Acts 13:21-22, 36)

- d) And John the Baptist's "legacy" is found in the "*spirit of Elijah*" and all the prophets ...

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." (John 1:19-23)

John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:27-30)

7. We are transitioning into a new phase of *Leadership* here at Christ Covenant Church. We are calling a **New Senior Pastor** ...
- a) He is smarter, better educated, more gifted, much more well-known, and more popular than your old pastor.
 - b) There is a danger there: *The danger of pride and self-reliance.*
 - c) It is **your duty** to begin now to pray for your new pastor.
 - d) I can think of no better way to do so than to pray Psalm 20 in the Spirit of Elijah!
8. *O Lord, save our Pastor. May you answer us when we call to you in prayer!* (Ps. 20:9, paraphrased)
9. *Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Ps. 20:7)*