

# True Consolation

## *Part II of The First Burden of Zechariah*

- <sup>1</sup> 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.
- <sup>2</sup> For the **household gods**<sup>1</sup> utter nonsense,<sup>2</sup> 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**.
- <sup>3</sup> "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.
- <sup>4</sup> From him shall come **the cornerstone**, from him **the tent peg**, from him the **battle bow**, from him **every ruler**-- all of them together.
- <sup>5</sup> 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.
- <sup>6</sup> "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.

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<sup>1</sup> Teraphim; Gen 31:19.

<sup>2</sup> For the speakers have uttered grievous things, (Zec 10:2 LXA); For the household gods have spoken wickedness, (Zec 10:2 NET); For *the worshippers of idols speak oppression* (Targ.).

- <sup>7</sup> 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.
- <sup>8</sup> "I will **whistle for them** and gather them in, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as they were before.
- <sup>9</sup> Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and with their children they shall live and return.
- <sup>10</sup> 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**.
- <sup>11</sup> **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.
- <sup>12</sup> **I** will make **them** strong in the LORD, and they shall walk **in his name**," declares the LORD.

### **Zechariah 10:1:12**

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## **Gods and the Weather**

ZECHARIAH BEGINS HIS SECOND PART OF THE FIRST BURDEN with a short and rather historically vague two verse poem. “**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. Because the household gods speak iniquity, and the diviners see lying visions;<sup>3</sup> 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).

The idea here seems to be that the people and leaders of Israel (see vs. 3) consulted the spirit-world for knowledge of and help with the weather. They consulted “household gods,” *teraphim*. These are the same objects Rachel stole from her father Laban, and they seem to refer to the idols that housed dead ancestor spirits (“idols” were considered the residencies of spirits) who were often consulted for their supernatural wisdom. They went to diviners ... “soothsayers” (Geneva Bible, NET), “fortune-tellers” (NLT)—those who are in contact with the spirits. They went to the dreamers,<sup>4</sup> false prophets who supposedly were in contact with God, who gave false consolation to the

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<sup>3</sup> “Speak iniquity, and the diviners see lying visions” is the NAS.

<sup>4</sup> This follows the TKN version which sees “dreamers” who “speak lies And console with illusions” as a third category of people, rather than a subset of the activities of the diviners (who 1. See lies and 2. Tell false dreams). Either way, it isn’t that much of a difference.

people that the rains were coming, when, in fact, they weren't.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who prophesied during the exile, have nearly as much to say about famine (the opposite of rain) as the rest of the OT combined. They also say much about false prophets. So perhaps Zechariah is recalling events that were still in the recent past. Maybe he is talking about the present moment, too. But the point of the poem is to [connect the consultation of other spirits with the rains](#) that the LORD now promises. The problem was, the people—though they belonged to God—were too busy chasing after the gods to be bothered with words from Yahweh. The impact of this was to turn the entire nation of people into wandering, mindless sheep who were opened up to various afflictions (from famines to war to exile) because they had no True Shepherd.

Before looking at the amazing prophetic remedy to this desperate situation, I think that establishing some [points of contact](#) with such antiquated activities will be helpful. On the most basic level, it is easy to think that we are people incapable of this kind of supernatural neanderthalism. I

mean, who has idols in their houses anymore, especially that the consult for the weather? We are a scientific, enlightened people, no longer given to superstitious religious nonsense. Therefore, what possible application could this have nowadays?

I think that one of the closest parallels we have to Zechariah's two-verse poem is the modern apocalyptic **environmental movement** with its many and varied predictions that if mankind will simply do x, y, and z then the immanent disasters that await our world (because of manmade global warming, or in the 1970s global cooling), can be averted. These are **prophecies**, just like Zechariah is thinking of, make no mistake about it. But who would ever dare suggest that they are *religious* prophecies? After all, many of the people I know personally who believe and broadcast such reports are actually atheists.

We can think about this in two respects. The first is that the atheist, when he makes such predictions, is often coming at this from the worldview of something like scientism. **Scientism** is the belief in the universal appropriateness of the scientific method, and the view that

empirical science constitutes the most authoritative worldview, to the exclusion of other viewpoints.<sup>5</sup> (I'm presupposing here that the scientific method can actually be applied to the weather 10 years or 100 years in the future. I think such things are much less scientific than people give them credit for, given that we often can't get the next week's weather correct. Earth is one massive, nearly infinitely complex system). Of course, scientism is self-refuting, since you can't perform a scientific experiment to prove it is true and should be believed. Rather, it is a non-scientific belief, a belief of pure faith. Indeed, it is a religion of materialism, nothing immaterial exists.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This is essentially the Wikipedia's definition.

<sup>6</sup> **Going Deeper.** Actual scientists will be much less dogmatic on such topics, since dogma is the provenance of religion. When it comes to such things, good science deals in "theories", like the "theory of evolution" or the "theory of gravity." Theories do not allow such dogma. But what about scientific "laws?" Aren't these "laws" the equivalent of a religious dogma? Someone will say, "Gravity is a law, not a theory." It is true that there is a *law* of gravity. But there is also a *theory* of gravity. Laws differ from scientific theories in that they do not posit a mechanism or explanation of phenomena (i.e. "manmade" global warming). They simply report on observable and repeatable behavior and tell us "what is." Theories go on to try and explain why a thing is. Someone has said of gravity, "A law is just a part of a theory that can be stated in the form of a single sentence or a single equation. Newton's law of gravity is the statement that the force by which a particle of mass  $M$  acts on a particle of mass  $m$  has magnitude  $GMm/r^2$  and direction from  $m$  to  $M$ . Newton's theory of gravity is the framework

But frankly, many people do not understand the profoundly religious roots of this modern movement, even self-proclaimed atheists. For 25 years, former Vice-President Al Gore has set himself up as the figurehead of this movement. His 1992 book *Earth in the Balance* basically became the Bible of the movement. In a chapter titled “Environmentalism of the Spirit,” he has a section on “the sacred quality of water” (quite relevant to *Zech 10:1*). He says that Christians are baptized in water. The Qu’ran teaches that everything was created from water. Buddha is presented metaphorically as a “rain cloud,” covering, permeating, fertilizing, and enriching ‘all parched living beings’ so that they can reach Nirvana. Sikhism and its parent religion Hinduism both talk about Water as the

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that contains this law and everything else you need to calculate the motion of particles influenced by this law. A theory doesn't ever stop being a theory just because sufficient evidence to support it has been found.” (Reference <https://www.physicsforums.com/threads/difference-between-theory-and-law.309324/>). So however true it might be that laws are dogmatic, it is irrelevant to the point here, as something like man-made global warming is, by definition, not a law, but a theory—a theory which is itself based upon no law (there is no “law of global warming”), but only incomplete and non-neutral observations that give different pictures of temperature and destruction, depending upon how you manipulate and spin the data (on both sides of the debate).



Progenitor and the Vast Earth as the Mother of All.<sup>7</sup> One could say that he is asking how we can keep the rains coming.

Gore speaks very positively of something called the “**Gaia hypothesis**” that sees the earth as a self-regulating system that has characteristics of something alive.<sup>8</sup> **Gaia**, of course, of the Greek goddess Mother Earth. He discusses this after very positively affirming how in prehistoric Europe and much of the world, the religion was that of a single earth goddess who was assumed to be the fount of all life and who radiated harmony among all living things.<sup>9</sup> Kumbaya.<sup>10</sup> **What in the world does this have to do with global warming?** Nothing, if all that he was after was “science.” But this is the deeply religious worldview behind so-much of what presents itself as “pure science” to the public. It is simply a return to the worship of nature through fertility cults, pagan religions, the New Age, and

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<sup>7</sup> Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Forging a New Common Purpose* (Routledge, repub. 2013), 261-62.

<sup>8</sup> 264. Having living things on it is quite different from itself being a living being.

<sup>9</sup> 260.

<sup>10</sup> Or, as my family would say, “Yucaipa.” Ask me if you want to hear the story.



mysticism. Frankly, atheism is itself practically the same thing though in the opposite direction. It is the worship of nature without thinking you are worshiping nature (I think of Carl Sagan's famous catechism answer to his non-religious religion, "The cosmos is all there is, all there ever was, and all there ever will be").

Now, I'm not bringing this up to make a political point or to comment on whether the earth is warming or cooling or whether we are causing it or not. I'm interested in the religion of this and how much it reminds me of Zechariah's poem. I bring it up because Al Gore runs around calling himself a Baptist. "I am a Christian. I am a Protestant. I am a Baptist," Gore told *Newsweek* in an interview in 2002.<sup>11</sup> Yet for this "Baptist," Jesus is never held up as the only way to the Father. Instead, he is, at best, the Great Ecologist. Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, Gaia, it's all the same, as he mixes all religions into One, having much more in common with pantheism than he does anything remotely Christian.

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<sup>11</sup> "Religious Background of Albert Gore, Jr."  
[http://www.adherents.com/people/pg/Al\\_Gore.html](http://www.adherents.com/people/pg/Al_Gore.html).

But you see, this is exactly what seems to have been going on in Israel with God's own people. They just put their own spin on it. Yahweh is just one of many gods, all equal in power and wisdom. That's how they were acting. We too have our modern prophets, who consult the expert-diviners of the weather, speaking prophecies of doom and salvation, telling us their visions and dreams without ever consulting the LORD God. These can be overtly religious. They can call themselves Christians. They can run around pretending they are completely without any religion or god whatsoever. They still do these things. There is nothing new under the sun.

And it is worth noting that, whether ancient or modern, whether Gaia or teraphim, at the end of the day, we have before us the worship of the gods, demons, dead ancestors, or the like. Teraphim were most likely thought to represent ancestor worship. Diviners are those who seek demons or gods. Dreamers very often have angels or other supernatural beings showing them things. Gaia is the goddess.

Meanwhile, and this is the other part that I see parallels to, the people wander like sheep and are afflicted for lack of a shepherd. They believe anything they are told, and I'm not talking about the science of it here. If the earth is warming, then it is warming. If it isn't, then it isn't.

What I'm talking about are the **doomsday scenarios**: massive hurricanes in record numbers, a totally ice free arctic, millions of displaced refugees, fields of delight becoming deserts in a decade. All of these have been predictions that were supposed to have come true already. Of course we have a responsibility to the earth; the Bible says so. But being responsible vs. becoming gods are two different things. There is a hubris here, and a basic refusal to trust and ask God for the rain. Instead Gore writes, “**The richness and diversity of our religious tradition throughout history is a spiritual resource long ignored by people of faith, who are often afraid to open their minds to teachings first offered outside their own system of belief. But the emergence of a civilization in which knowledge moves freely and almost instantaneously throughout the world has led to an intense new interest in different perspectives**

on life in other cultures and has spurred a renewed investigation of the wisdom distilled by all faiths. This panreligious perspective may prove especially important where our global civilization's responsibility for the earth is concerned." This is the new Babel. "Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a Shepherd."

## Ask Me and I'll Send the Rains

After the introductory poem, the chapter begins with a word against "the shepherds" of Israel. "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..." (Zech 10:3). God will punish the church because its corrupt leaders<sup>12</sup> take the sheep away from the LORD. The LORD is supposed to be their Shepherd, as he was for David. But

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<sup>12</sup> Gore is a fascinating study in the nature of the relationship between American politics and religion, and this occurs on both sides of the political aisle (Pat Robertson has done the same thing, and done it with the weather, claiming that God sent Hurricane Katrina to punish the people of New Orleans). No, he isn't a pastor. Yes, he has preached in pulpits across America this gospel of environmentalism, and he does so claiming to be a Christian during former worship times. Thus, our politicians confuse the sheep into thinking that politics is the Word of God and they are His spokesmen on earth for what must obviously be God's political agenda.

these shepherds, these “**leaders**” are wicked. So he will take his vengeance out on the leaders. What a terribly frightening thing it is to be a leader of God’s people in any capacity! They will be **judged double**. Do not yearn for it or seek it unless God really is calling you to it. But if he is, do not run from it, because God will always find you, Jonah. But he will be with his sheep, to care for his flock.

Yet, just as he is punishing the leaders and we start to think that the sheep will feel the full brunt of his hot breath, this is just where the **good news** begins for them. For though the sheep have gone astray, the LORD has not forgotten them. What we are going to do now is consider how he will take care of his sheep. What will he do for them? Now, we have already seen two things. If they **ask for rain, he will give them rain**. The picture of rain in the season of spring rain is one of common blessing. He won’t be against them any longer. It presupposes that they are now living in houses and farming again, so they are back in the Land. That is how the verse ends.

This in turn presupposes that God has already done many good things for them. So why wouldn’t he also give

them rain? He loves his people. The image is also one of **abundance and life**. Rains make things to grow. It brings food. It gives water. It cools down the land. Life returns to the dry places.

But the verse also calls upon the people to “**ask**” God for the rain. In this way, it is **calling them back into a relationship with him once more**. This is wonderful, but also the first necessary thing to do. For just a few years back, God had sent them away, given them a certificate of divorce (**Isa 50:1; Jer 3:8**). The covenant was severed. The relationship had ended. But now, God is remaking it, calling his people to himself again, even as he had Hosea take back his wife of iniquity after she left him. This harkens back to the opening lines of Zechariah 1 and the introduction to the Burdens (ch. 7): **Return to me and I will return to you, says the LORD**. He is inviting them to come. God alone makes this possible. It isn't what they've done. His irresistible call will bring the remnant to him. But, of course, they must respond once they have been brought back to life.

I was talking with someone this week about how I have noticed this reluctance on the part of some Reformed people to call others to Christ, to ask them if they have personally trusted in Jesus, to confront them with that most important of questions, to bring about movement from those who have heard the gospel. Yet, that is the uniform message of the Bible, and there is nothing necessarily Arminian about it. Don't be afraid to ask your children, have you trusted in Christ? If not, why not? Here, let me help you learn how to pray to the LORD. Let me show you what it means to repent.

## God of the Storm

At any rate, there is one more thing you need to notice about the rain. It says, “Yahweh makes the storm clouds.” This fascinating expression is very close to Yahweh riding the storm clouds or coming in storm clouds. In Canaanite religion, this was Baal's job. In Greeks religion, it was Zeus (some have argued that they are the same deity). But no, they are usurpers who utter nonsense and teach lies. Yahweh is the cloud rider. Yahweh comes in the storm. Yahweh makes the storm.



But behold, “With the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming” (Dan 7:13), Daniel says. Many years later Jesus would tell the high priest, “You have said so [that I am the Christ, the Son of God]. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt 26:64). So by using the imagery that it does in vs. 1, Zechariah is pointing us to Christ.

## Shepherd of the Sheep

This continues with the Shepherd in vs. 2. Again, Yahweh is the Shepherd of Israel in the Scripture. And yet, Jesus says, “I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Jesus takes the title that belongs to Yahweh in the OT, because Jesus and Yahweh are One (Remember, it is the Word of God speaking to Zechariah in this Burden; see Zech 9:1).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> It struck me this week that the language of 9:1 is “The oracle of the word of the LORD.” So if “word” is meant to be understood as “words” as in a revelation of some kind, then “oracle” could be redundant (someone suggested to me that it is epexegetical, which is the idea of two words together that mean the same thing). However, we could also read it as the oracle is actually the words that need to be spoken. And they are spoken by the Word. Therefore, it is a reasonable interpretation of the logos (LXX) to read it the way John 1:1 reads it. The Word of God, Christ, has a burden that he must speak forth.

He also says that he cares for his flock. In fact, at one place in Matthew we read that, “**When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd**” (**Matt 9:36**). **Jesus quotes Zechariah**. The implication is that Jesus is Zechariah’s Shepherd. His entire earthly ministry displayed his care for his sheep: feeding them, healing them, teaching them, loving them, exhorting them, finally **laying down his life for them**.

Remarkably, in Zechariah 10 it explains how the Shepherd cares for his flock. But is it unrelated to what Jesus said and did? It begins with the imagery of making the people like his **majestic steed in battle** (**Zech 10:3**). The donkey imagery has faded away, and returning again is the image of a war horse. What does the war horse do? It assists the rider in his military conquest. The theme continues in **vs. 5** “**They shall be 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.**” What kind of a war is this?

In answering this question, it is curious that as soon as Jesus sees the people as sheep without a Shepherd, he immediately turns to his disciples in the next verse and says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matt 9:37-38). He changes the metaphor from war to harvesting. Because Jesus is not making physical war. He is defeating Satan and his minions, setting people free from the power of death and the devil, sin and Satan, but he is not making war against men here. “I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you” (Luke 10:19).<sup>14</sup> We do not fight against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of heaven. So to use Isaiah’s words, he is turning swords into plowshares. His people are used in this spiritual war to bring the sheep to peace with God. That is what I was talking about earlier about confronting your children with a response to the gospel. This does not refer to an elite

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<sup>14</sup> The previous two verses refer to demons and Satan.

class of Christian leaders, either. It is all of God's people that are used in the battle here.

**Zechariah 10:4**, which comes between these two verses, carries some of this same war imagery. There is a battle bow here. However, it also has different kinds of things as well. There is a “**cornerstone**” and a “**tent peg**” and also “**every ruler**” is here. It says, “**From him shall come**” these things. What does this mean? One commentary says, “**The remedy for the nation's deception focuses on the coming of the Messiah who is described in a fourfold way as the Cornerstone (cf. Isa 28:16), the Tent Peg ... the Battle Bow (cf. Ps 45:5), and the Ruler (cf. Gen 49:10; Micah 5:2).** These terms emphasize the strong, stable, victorious, and trustworthy nature of Messiah's rule.”<sup>15</sup>

**Calvin** notices that “**Zechariah ... mentions here all the supports which sustain a building from its very foundation.**” Of course, Messiah is called the **Cornerstone** in both the OT (**Isa 28:16**) and NT (**Matt 21:42; Mark**

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<sup>15</sup> F. Duane Lindsey, “Zechariah,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 1564.

12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Eph 2:20; 1 Pet 2:6-7). Christ is the Tabernacle (John 1:14) that was fastened to the ground with pegs (Ex 27:19). When I read the translation in Calvin, “From thee the nail,” I couldn’t help but think about Christ dying on the cross, as they fastened his Temple to the tree, suspending him between heaven and earth. Is it any wonder that this is called a “burden?” For whoever bore such a burden as this?

Therefore, the burden continues, “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph” (Zech 10:6). Salvation comes through Jesus Christ to his people. He uses the affectionate term “Joseph” to go along with “Judah.” God loves his people. “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” (6). They were not seeking him, but he sought them, in their sin, and brought them back to himself. The salvation found in Christ is pure love, pure compassion, pure grace, pure mercy.

Therefore, “Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine” (7).

Warriors do not drink on the eve of battle, but only after it has been won. Their minds must be clear. But after the battle has been won, and victory theirs, hearts are cheered with the wine and merriment found in the king's hearth. "Their children shall see it and be glad; their hearts shall rejoice in the LORD" (7). When they see the victory and when they see your own gladness and happiness at having been saved and transformed, your children will see it and God will use this to make their own hearts glad through you, even as it is promised.

After the victory, the LORD will whistle for his people like Galdalf whistling for his war horse Shadowfax. When the master of horses whistles, the horse knows the sound and comes. It is a coming to Christ. "For I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as they were before" (8). "Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and with their children they shall live and return" (9). In bringing Israel back from Babylon, the prophet foresees the day when God's people scattered abroad in the nations shall return to him in the heavenly city. It starts in the typology of

Zechariah's own day with the people returning to build their temple. Then it begins its fulfillment in the days of Christ with the Jews, as the Lord Jesus came to them.

But then it says, “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.” Suddenly, as we have seen before in Zechariah, the promise to Abraham comes back into view, the promise to be the father of many nations. Israel hadn't been scattered to Egypt for centuries, though many surely fled there when the Babylonian came to the walls of Jerusalem. As for Assyria, the picture is one of as far south and north as I scatter you, I will bring you back. I will bring you back whether I sent you there or not. This hints at the salvation of the Jews *and the Gentiles*, whom God scattered abroad the face of the earth all the way back in the days of Babel.

How strange that he would return them to Gilead and to Lebanon. Why? Because the Promised Land is overflowing with people (it also recalls the full extent of the Promised Land from the previous chapter)! They have



to make their way east, east of the Jordan into the land of Gilead. They have to go north, north into the land of Tyre and Sidon, which came up in the last chapter. God's people will begin to expand into the whole world, after they've been gathered into one family in Christ. The ancient promises are about to be fulfilled, very soon, Zechariah is saying. And certainly, we live in that era of mighty fulfillment of these great prophecies.

**Vs. 11** now shows us the **great strength of the LORD** to do these things. It recalls the footsteps of the LORD in the Exodus. “**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.**” Again, it talks about Egypt and Assyria. Triumphant over the Nile is the imagery of redemption out of slavery. It is a picture of salvation in Christ, who triumphed over Pharaoh and Leviathan in the waters. As for the Assyrian, who thought he was the World Tree that brought the nations under its shade (**Ezek 31**). “**All hail the mighty Assyrian king**” (This and other trees appear in the next chapter). But he is laid

low, the mighty tree, along with all the trees of Eden, for his arrogance. But fitting the theme of the chapter and the other prophets, what kind of triumph is this? How shall he lay them low?

By triumphing over them in the cross (Col 2:15). Long ago, Cyprian of Carthage wrote, “That Christ is God” saying:

“In Genesis: ‘And God said unto Jacob, Arise, and go up to the place of Bethel, and dwell there; and make there an altar to that God who appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of thy brother Esau’ (Gen 35:1). Also in Isaiah: ‘Thus saith the Lord, the God of Sabaoth, Egypt is wearied; and the merchandise of the Ethiopians, and the tall men of the Sabeans, shall pass over unto Thee, and shall be Thy servants; and shall walk after Thee bound with chains; and shall worship Thee, and shall pray to Thee, because God is in Thee, and there is no other God beside Thee. For Thou art God, and we knew it not, O God of Israel, our Saviour. They shall all be confounded and fear who oppose Thee, and shall fall into confusion’ (Isa 45:14-16). Likewise in

the same: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight the paths of our God. Every channel shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and all crooked places shall be made straight, and rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be seen, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God, because the Lord hath spoken it’ (Isa 40:3-5). Moreover, in Jeremiah: ‘This is our God, and no other shall be esteemed beside Him, who hath found all the way of knowledge, and hath given it to Jacob His son, and to Israel His beloved. After this He was seen upon earth, and He conversed with men’ (Baruch 3:35–37). Also in Zechariah God says: “And they shall cross over through the narrow sea, and they shall smite the waves in the sea, and they shall dry up all the depths of the rivers; and all the haughtiness of the Assyrians shall be confounded, and the sceptre of Egypt shall be taken away. And I will strengthen them in the Lord their God, and in His name shall they glory, saith the Lord.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Cyprian of Carthage, “Three Books of Testimonies against the Jews,” in *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and

Do you see? From start to finish, this second part of the first burden continues where it left off. It is about the coming of Messiah. The effect of his coming, for yet a third time in the passage, now finishes, “I will make them strong” (Zech 10:12). They will strong and mighty “in the LORD.” Zechariah’s “in the LORD” becomes the very important “in Christ” in the NT. Same person. This, we know, because “They shall walk in his Name.”

But notice the syntax. “‘I (first person) will make them strong in the LORD, and they shall walk in his (third person) name,’ declares the LORD.” One commentator asks a great question, though I’m not sure he understands the full biblical answer. “The final verse of this poem may strike the reader as odd,” he says. “Is it possible that the deity would refer to himself in the third person while speaking in the first person? ... Such syntax is at home in earlier prophetic literature, for example, in Hos 1:7, ‘I will deliver them by the Lord their God,’ a text in which the

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A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, vol. 5, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 517–518.

deity is clearly speaking.”<sup>17</sup> If only he understood the interplay throughout the OT of two Yahwehs but One God! This lost but vital piece of OT interpretation in the church must be recovered in our day, that Christ might regain the preeminence in our minds that he always have had in our understanding of the OT. This seems exactly what Hosea and Zechariah are both seeing.

We have seen how there is a man coming whose “name is Branch” (**Zech 5:4**). We have also see the Angel of the LORD was the one speaking the messages to Zechariah in the first part of the book. Way back in Exodus, the LORD had something very important to tell the people. “**Behold, I send an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Pay careful attention to him and obey his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression, for my name is in him**” (**Ex 23:20-21**). Now, the Burden of the Word of the LORD unveils in a new way (for Zechariah

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<sup>17</sup> David L. Petersen, Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi: A Commentary (Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 78.

that is), that the Name is the Angel, coming soon as a man—the Branch. They will walk in his Name.

“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). Peter tells the crowds, “You denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name-- by faith in his name-- has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all” (3:14-16). Still later in Acts, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (4:12). Later yet, “They were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (5:41). There are so many more, it would take an hour just to read them. For the NT understands walking is in the Name—in Christ, the Name of God. What was going through the Apostle’s mind then, when he told the man, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” (3:6). Just a miracle (“just”)? Or could he

have been thinking of Zechariah, “**They shall walk in his Name.**”

Beloved, what we see then in this picture today is a wondrous prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do not think this passage is an outdated, irrelevant prophecy, that we aren't like those people back then. Don't worship the earth and the force and powers of nature and over nature. And don't think that you aren't capable of turning away from the LORD as they did. Turn back to him when you sin, for he bids you to call upon him and he will send rainclouds of delight. Come to him and find salvation, wine of gladness, room in the Promised Land, strength in Christ. You will be more than conquerors in the Name. Not through physical power, but through the simplicity of the gospel and power of Jesus Christ. Luther says, “**They will be strong, not in their own might but in Christ. In His name they will walk.**” That is, they will believe and live in the faith which has Christ as its object.”<sup>18</sup> As Bryan Gregory puts it, “**He is peaceful, yet he conquers the world. He is**

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<sup>18</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 20: Minor Prophets III: Zechariah*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 20 (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 115.



gentle, yet he overcomes. He is meek, yet he is vindicated. He is humble, yet he turns the world upside down.”<sup>19</sup> This is the **True Consolation** that comes not from lying false prophets of doom and gloom, but from the one who has conquered sin and death and holds the power of the rains in his hands.

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<sup>19</sup> Bryan R. Gregory, *Longing for God in an Age of Discouragement: The Gospel according to Zechariah*, ed. Tremper Longman III, *The Gospel according to the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 171–172.