1:2 God is frequently called “Yahweh of Armies” in Zechariah because the prophecy is seeking to assure the Jews that although everything seemed quiet on earth and in the land of Judah (:11), God’s invisible armies of Angels were very actively working. We need to also be aware of this.

1:12 The Angel didn’t understand- Angels don’t sin, they have God’s nature, but they still don’t know everything (Mt. 24:36).

1:16 God had returned to Jerusalem; through the prophets, He had called for the Jews to leave Babylon and also return to Jerusalem. But most of them preferred to stay in the soft life there. Those who returned were following where God led. The call to repentance in v.3 was in terms of ‘returning’ to God- and the Jews could’ve demonstrated this by returning to Jerusalem from Babylon. God had already returned to them; they had to return to Him. God takes the initiative with us, time and again.

1:21 A horn can be understood as a symbol of power.

2:7 God urged the Jews to leave Babylon. But as the book of Esther explains, they were quite comfortable there, Jews were in high places, they didn’t stay weeping by the rivers of Babylon for long; and there’s archaeological evidence they were involved in banking and commerce. But God told them to escape from it- for spiritually, it would kill them. Their position was urgent. But most preferred to remain there, rather than leave it all behind and make the long and uncertain journey to a land in ruins.

2:8 *Apple of His eye*- The most sensitive spot on the human body. God is so sensitive to us His people; His love for us is so great that He will be highly sensitive to everything done bad to us, and every pain we experience.

3:1 The context in Zechariah 3 was that of the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. That situation was reflected in the Heavenly court. The Jews were trying to rebuild the temple and re-establish a system of worship there. However, “the people of the land” acted as a satan [‘Satan’ means ‘adversary’] to the Jews. They are actually called “the adversaries of Judah” in Ezra 4:1. They wrote an accusation against the (new) inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem to the king of Persia (Ezra 4:6). The Hebrew word for “accusation” is related to that translated “satan”. 3: 8 tells us that the characters of verses 1 and 2 are ‘men of sign’ i.e. we have to interpret them. So the satans - the adversaries - stood before the angel along with Joshua the High Priest, who “was clothed with filthy garments” (:3) - without a mitre on his head (:5 implies). The inhabitants of the land, the satan, were complaining to God, manifested in the angel, that the new Jewish high priest was not really valid, as he did not wear the proper clothes (they had probably been lost during the captivity). The angel rebukes the satan, and proceeds to clothe Joshua with a set of priestly clothes and a mitre (:4,5), thus showing God’s acceptance of him. The inference behind the complaint was that God had not really chosen Jerusalem for the Jews to rebuild, and that therefore they were going ahead with their plans without God behind them. But the angel says that the Lord *has* chosen Jerusalem, in the same way as He *had* chosen Joshua to be high priest. Thus Joshua represented Jerusalem. “Isn’t this a burning stick plucked out of the fire?”, the angel asks satan concerning Jerusalem. This is quoted in Jude 23 concerning saving repentant sinners. Thus the angel is in effect saying, ‘Jerusalem has repented, therefore I have plucked them out of the fire of judgment and destruction; you should not therefore be implying that Jerusalem and the Jews are so sinful that they cannot be restored to their land with Me behind them’.

4:6 The prophets continually criticize human strength. In our terms, this may translate into situations like what we do when we feel the first onset of an illness; when a car won’t start… do we trust in human strength, on the pretensions of science, and only turn to God if all else fails? In prophetic terms, this is *awful*! That we don’t first and totally turn to our God.

5:3 This condemns theft and dishonesty amongst the exiles who had returned from Babylon. Malachi and Haggai comment that the harvests were poor and the people suffered- because their focus was on building their own farms rather than building God’s house. Verses 5-11 seem to be saying that their wickedness was so great that they may as well be taken up by Angelic means and returned to Babylon [“Shinar”, :11] to build a pagan temple there, as an inversion of the way they had been taken by Angelic means from Babylon to Judah in order to build Yahweh’s temple.

6:12 Zerubbabel's name meant 'The branch /shoot from Babylon'. He could have fulfilled these prophecies, he was intended to- but history records he returned to Babylon. So the prophecy was reapplied to Joshua the High Priest- the Hebrew form of ‘Jesus’. But he also failed. The fulfilment has therefore been reapplied and rescheduled to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, “the branch” (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5).

6:15 So often, God sets up very detailed potentials for His people- but they are only realized if we play our part. It must be so tragic for God, enthusiastically creating plans in such detail, which are then never operationalized because of human laziness and small minded selfishness.

*You shall know*- Zechariah says this several times, implying that his words weren’t taken seriously by those he spoke with. This is the experience of all God’s true children.

7:5 We can do religious exercises such as fasting and other things which involve physical loss and discomfort for us, and yet our heart may still be far from God. Indeed, we can do these things as it were unto ourselves and not to God; but this isn’t the same as true spirituality (cp. Col. 2:21-23).

7:12 *His Spirit in the previous prophets*- The prophets, whose words are now in written form in the Bible, were inspired by God. His Spirit was in them, and was articulated through their words which we now read on paper. In this sense God’s words are Spirit and life (Jn. 6:63); and the prophets spoke not just their own words , but the words which God’s Spirit inspired (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Through absorbing God’s word into our lives, His Spirit and life will be active in us.

8:2 God’s enormous love for us His people explains why He is also so jealous over us, and why at times He has so much anger relating to us. Every thought or action of unfaithfulness or denial of Him is indescribably painful to Him.

8:3 Ezra 6:14 says that the captives who returned from Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem prospered in their work and were inspired to it by the prophecies of Zechariah. He encouraged their hands to be strong in the work (8:13). Here in v. 3 God says that He has already returned to Zion (the temple mount); and so those who returned were as it were following Him. This prophecy that Jerusalem would surely be rebuilt would’ve encouraged the builders as they worked against so many obstacles and so much discouragement from within and without.

8:6 This question touches upon the psychology of the reason why we find it hard to believe God. We assume that if something is too hard for *us*, then it must be too hard for God. We assume that God is a man, just a bit bigger and wiser and more powerful than us, but broadly within our limitations. Thus we make God after our own image, instead of realizing that we are made in *His* image. Of course, we do this only subconsciously. The unlimited almightiness of God is what true faith accepts.

9:1 Note the mutuality between God and His people- our eyes look to Him, and His eyes look to us (:8). And in that catching of the eye, that flash moment when the God who is in search of man meets the man who is in search of God, there is the energy of the Spirit.

9:7 *He will be*- Note how often God states that the intended result of His judgment of Israel’s enemies is that they will join the people of God.

9:9 The concept of a humble King was a contradiction in terms- a King was supposed to be proud and displaying his power, riding on a fine horse rather than a young ass. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy by entering Jerusalem sitting on a young donkey which hadn’t been broken in (Lk. 19:30). It would’ve stopped and started and wandered rather than striding purposefully. It’s rather like a new victorious president entering his capital city in a spluttering old car, rather than in a fleet of shining, powerful, quietly purring Mercedes. The point was that in God’s Kingdom, true greatness is in humility. The mighty horse and chariot which human strength prefers is to be brought to nothing (:10; 10:5).

10:1 We shouldn’t presume upon God’s blessings; even in the time of rain, we are to ask for it. Even if we have food in the fridge and in the cupboard, we are to ask God to give us the food of today (Mt. 6:11).

10:3 *Because*- This implies that because Yahweh had visited His people and (potentially) made them a strong flock capable of doing His work, therefore the priests were at fault for not enabling Judah’s spiritual revival. God is angry with those who don’t play their part in enabling His potential plans for others to come true for them.

10:5- see on 9:9.

10:11 Repeatedly Zechariah emphasizes that it is the pride of these nations more than anything else which is the basis for their condemnation. The Nile was the pride of the Egyptians just as the Jordan was Judah’s pride (11:3).

11:10 Israel rejected God's covenant, and therefore He rejected them in that He broke the unbreakable-by-Him covenant (2 Kings 17:15,20). In reality, they had rejected themselves, and broke the covenant (Jer. 31:32). It was only they who could break it, and God was only sadly confirming what they had done. And so with us. Only we can reject ourselves from God’s covenant love.

11:11 It was the poor within the society of Zechariah’s time who responded to God’s word; and this is a principle, that the poor [in whatever sense] who accept the Gospel better than the wealthy (Lk. 7:22; 1 Cor. 1:26). The ‘prosperity Gospel’ is not Biblical.

11:14 Covenant relationship between people is broken [the horizontal level, as it were] when they break their covenant relationship with God [the vertical level]- v. 10. Conversely, if we are in covenant with God then we must be in meaningful covenant relationship with all those others who are in covenant with God. In our times, baptism into Christ means that we are “in” the new covenant based around God’s Gospel promises (Gal. 3:27-29). We therefore are in covenant fellowship with all others who are in the same covenant status with God.

12:3 *Trample upon it* - The LXX of this verse is quoted in Lk. 21:24 as having a specific fulfilment in the last days before Christ returns.

12:10 This states that men would look upon the pierced (i.e. crucified) Saviour, and mourn in recognition of their own sinfulness. This verse is quoted as having fulfilment both at the crucifixion (Jn. 19:37) and also at the final judgment (Rev. 1:7). There is strong connection between these two events. The cross divided men into two categories: The repentant thief and the bitter one; the soldiers who mocked and the Centurion who believed; the Sanhedrin members who believed and those who mocked; the women who lamented but didn't obey His word, and those whose weeping isn't recorded, but who stood and watched and believed. As we come before the cross in our minds, we are naturally driven to self-examination. There our thoughts are revealed (Lk. 2:35). This is why self-examination should occur naturally if we break bread properly, i.e. with our minds focused upon Him as He hung there.

*Only son… firstborn*- The Jews will come to understand something of God’s grief at the death of His only Son.

*Pierced*- It’s possible that the Lord Jesus still has marks in His hands and side where He was crucified- 13:6 may imply that the Jews of the last days will look upon them. He had them after His resurrection (Jn. 20:27), and marks of death were visible in the vision of Jesus which John saw (Rev. 5:6). Perhaps for absolute eternity He will carry these marks as a constant reminder to us all of the price paid for our redemption.

13:6 *Marks*- see on 12:10.

13:8 This could mean that two thirds of the Jews now living in Israel will die during the tribulation.

13:9 The purpose of Israel’s final tribulation will be to bring them to repentance; once there is repentance amongst them, then Christ will come (Is. 59:20). The quicker they repent, the shorter and lesser will be their tribulation. This explains why some of the prophecies of the last days are vague and hard to fit together chronologically- because there are various potential scenarios, depending upon the speed of Israel’s repentance. This trial of faith as gold is tried is going on in the lives of believers right now (1 Pet. 1:7)- the tribulations of our lives are therefore as intense and dramatic, in spiritual terms, as the tribulation about to break upon Israel. We shouldn’t underestimate the traumas which we go through spiritually.

14:4 This must connect with Christ’s ascension from Heaven from the Mount of Olives, with the Angels promising that He would return in the same way (Acts 1:11). Immediately prior to Christ’s second coming, Jerusalem will have been captured by her enemies; Christ comes when the remnant of Jews left alive repent and cry out to Him; see on 13:9.

14:7 This may suggest that the meaning of time collapses around the time of Christ’s coming. This would provide the answer to many practical questions- e.g. how shall we each stand before Christ’s judgment seat individually and have some time in discussion about our lives; why can’t we fit all the prophecies of the last days into some chronological order?

14:11 *No more curse*- Quoted in Rev. 22:3 about the future Kingdom of God on earth. God will be literally King over all the planet (:9); and there will be topographical changes around Jerusalem (:8).

14:12 Could this refer to nuclear warfare, used by God to punish those who use it? God will destroy Israel’s enemies by turning them against each other (:13).

14:21 *A Canaanite*- This apparently strange ending reflects Zechariah’s sadness that in his day, there had been unbelievers and even enemies allowed by God’s people to have rooms right in the temple of Yahweh itself (Neh. 13:7,8). He looked forward, as all God’s children do, to the time of God’s Kingdom when the sheep and goats will finally be divided from each other for ever.