

# Dr. Gary Yates, Book of the 12, Session 27, Zechariah, Part 1

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his course on the Book of the 12. This is session 27, Zechariah, Part 1.

This study and the next are going to focus on the book of Zechariah and the role of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in the Old Testament and in the Book of the 12 is that they are the two prophets that God uses to encourage the post-exilic community to complete the task of rebuilding the temple and beyond that to talk about the spiritual renewal and the ultimate restoration that God will bring to the people of Israel.

Haggai begins his ministry in August of 520 BC. The work on the temple has been lying dormant for 20 years. The work is unfinished.

God wants the people to finish this. The temple is central to their worship. It is central to their relationship with him, and the people respond to the prophetic message of Haggai and, within three weeks, are actually rebuilding.

A short time after that, God raised up the prophet Zechariah, and in the opening verses of the message of Zechariah, we see the prophet calling the people to repentance. It says as this issue is raised, remember that the idea of repentance, the Hebrew word *shub*, turning around or returning to the Lord is not just an important concept in the prophetic literature as a whole. It is an especially important concept in the Book of the 12.

It is one of those unifying ideas. What we have in the book of the 12 at large is mostly a failure of the people to repent, and over this 400-year period during the Assyrian crisis, the Babylonian crisis, and the Persian crisis, God raised up a variety of prophetic voices, and the people, for the most part, do not respond to them. Often, there is outright rejection when a prophet like Amos is sent home or when a prophet of judgment like Micah is told not to preach these things; disaster is not going to overtake us; the Lord is in our midst.

But there are limited examples of repentance. At the very beginning of the Book of the 12 we have the story of Joel and the repentance that took place during his ministry and we are still going to look at that. We have the surprising repentance of the Assyrians and the Ninevites when Jonah preaches to them.

Then we have this positive example in the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah where Haggai and Zechariah call the people to be faithful to God and to return to the work

of rebuilding the temple, and the people are responsive to that. Within three weeks of the time that Haggai preaches, the people are doing the work of rebuilding the temple. Zechariah expresses this and talks about the past in verse 2 of chapter 1, the Lord was angry with your fathers.

That is the reason why this judgment has occurred in the first place. Therefore, thus declares the Lord of hosts, return to me says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you. So, a call for them to respond to the prophetic word more than just simply rebuilding the temple.

Be renewed, turn from your sinful ways, and restore your relationship with God, and when that happens, God promises to return to them. So again, we have this balance between God's saving initiatives, God's bringing the people back home, and the people's response to that. So, there is a reciprocal relationship with that.

Return to me, and I will return to you. In verse 6, again going back to the failure of the fathers in the past, but my words and my statutes which I commanded my servants, the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? And that's the story that we've seen develop throughout the book of the 12. They didn't listen to God's spokesman, and they experienced judgment as a result of that. As Zechariah lays this out in front of the people, it says, so they repented and said as the Lord of hosts has purposed to deal with us for our ways and our deeds so he has dealt with us.

And so, the prophet calls them to repentance, and the people respond. They recognize, yes, you're right, our fathers were punished because of their sins, and the Lord returns to his people because they return to him. On the basis of that repentance and on the basis of their responsiveness, God now promises to bless them, and both the ministry of Haggai in a shorter form and Zechariah in a longer form provide for us the encouragement that God is giving to the people as they do this difficult task of rebuilding the temple.

When they came back from exile, it was not the glorious time that we might think about reading some of the earlier prophets. It was a difficult time; there were financial hardships, they were still under foreign oppression, there were enemies in the land that did not want to see Judah becoming a viable province, and, so this was a discouraging time. It would be a very difficult process to rebuild the temple, and this temple would be nothing compared to the glory and the opulence of the temple that Solomon had built.

So, if these people are going to finish the task that is going to take them a period of roughly five years, they are going to need constant encouragement from the Lord and from his prophets. And so the role of Haggai and Zechariah in all of this is to challenge the people to rebuild when they respond to the challenge to encourage them. God is with you, God will provide the resources, God has provided the

leadership that you need in the person of Zerubbabel and in the person of Joshua and the Lord is going to bring this to completion.

Ultimately, beyond all of this, there will be a complete and full and final restoration. So, the people repent, and they come back to God, but one of the issues that is going to be developed in the remainder of the book of Zechariah is that this repentance is still not a full and complete repentance. It is not until the time that the people fully return to God that they are going to experience all of the blessings that God has promised for them, and the restoration will be complete.

So, there is a partial now experience of the blessings of restoration. There is going to be an ultimate not yet experience of that in the future eschatological kingdom. That distinction between now and not yet really provides for us the outline of the book of Zechariah because the first eight chapters of Zechariah are going to focus especially on the blessings that God is providing now and all of the things that God does as the people are faithful to him and rebuild the temple.

In chapters 9 to 14, there is more of a focus on the not yet and the eschatological restoration, the return that is going to happen beyond the return, and the time when Israel will fully experience all the blessings that God has for them. Remember when the prophets before the post-exilic period were talking about this time? The prophet Jeremiah says the Lord is going to bring the people back to the land, and he is going to write the law on their hearts and forgive their sins. The prophet Ezekiel says that the Lord will give his people a new heart.

Deuteronomy has said the Lord is going to circumcise the hearts of the people. Some people look at those kinds of promises and write about the fact that it appears that God is going to override Israel's will or that God is simply going to impose repentance on them. But I think that understanding, as we have talked about earlier, that understanding and that explanation of the prophetic language fails to understand, in part, how prophetic rhetoric works.

When a prophet is looking forward to some great act that God is going to do in the future, the promises are often expressed in an absolute and unconditional way. The purpose of that rhetoric is to encourage the people who are experiencing either exile or judgment and to remind them God is going to fulfill these promises. God has made certain covenantal commitments to Israel, and God is sovereign enough, and God is powerful enough that he will ultimately win in the end and accomplish the purposes that he has designed.

That is the way prophetic language works. So, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, the Lord is going to write the law on your hearts. This problem of Israel's persistent sin is going to be removed and taken away.

Ezekiel, God is going to give them a new heart. However, when the time of fulfillment begins, we are back to the issue of how do the people respond to God's saving initiatives? The time that Jeremiah and Ezekiel look forward to when God would bring back the people to the land is here. Now, once that time of fulfillment has arrived, the issue becomes the timing of this, the manner of how you experience these blessings, and the fullness to which these blessings are enjoyed in the present generation depending upon how the people respond to God's saving initiatives.

And in the book of Haggai and Zechariah, we do see a positive response to God's saving initiatives. We do see a positive response to the prophetic call to rebuild the temple. But in chapter 8 verses 16 and 17, we also see that there is still a need for the people to fully come back to God and revise their ways.

Being back in the land was not enough. Ultimately, they would have to fully return to the Lord with all of their hearts. And so, the prophet Zechariah is going to say in chapter 8, verses 16 and 17, the word of the Lord of hosts came to me saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, the fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth month and the fast of the seventh month and the fast of the tenth month shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts, therefore love and peace.

So, the sadness of exile is going to be turned into the joy of celebration. But how is that going to happen? Back in verse 16, speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true, and make for peace. Do not devise evil in your hearts against one another and love no false oath for these things I hate, declares the Lord.

So, we're right back to the message of the prophets before the exile. When the people learn to practice justice, then God will pour out on them the covenant blessings. When they fully return to God, then the blessings will be fully experienced.

And so, the timing and manner and the way that all of this is worked out is these absolute unconditional promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel are ultimately realized are going to depend on the people's responses. Later, when God makes the saving initiative of even sending his son and the promised Messiah, the response of Israel to that saving initiative ultimately means that the kingdom of God is going to come in an initial stage and then only at a later time in its ultimate in its ultimate consummation. We, as the people of God, presently are living in a time of now and not yet.

The kingdom of God has been inaugurated and we are enjoying the blessings of the kingdom and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus and the work that he has done that leads to him ascending to the right hand of the Father is the basis for that and why we have been transferred into the kingdom of the Son that he loves, the

book of Colossians. But the kingdom is also not yet. The full and final realization of God's kingdom rule over the earth hasn't occurred.

The people of Israel in the post-exilic era, as they are living in the return from exile, are also living in the now and the not yet of restoration. God has begun his work of eschatological salvation. God has brought them back to the land, but the return has still not fully restored them to the Lord.

As we understand from the preaching of the prophets, there is going to be a return beyond the return. Jeremiah had said in 70 years God is going to bring the exile to an end. God will bring his people back to the land.

Daniel, through his prophetic visions, says it is not simply going to be 70 years before God fully restores Israel. There are going to be 70 weeks of 7 years. Whether we understand that in a literal way or simply an apocalyptic way of saying in a long, long time, Daniel reflects for us that the final restoration is going to take place at a much later time than simply the 70-year return to the land.

So there is this issue of repentance in the book of Zechariah. God blesses them for their repentance, but there is also a recognition that it is incomplete. To further encourage the people in their rebuilding and to further move along their repentance and the renewal of their covenant with God, God reveals to Zechariah in the year 519 BC, as the people are in the midst of rebuilding this, a series of night visions.

These occur in February of 519 BC. So, they have been rebuilding for some time. These night visions present some interpretive challenges for us.

As we read this, we're like, wow, what're some of the symbolism? We have something that is very close to the kind of apocalyptic literature that we have in the book of Daniel or the book of Revelation. In fact, it seems like a form or a type of sort of proto-apocalyptic language. But in the midst of all the difficulties of this and the differences and the nuances and the specific details of these eight visions, there really are four or five key themes that are coming out in each one of these.

Number one, there is the idea that God is going to judge the nations that have oppressed Israel and sent them away into exile. So, there's going to be a reversal, between Israel's situation and the nations. God is going to bring about the restoration of Israel, and part of that is going to involve the rebuilding and renewal of Jerusalem and the temple that's necessary and that's needed.

There is going to be a cleansing of the land and a purging of the people of Israel from their sin. Sin and disobedience to God and social injustice are really issues that are as large in the post-exilic period as they were in the pre-exilic period. There is also going

to be a key leadership role for Joshua as the high priest and Zerubbabel as the governor.

In fact, these prefigure the leadership that will ultimately be given by the promised Messiah. So yeah, these visions do present us with some interpretive difficulties. If you're reading through them for the first time or haven't read through them in a while, it can be very confusing, but those are the key themes that all of these visions are trying to relay.

They're all dealing with aspects of the restoration that is taking place in connection with the rebuilding of the temple and an encouragement that God will ultimately make this successful. The first vision in chapter 1, verses 8 to 17, is a man among the myrtle trees, and the myrtle trees provide cover and seclusion. But this man is the angel of the Lord, and we seem to have another group of angels who have gone out into the four corners of the world, and they have scouted out the world, and they have found that the world is at peace and security.

The troubling aspect of this is that these are the nations that have oppressed Israel or taken them away into exile or brought all the horrors of defeat and exile on them. So the question is, why are these nations at ease, and why are these nations enjoying this kind of security? And the angel of the Lord raises a question and says something to the Lord. O Lord of hosts, Lord of armies, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah against which you have been angry these 70 years? And the Lord answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked to me, and he said, I'm extremely zealous for Jerusalem and Zion and the nations that have afflicted and oppressed you. They will not be at peace and rest for very long because I am beginning to bring about this reversal where I will judge the nations and save my people.

Now I think it's very interesting that the angel of the Lord feels the necessity of reminding the Lord of God's promise through the prophet Jeremiah that the exile would last for 70 years. Okay, God, we're at the end of that period, and if we could think about from 586 to 520, that in itself almost represents a 70-year period. So, God, how long before you fulfill your covenant promises? Earlier, before the people had even come back to the land, Daniel in Daniel chapter 9 is asking God the same question, and he confesses the sin of the people, admits that he's part of that, and says, God, forgive our sins.

It's time for the judgment to be over and for the restoration to begin to take place. So, God has made this promise to his people, but both the prophets and the angels feel that it's their role to remind God of the covenant promises and to pray in light of that that God would fulfill that. And God, in response, says, I'm aware of my promises.

I'm committed to them. I am going to fulfill them. The Lord even says in Isaiah chapter 62, I have stationed watchmen on the walls.

And we're not sure here if the watchmen are angelic figures or prophetic figures in light of Zechariah and Daniel. They may be both. But I have installed these watchmen on the walls to pray and to remind me of the promise that I've made concerning the 70 years. So, in light of that, it's perfectly legitimate for a Daniel to pray, God, remember your covenant promises and fulfill them for the angels to remind the Lord of that.

And even as we look forward to the future coming of the kingdom of God, Peter says that we, as believers, are able to hasten the day. And perhaps in the same way that Daniel and these angels remind the Lord of his promises, ask him to fulfill them; God has given us a responsibility as his followers, as members of the kingdom of God, to pray for the arrival of the ultimate consummation of that kingdom. Jesus taught his disciples to pray, your kingdom come.

As we do that, and as we carry out God's kingdom work in anticipation of that, we are able to hasten the day. Again, the timing of when God brings eschatological blessings is in many ways conditioned upon the ways that people respond to those promises. God, within his sovereignty, has given us that role of being a part of that and praying in and bringing in the kingdom and the final fulfillment of God's promises.

So, this is related to the fulfillment of the 70-year prophecy and the promise that God would bring his people back and restore them. The second vision is of four horns and four craftsmen in Zechariah chapter one, verses 18 to 21. These four horns represent the enemies who have oppressed Israel again.

And rather than being a specific reference to four different groups of people or four different empires, something like what we have in Daniel, probably what we have here is that the four horns represent the four points on the compass: north, south, east, and west. An animal horn is a symbol of strength. And when the Lord is described as our horn or as the horn of salvation, that's what we have going on here.

One time, when a group of false prophets want to promise Ahab that he will be successful in battle, one of them puts a helmet on that has horns and goes running around and budding into things to say, this is what you're going to do to your enemies. So, an animal horn is a symbol of strength. If you still don't understand that from an ancient Near Eastern perspective, you can look at a Minnesota Vikings football helmet or a St. Louis Rams football helmet, and we're still using the same imagery.

What this passage promises is that the four horns that have been used against Israel, God is going to raise up a craftsman. This craftsman will devise either a tool, an implement, or a weapon that will bring about these four horns being cut off and brought down. We actually have the opposite here of the promise that God makes to Israel in Isaiah chapter 54, no weapon formed against you will prosper because God is going to ultimately restore his people.

But what we have here is the opposite of that. These nations, these enemies, these armies that have oppressed the people of Israel and that have had the strength of a ram or an animal with a horn, God is ultimately going to deal with them. In Daniel, chapters 7 and 8, the horns that come out of the beast represent the power of these empires that oppress the people of God.

God is ultimately going to deal with that and God will bring about their fall and their defeat and their destruction. Vision number three, we have a man with a measuring line who is going out to measure Jerusalem. The reason for this is that he's doing the preliminary survey work for ultimately preparing for the rebuilding of the wall.

As he goes out to do that, an angel meets him and informs him that there's no need to do this because Jerusalem will be an unwalled city. The city is going to be so large in population that the walls will not be able to contain that. Instead of having a protective wall around the city, the Lord himself will be a wall of fire that protects the city and keeps it from being invaded by these enemy armies that want to come and take it.

What do we do with the prophetic language here? There are other prophetic passages, for example, Isaiah chapter 60, that talk about foreigners coming and actually rebuilding the walls. We know that in the return that's led in 445 BC, Nehemiah comes back, and God specifically lays it on his heart to rebuild and to restore the walls of Jerusalem that had been torn down and destroyed by the Babylonians. In fact, Jerusalem could not be a viable city until that happened.

A city without these kinds of walls in the ancient world would have been constantly susceptible to enemy attack. The language here is obviously ideal and rhetorical. It is stressing in a figurative way, first of all, the blessing that will be upon Israel, the number of people that will come back there.

It is also talking about the fact that even when the walls are rebuilt, God is their ultimate source of protection. Their walls had not protected them against the Babylonians because God had given them over into the hands of the Babylonians. Now, the Lord himself will be their protector.

That is what I think this vision is trying to emphasize, the security that the Lord would give to his people. In all of these visions, I think we also have a now and a not yet aspect. These are the things that God is going to do for the people in the near future.

This is the blessing. These are the judgments that God is going to carry out in the near future on the enemies of Israel. But there is also still this not yet aspect that will be more fully developed in the second half of the book.

This is ultimately the ideal of what Jerusalem will be like in the eschatological kingdom. Completely safe, completely secure, and the Lord will be a wall of fire around the city. The fourth vision in chapter three of Zechariah is a vision of Joshua the high priest.

What we have here is almost sort of a legal scenario where Satan, the accuser, we will talk about him in just a second, notes the fact, and we see that the high priest's garments are covered with filth and excrement. Living in exile, Judah and the priesthood and the people and the leaders have all been defiled before the exile had ever taken place. Remember that the prophets are going to talk about the corruption of the priesthood.

So, in light of that, the accuser, the Hebrew word, the satan, has a valid issue here. Is this priest qualified? How can he have the purification to stand and serve in the presence of God? This is a pretty vital question because if we have a temple but there's no qualified priesthood, what do we do with this? So, the Lord, it's certainly not Joshua's own personal qualifications here, but the Lord in an act of graciousness provides new garments for the priest. He purifies the priesthood so that they will be able to serve and stand before the Lord and the worship at the temple and the sacrifices and the prayers and the teaching and instruction of the people through the priesthood that will be carried out.

It begins with an act of God's grace where God graciously purifies them. So, the satan is accusing the priest; look at him, look at the defilement of that. The Lord rebukes him and says, I'm going to purify, and I'm going to restore them.

And the Lord promises to the priest in the verses that follow, thus says the Lord of hosts, if you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts. And I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. Hear now, oh Joshua, the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign.

Behold, I will bring my servant, the branch. So, we've got several things to talk about here. The Lord provides new garments for the priesthood.

The Lord restores them to the place of service. And the Lord says to Joshua, this is not just for you, but for all of the men that come after you, if you will be faithful, if you will be the kind of priest that God wants you to be, if you will be the right kind of representatives that God has designed the priest to be in the first place, then the Lord will bless you and give you this position where you minister in my presence to the people. Also, in addition to this, these priests that God was restoring to Israel were a sign that indicated that God had an even greater blessing in store for Israel.

God would also bring his servant, the branch. And so, when this mentions the branch, who are we talking about here? The prophet Zechariah again is demonstrating a familiarity with the prophecies that have gone before him and the prophets who were either prophesying in Israel and Judah in the pre-exilic period or during the time of the exile itself. The prophet Jeremiah had promised that God would raise up for the house of David a righteous branch.

This righteous branch refers to the future Davidic ideal ruler, the Messiah, that would rule over the people in justice, righteousness, and peace. The last king in the line during the days of Jeremiah had been Zedekiah. The Lord is my righteousness. But we know that this king was anything but a righteous king.

So, the prophecy that Jeremiah gives is that the future ideal Davidic ruler, the future Messiah, he will truly be a righteous branch. God is going to reduce the house of David to nothing more than a tree stump, but out of what looks like a dead tree, God is ultimately going to bring a righteous branch. So, this branch talks about the revival of the house of David.

In Isaiah chapter four, which I think is another passage that informs Zechariah chapter three, the branch refers to the bounty and the agricultural prosperity and productivity that God will restore to Israel. So that's what is symbolized here from the branch. God is giving a promise to Joshua.

God is graciously restoring him to priesthood in spite of the defilement of the priest and in spite of their long history of not leading the people in the direction that they should go. But ultimately there is a promise beyond this of a future branch, a righteous branch from the house of David who will join together the roles of priesthood and kingship. In the post-exilic period we have two leaders.

We have Joshua representing the priest. We have Zerubbabel representing the house of David. Ultimately those roles are going to be fused into one individual, the branch, the leader that God will raise up in the future.

So again, we have the tension between the now and the not yet. What God is doing in the now for the priesthood is a promise and a guarantee of what God will do in the not yet regarding the restoration of the house of David. We have another reference

to the branch and its connection with the priesthood in Zechariah chapter six verses nine to 15.

I want to look at that passage and we see some of the same ideas. There is a ceremony described in Zechariah chapter six where there is a crown put on the high priest Joshua. The Lord says to the prophet, take from the exiles this group of men and go on the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah.

Take from them silver and gold and make a crown and set it on the head of Joshua. So, there's almost kind of a royal authority being given to the priesthood here. Then it also says in verse 12, thus says the Lord of hosts, behold the man whose name is the branch, for he shall branch out from his place and he shall build the temple of the Lord.

It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and he will bear royal honor and shall sit and rule on his throne. There shall be a priest on his throne and the council of peace shall be between him and the crown shall be in the temple of the Lord as a reminder to help. This is a complicated passage, but in some sense again Joshua the high priest is given royal authority, but he represents also the branch who will build the house of the Lord.

In light of the fact that Zerubbabel, as the present representative of the house of David, is the one who rebuilds the temple, I think we have a now and not yet aspect in regard to the promise of the branch. In a sense, Zerubbabel himself is the initial fulfillment of the branch. But there is a figure beyond this who will ultimately rule and reign on the throne in a way that was not true of either Joshua or Zerubbabel.

Ultimately, when the future Messiah comes and we know that the role of Jesus in the New Testament, he is going to fulfill perfectly the roles of prophet, priest, and king. There is some textual evidence from Qumran to indicate that they believed that there were two Messiahs. There was an Aaronic priestly Messiah and there was also going to be a more royal figure who would be the Messiah.

In the New Testament, we see those roles being fused into Jesus. So, we have in the post-exilic period a dual leadership that is provided by Joshua and by Zerubbabel. Ultimately, Christ will fulfill both of those roles.

What God is doing in blessing and restoring the people and in using the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua prefigures and anticipates what God is ultimately going to do through Messiah. A few more things about this vision of the cleansing and the new garments for the high priest. We know that the provision of clothing for a priest was connected with two very important events in the Torah.

Clothing was provided, we see this in Exodus 28 and 39, at the time when a priest was ordained to service. He was purified and he was set apart for this special role where he is going to represent God. We have that going on here as well.

However, in Leviticus 16, we know that there were special priestly vestments worn on the Day of Atonement. We have a mention here in this passage of a turban that the priest wears on his head. I think both of these ceremonies are likely in view.

This is like the new ordination of a priest because priesthood is beginning again, and the service and ministry of the priesthood is beginning again with the Second Temple. But there is also a purification that is taking place that reminds us somewhat of what happens for the entire nation of Israel and the priest in Leviticus 16 on the Day of Atonement. Remember, on the Day of Atonement, the priest had to offer a sacrifice both for himself and for the people so that their filth and the defilement of their sin could be removed and so that they would be allowed to live in the presence of God for another year.

We have a ceremony and a vision of something on that par in this passage in Zechariah chapter 3. Mark Boda mentions another passage that seems to have informed this fourth vision. It is a very interesting one. In Isaiah chapter 3 verse 16 to Isaiah chapter 4 verse 6, we have the removal of the luxurious garments of the rich women of Zion who have become proud and arrogant and they are living a sinful life.

So, God removes their garments; God removes their turbans and the coverings that are on their head. Then that is followed by a promise in Isaiah chapter 4, verses 2 to 6, that the Lord will purge the defilement of Zion and the fire of his judgment will ultimately remove the filth and the dross and the sinfulness of the land and the branch of the Lord will thrive and prosper in that day. So, I think Boda is right, I can't help but see that we have at least an allusion back to that passage as well.

The defilement of the judgment of exile that had come upon all of the people of Israel and Judah, that is being removed. The promise of the purging judgment, that has taken place. God has cleansed his people and now the blessings that are associated with the branch of the Lord are now being realized and enjoyed.

I think in Isaiah chapter 4, the branch of the Lord is an image used to talk about blessing and prosperity and the covenant blessings of the fertility of the land. In Jeremiah, the branch is used to talk about the house of David and the restored future David that will rise up on the throne. Both of those things are in view here.

So, there is a lot going on in this vision of the new garments that are being provided by the priest. One more comment. We have the accusation here or the accusation that is being leveled here.

We have this figure: Ha-satan, the satan, the accuser. Now in the light of the progress of Revelation, we understand that the figure here is actually Satan or the devil himself. In the Old Testament, the figure that is in view here is the same as the Satan that is in Job chapter 1 and 2 who stands before the Lord and accuses Job.

Have you seen Job and noticed him? The Lord says to the Satan. The satan says, well, yeah, but the only reason that he is faithful and upright and righteous is because of all the ways that you've blessed him. So, this figure, the Satan, how do we understand him and how would they have understood him in connection with the revelation of the Old Testament? I think we can connect the dots here in light of the further revelation of the New Testament.

We understand this is the devil, and this is Satan. In Revelation chapter 12, he is called and referred to as the accuser of the brethren. But some people have argued that what we have here is that there is a less clear understanding of this figure in the Old Testament.

He is referred to as the Satan. It is a title rather than a personal name. The role of this figure here is that he appears to be in the divine counsel, a prosecuting attorney.

This may have been a legitimate role that was given to this figure before the time that he sinned and rebelled and turned against God. His job was, in a sense, to investigate the world and to bring these particular cases and instances before God to make sure and to determine that the world remained faithful to him. However, when Satan rebelled against God and gave up this legitimate role, this turned into a role of opposition both to God and to his people.

Some commentators and some interpreters are simply going to see a legitimate prosecuting attorney here who serves on the heavenly counsel. Then in light of later revelation in the New Testament, we understand this is Satan. However, I think if you look at both the story of Job and the story of Zechariah here, we understand that this is more than simply someone carrying out the role of a legitimate prosecuting attorney.

He has an evil, malevolent intent both in this passage and in the passage in Job. In the book of Job, he not only levels accusations against Job, in a sense he makes certain insinuations against God and his character as well. So in these passages we may not fully understand him from an Old Testament perspective as the devil, Satan, but he does seem to have a malevolent role.

Even if he had originally been given the legitimate role of being God's prosecuting attorney and to bring before God instances of where individuals or other creatures might have been disobedient to God, he seems to be abusing this role in the passages that we see him in the Old Testament. Many times, the term Satan, and I

think this would probably be the primary usage of this, it's talking about some type of human adversary. So, we see someone here in kind of an adversarial role.

We understand this to be Satan in light of later revelation. He brings this accusation, and the Lord rebukes him and says, by my grace, I've purified the priesthood, and now I'm going to use them to serve God in the new temple that's being built by Joshua and Zerubbabel. We go to the fifth vision.

The fifth vision has to do with the vision of the two olive trees and the golden lampstand. How we envision what this would have looked like is a little difficult, but the basic message of this is that God is empowering Joshua and Zerubbabel as they lead the people and they carry out the rebuilding of the temple. Joshua and Zerubbabel are the olive trees that provide the oil that lights the lamp.

I think it's probably referring here to the lamp and the menorah that's in the temple and the tabernacle. In the tabernacle in Exodus chapter 25 we see a description of the lampstand that would be there to represent God's presence and the light of God's presence. Second Chronicles chapter 4 tells us that there were actually ten lampstands in Solomon's temple.

So, the lampstand here represents, it appears to be the light of God's presence that was represented by the menorah in the temple. By rebuilding the temple and by providing the effort that brought that about, the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, they were restoring the presence of God so that the people again could enjoy God's presence and worship the Lord. We saw in our discussion of Haggai that's why rebuilding the temple was such a central issue.

However, ultimately Joshua and Zerubbabel are not the ones who bring this about because they carry out their work in the enablement of the Spirit of God. The Lord gives this particular word to Zerubbabel, the governor, not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts who are you oh great mountain before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain and he shall bring forward the topstone amid shouts of grace, grace to it. Here's a promise: God's spirit will empower Zerubbabel to bring about the rebuilding of the temple, and this work will be completed.

The great mountain that is referred to in this passage is talking about all the obstacles that would stand in the way. They were facing some huge obstacles. There were financial shortages.

There were the difficulties of coming back to the land and attempting to rebuild the city while rebuilding the temple. There was the opposition of people within the land. As the people thought about these things, these obstacles often seemed insurmountable.

That's why the rebuilding of the temple had been something they had set aside for fifteen years. So, this promise says in spite of these mountains that are in front of you, nothing will stand that can ultimately thwart God's purposes or keep Zerubbabel and Joshua from being able to rebuild the temple. They will not do this in their own strength.

They will do it in the power of the Lord. So, in verse 9, this encouraging word and you can imagine what this meant to Zerubbabel and to the people. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house.

His hands shall also complete it. Whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. So, ultimately, this work is going to be finished.

Vision six, we have the vision of a flying scroll. The scroll that is described in chapters five verses one to four is thirty feet by fifteen feet. The ESV study Bible describes this or pictures this as a flying billboard.

This is a massive scroll and I think that's a great way to imagine this. What exactly is going on here? Why do we have a billboard flying across the sky? This flying scroll is a reminder of the covenant that existed between the people of God and Israel. Remember the scroll of the commandments in Josiah's day.

Remember the scroll that was found in the temple. So this is a reminder of the covenant responsibilities and it is a gigantic flying scroll to represent its importance. It also says here specifically that what is written on this scroll are the covenant curses.

There is not only the size of the billboard but there is writing on both sides. So there is an enormous warning here of the urgency and the importance of obeying the covenant commandments so that the people do not have to continue experiencing the covenant curses. Remember that Haggai said when they did not rebuild the temple and when they did not complete the temple, they were not doing this; God had brought upon them the covenant curses of agricultural deprivation.

In the post-exilic period they were still missing the grain, the wine, and the vine in the same way that we saw in the pre-exilic period. This graphic large sign is reminding the people that unless they obey God, they will continue to experience God's judgment. Now that they are back in the land, now that the exile is over, they have the opportunity to experience God's blessing.

There is no need, there is no necessity for there to be more judgment. But if the people do not obey God, there will be more judgment. As we look at the prophets Joel and Malachi, who also ministered during the time of the post-exilic period, we

are going to see that there was a problem with continued sin that necessitated God's further discipline.

Vision seven, maybe the oddest of all of these visions, is the woman in the basket in chapter five, verses five to eleven. This vision complements what we have just talked about in terms of the flying scroll. There is a warning here, I believe, of the potential for further exile to Babylon.

What we have here is that we have a woman representing the sin that's in the land. Again, they've come back to the land, but that's not enough. They need to fully return to the Lord.

This woman is put into a small basket. A metal lid weighing close to 70 or 75 pounds is put over the lid. In this basket that's like three-fifths of a bushel, this woman is placed in there.

The metal lid is there to make sure that she stays there. Then two angelic figures, they are women with stork wings, lift this basket up and fly it to Babylon. I think the picture in the image that's being given here is the possibility of exile once again taking place.

This woman, representing the evil and sin in the land, is taken away to Babylon. The same thing can potentially happen to the people if they do not follow the Lord. So, exile has already taken place.

We would think, well, the people sure learned their lesson and wouldn't have continued in their sinful ways. But if they do not fully turn back to God, if they do not abandon their practices of injustice, if they do not remain faithful to the Lord, there is the possibility of further exile. The final vision, and again, completing this picture of restoration, renewal, this now and not yet promise of what God is going to do for Israel in the near future and what he will ultimately do for them.

There is a vision of four chariots. I think the vision that we have here clearly bookends and parallels the vision of the scouts on the four different-colored horses back in chapter one. What is happening here is that these four chariots with the different-colored horses are riding out into the different points of the compass, ultimately to carry out God's judgment and bring justice.

So, the role of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah was to encourage the people to begin building and, once they did that, to encourage them of the blessing that God would bring upon them. In 5:19, Zechariah, as the people are in the midst of this rebuilding, as they are experiencing all of the difficulties, hardships, and struggles that go along with that, God promises to bless Zerubbabel and Joshua.

God promises to use them to bring restoration and blessing. The encouraging message that emerges for us as we read the book of Zechariah is that God's faithfulness to his people at this difficult time in their history points to the ultimate fulfillment of his covenant promises. We can trust in the Lord as we live between the now and the not yet in the same way that the people of Zechariah's day did as they saw the faithfulness of the Lord to them.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his course on the Book of the 12. This is session 27, Zechariah, Part 1.