

Lift Up Your Eyes

Introduction

- Jesus said, *“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then **they will see** the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.”* (Mark 13:24–27, ESV)
- As Jesus shared with His disciples the events of His return, he calls on them to look forward to these events with a heavenly perspective. Good things are coming! As He prepares us to be watchful for His return, you’ll notice that He mentions the elect being gathered “from the four winds,” which is a phrase often used throughout some of the most potent apocalyptic writings in the Bible. This phrase was always used as a way to describe the broad-sweeping scope of God’s power and the extent of His power over men. We see that phrase echoed over 500 years prior in the writings of Zechariah the prophet.
- Let’s look back to a time where God spoke about future events and called on His people to **lift up your eyes** to see the wondrous things that God would do, and the extraordinary things that He’s doing in our lives today!
- Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai the prophet and spoke to the people during the end of their 70-year exile in Babylon. This book is super bizarre, the first part, which we’ll consider here, consisting of a call to faithfulness, eight visions, and four sermons to the people. He begins the book with a call to return to Him, and He would be with them (Zech 1:1-6), to which the people agree. Then he launches into 8 powerful visions, arranged in a *chiastic* pattern (pairs of visions working outward to inward), which provide the nation with hope and encouragement for the events about to take place.

Hope and Comfort in Visions

- **God Judges All Men**
 - Vision #1: Four Horsemen On Patrol (Zech 1:8-17)
 - Summary: Zechariah sees four horses of varying colors out on patrol to the whole earth. They report back that the entire earth is at rest, and then the Lord gives the angels words of comfort that He will return to a relationship with Jerusalem while pronouncing judgment on the nations.
 - Takeaway: God judges all nations and shows mercy to His people!
 - Vision #8: Four Chariots On Patrol (Zech 6:1-8)

- Summary: Four horses with chariots go out to patrol the corners of the earth, and bring their report back to God. The horse which goes to the north country reports back that it is at rest.
 - Takeaway: God is in control of all the four corners of the earth!
- **God Will Protect His People**
 - Vision #2: Four Horns, Four Blacksmiths (Zech 1:18-21)
 - Summary: Four horns which represent the nations that oppressed and scattered Judah are brought down by a weapon made by four craftsmen.
 - Takeaway: God will remove all of Israel's enemies!
 - Vision #7: Woman In A Basket (Zech 5:5-11)
 - Summary: God continues to cleanse Judah by putting a woman named "Wickedness" into a basket with a lead weight on top, carried away to Babylon and set on a pedestal like one of their idols.
 - Takeaway: God will remove all of Israel's sinfulness!
- **God Dwells Amongst His People**
 - Vision #3: Jerusalem Is Measured (Zech 2:1-13)
 - Summary: A surveyor measures the city of Jerusalem and reports that there will be no need for walls, as God will protect them with a wall of fire and He will dwell among them.
 - Takeaway: God will bless Israel with His presence and protection!
 - Vision #6: The Flying Scroll (Zech 5:1-4)
 - Summary: A giant scroll of the law flies through the city, cleaning out anyone who breaks the commandments. Specifically mentioned here are lying and stealing from the original Ten Commandments.
 - Takeaway: God will punish those who refuse to obey His law!
- **God Purifies Us By His Son**
 - Vision #4: Joshua, The High Priest (Zech 3:1-10)
 - Summary: Satan stands accusing Joshua, the High Priest, and God replaces his dirty priestly garments with clean ones. Just as He has purified Joshua, He will bring His

servant, "the Branch" to purify the nation in a single day. These things will happen **if** Joshua is faithful to God (Zech 3:7-8).

- Takeaway: God will send His High Priest (which is Jesus) to purify them of their sins.
- Vision #5: Zerubbabel, The Royal Heir of David (Zech 4:1-14)
 - Summary: Two olive trees pour oil onto a lamp, representing God's two anointed offices of priest and king: Joshua and Zerubbabel. He empowers them with His Spirit to make mountains into plains and to complete the building of the temple. These things will happen **if** Zerubbabel trusts in God's Spirit rather than his might or power (Zech 4:6).
 - Takeaway: The temple is completed, and the "Priest-King" is a light to the nation!
- **A Bonus Vision Of Christ**
 - In a final vision pointing to Christ, Zechariah is told to put a crown on Joshua's head and to say, "... *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 shall bear royal honor and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."* " (Zech 6:12-13)
 - The promise of the Christ's coming would only come to pass **if** they would diligently follow the voice of God and obey (Zech 6:15)!

A Renewed Purpose

- Zechariah then turns from these visions to answer a question from the people, who were wondering whether their days of fasting over the events of the Babylonian captivity should continue (Zech 7:1-3).
- God's response is in the form of a question back to them, "... *'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?'*" (Zech 7:5-6) Basically, God was pointing out that their ritual observances were selfishly motivated!
- The solution to this problem was for them to **lift up their eyes** to see the needs of the widows, the fatherless, the travelers, and the poor, and to show justice, mercy, and kindness to others (Zech 7:8-10). If they did that, God would be with them and bless them with abundant peace and prosperity (Zech 8).

Conclusion

- Today we're waiting for the wondrous return of our King to take us home with Him to heaven! There are so many reasons to be excited and prepared for that day, and just like the

children of Israel as they waited for the kingdom and for their Messiah, we too should **lift up our eyes** and see what God is doing!

- We have so much work to do in this world, but it should never be done out of selfish motivation! Instead we should **lift up our eyes** to the needs of others and let the love of Christ dwell in us richly!