

SPIRITUAL CAT SCAN

ZECHARIAH

The inventor of the sewing machine was a man named [Elias Howe](#), *and Howe was helped by a dream...* A typical sewing needle is threaded opposite its point and the thread is pulled through the garment.

This wasn't going to work in Howe's machine. He couldn't figure out where to place the needle. *Elias was running out of money and ideas...*

Then one night he had a dream. A king had ordered his execution for failing to invent a sewing machine. Soldiers were escorting him to the gallows, when he noticed they had strange spears in their hands.

The spears were pierced near the point. Instantly, *Howe knew how...*

He raced to his workshop, and by morning had the first sewing machine up and running. Ladies, next time you sit at a sewing machine remember the *seam* your sewing was made possible by the *dream* of Elias Howe...

The Prophet Zechariah also had a dream. And it was his dreams that helped the Jews rebuild their nation and reconstruct their Temple.

Here's the background... After 70 years in Babylon 50,000 Jews, along with Governor Zerubbabel, and the High Priest Joshua, and the Prophet Haggai – *returned* to the land of Judah to *resurrect the nation Israel...*

And understand the challenge they were up against...

The Babylonians had ravaged the land and demolished the Temple.

Their mission was to *stitch up a war-torn* land. *The job was enormous. Their supplies were meager. The work was difficult.* And everyday the workers were haunted by the memory of Jerusalem's former glory. It was a cloud over the present task. Nothing they'd build could be as colossal, or elaborate as what stood before. Morale was low. *Why even try?*

Construction on the Temple started as soon as the first Jews returned, in 535 BC - but all that got accomplished was the laying of the foundation. Work ceased for 15 years. Everyone went off to build their own houses.

It was Haggai that got them back on task.

He challenged them, "*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?*" How could they justify building their own houses, before building God a house?

Work restarted in 520 BC. *And help came in the form of a dream.*

It was in the evening hours of February 15, 519 BC. A night Zechariah would never forget. In one night God gave the prophet a sequence of eight dreams. One stunning vision after another kept waking him up.

God worked on Zechariah like a loaded pizza from Mellow Mushroom.

All through the night the brother's mind was dancing with wild, bizarre, off-the-chain images. Extra-strength Niquil couldn't keep him asleep.

It reminds me of the man who dreamed of eating a huge plate of spaghetti. When he woke up his pajama string was missing.

Likewise, what Zechariah saw was not just a dream. It was a series of real-life messages that God would fulfill over the course of history.

Yes, Israel had been torn, but God shows Zechariah how He'll stitch up *the nation's seams* through *eight different dreams*.

Some of the visions offered immediate encouragement to Zerubbabel.

Others looked to the future. God wanted the builders to know their work was not in vain. They were setting the stage for a glory yet to come.

While workers built Zerubbabel's *Temple*, God was at work between Zechariah's *temples*. While workers saw, Zechariah sees. And both gifts are needed in a mission for God - *actionaries* and *visionaries*. Zechariah's dreams got the nation's attention off their past and focused on their future.

Here's what we'll do today... We'll move quickly through Zechariah's eight dreams – then we'll sum up his prophecies concerning the future.

And then we'll conclude by talking about *our own personal dreams*.

In Dream One, Zechariah sees four horses. A man, God's messenger, is riding on the red horse. And he's standing among the myrtle trees.

The myrtle tree represented Israel. It's a small evergreen - more a shrub than a tree. It never grows more than eight feet tall. It has dark green leaves and when its pedals are crushed they give off a fragrance.

Israel is like an evergreen – it too, never dies. It's small in comparison with other nations. And the crushing of the pedals reminds us of Israel's tendency to grow sweeter through suffering and persecution.

God's messenger reports that the nations are at ease - yet they won't be forever. God is zealous for Jerusalem. He's angry with the nations that persecute Israel. God comforts Israel, but judges the Gentiles.

Zechariah 1:16 predicts Jerusalem's glorious future, "Thus says the LORD: 'I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it...' What an encouragement to Zerubbabel and his Temple crew...

In verse 17 he predicts, "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem." The returnees were laying groundwork for expansion.

At the end of chapter 1, Zechariah sees Dream Two.

Four horns appear. These are nations that scattered Israel - probably the *Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans*. He then sees *four craftsmen* - or demolition experts - who dismantle these nations.

The point is simple, **pick on God's kids and God will pick on you.**

Chapter 2 records Dream Three. A man with a tape measure goes out to measure the dimensions of Jerusalem. If you've ever sold a house, you know it has to be surveyed. Here Jerusalem's boundaries are measured.

The city has changed ownership. It now belongs to the Jews.

It would be another 75 years (or so) before Nehemiah would return to rebuild Jerusalem's walls. Yet in the meantime, God promises in verse 5 to be a fire around the city. He'll protect Jerusalem and be its glory.

God says in verse 8 he who harms Israel **"touches the apple of my eye."** *And this is how He feels about you if you're one of His kids.*

The subject of Dream Four is the High Priest Joshua. And ole Josh isn't exactly dressed for success. Verse 3 says he's wearing **"filthy garments."**

The Hebrew term translated **"filthy"** actually means **"excrement stained,"** or **"dung splattered."** Imagine a bad case of diarrhea. That's his robe.

The Angel of the Lord is on one side of Joshua. Satan is on the other side. And the devil is up to his old tricks. The accuser of the brethren is trying to heap guilt on a child of God who's helping to build the Temple.

This is what he's up to today. Satan doesn't want to see a strong church in our community, so he tries to condemn and discourage builders like you and me. *How can you be serving God - look at the sins you've racked up?*

It reminds me of Martin Luther's vision. Martin was at his desk when Satan appeared to remind him of all the evil he'd done. Finally *Luther* had enough of *ole Lucifer*. He shouted, *"It's all true, Satan, and many more sins I have committed which are known to God only; but write at the bottom of your list, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin!'"*

Luther grabbed the inkwell sitting on his desk, and threw it at Satan.

It was a turning point in Luther's life – from that moment on he was free from the devil's debilitating condemnation... Of course, the inkwell missed the devil, and hit the wall. Today, 500 years later, you can visit the Wartburg Castle in Germany, and still see the famous ink spot.

And just as Luther did, I hope you'll put your foot down today! Throw an inkwell at him if necessary! Take a stand on the blood of Jesus and stop allowing the devil to bury your good intentions under a mountain of guilt.

In chapter 3 Satan opposes Joshua – that’s when the Lord steps up to defend him, verse 2, “**The LORD rebuke you, Satan!... Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?**” What a fitting description for all of us? None of us deserve God’s mercy and grace. We’re all brands snatched out of hell.

No one is good enough for God. Take the witness stand to prove you’re worthy of God’s favor and Satan will tear you up on cross-examination.

He’s *an alligator of a litigator*. He can make the purest saint look like a sex offender. Attempt to defend yourself and he’ll drag up every nasty thought and dirty deed. *Thankfully, Joshua doesn’t defend himself.*

Verse 5 is the key to his defense. “**The Angel of the LORD stood by.**”

The Lord was Joshua’s attorney. Often in the OT the Angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Here, Joshua recruits *the divine Perry Mason*. Like ole Perry, Jesus never took a case he didn’t win.

Jesus rebukes the devil – then strips off Joshua’s filthy threads - clothes him in rich robes and a clean turban. In chapter 6 he even puts a crown on Joshua’s head... *And this is what Jesus does for those who follow Him!*

On the cross Jesus canceled out our sin. He forgives us, accepts us, clothes us in His goodness, and makes us members of His royal family. *All the while he rebukes Satan for reminding us of what we use to be.*

1 John 2:1 sounds like Zechariah 3. We're told, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate (or an attorney) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

In Dream Five Zechariah sees an automated Menorah. A Jewish Menorah is a seven branch lamp stand that burns with olive oil.

A long process - lots of work - went into lighting the Temple Menorah.

Olives had to be grown and harvested. They had to be crushed and the oil extracted. The menorah was then filled and tended by the priest.

But none of this applies to the menorah Zechariah sees. There's piping that runs from the olive trees into a bowl and onto the lamps. No harvest is required. No crushing of the olives. No priest. The lamp is supernaturally supplied. The oil drips into the bowl and flows to the individual wicks, without any human intervention!

Zechariah 4:6 interprets the vision, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts." As God fueled the menorah without human help, the Temple will be constructed through the power of the Spirit.

Throughout the Scripture oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. *Oil lubricates, soothes, heals, lights, warms, refreshes, invigorates, fuels, polishes, and shines* – all of which the Spirit does in our lives.

The Holy Spirit stokes our service. He lubricates the work so it's easier and smoother. He refreshes along the way, and creates in us a shine.

Zerubbabel was building a temple, which was no easy task. His job seemed as hard as climbing a mountain. Yet verse 7 asks, **“Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of “Grace, grace to it!”**

Zerubbabel will cut down his mountain and build the Temple, but it won't be by his *grit or genius* that he gets the job done. It's all about *grace*.

And the same is true with NT temple building - it too requires grace.

Any true *work of God* is always accomplished by the *Spirit of God*. It's not more elbow grease we need, but the supernatural oil of the Spirit.

The angel says to Zechariah in 4:10, **“For who has despised the day of small things?”** We learned in Haggai, it was the geezers – the old guys who remembered Solomon's temple and mocked the new version.

Zerubbabel's Temple was smaller and less ornate. But Zechariah says not to despise the small things. God uses *the small* as well as *the large*.

Sometimes God's greatest work is subtle, silent, simple, small in scale.

J Vernon McGee spoke in hundreds of churches across the country. He once wrote, “We Americans are impressed with the big and brassy. We like our Christian work to be a success story. We measure success by the size of the building and crowds that come. Well, I am becoming more and more convinced that the Lord is working in quiet ways and in quiet places today.”

Don't get discouraged when your Bible Study or prayer group only has a few people... Who knows the work God is doing in those few, and the work that may result? The Temple God builds is made up of lots of small things.

Inmate Robert Shepard escaped from jail in Charleston, South Carolina using dental floss. That's right, the rope he used to climb over the wall was made by braiding together 48 strands of mint-flavored, waxed dental floss.

Our lives may be a single strand, but God can twist relationships and circumstances together to do a great work in and through our lives.

In Dream Six Zechariah sees a flying scroll. It's quite large - 30 feet by 15 feet. Think of the airplanes that fly down the beach pulling advertising banners behind them. Zechariah sees a banner announcing judgment.

It reads, “The curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth.”

Dream Seven is Zechariah's version of the old TV show “I Dream of Jeannie.” But rather than a Jeannie in a

bottle, he sees a woman in a bushel basket. And the girl isn't a pretty jeannie in a skimpy costume.

Her name is "**Wickedness.**" You might say, "*She's a real basket case.*"

The angel takes this wicked witch, stuffs her in a basket, then seals it with a lid made of lead. She's transported back to Shinar, or Babylon.

Apparently, the Jews who returned to Jerusalem brought with them a few evils they'd picked up in Babylon. Their evil gets *returned to sender*.

And here's a lesson for us. You can't begin a new life in Christ if you're holding on to *dirty thoughts*, and *corrupt attitudes*, and *sinful habits*.

Stuff you past in a basket, plop on a lid, and ship it far, far away.

Chapter 6 records the eighth and final dream. Zechariah sees two bronze mountains, and four chariots riding between the mountains.

The chariots, presumably war-chariots, are pulled by horses – red horses, black horses, white horses, and dappled (*or pale*) horses.

It's interesting, 600 years later on the isle of Patmos, John see these same horses – the four horsemen of the Apocalypse - and writes about them in Revelation 6. In fact, the book of Zechariah gets quoted or referenced 31 times in the book of Revelation.

From chapter 7 on, God gives Zechariah a glimpse into Israel's future.

In chapter 8 we learn that God is a “zealous” God. He's not some old man you try to keep calm lest he get too excited and have a stroke.

God's heart still races on a regular basis. His blood pressure rises. He's intense, and passionate, and emotional. In verse 2 He says, “I am zealous for Zion.” God loves the Jewish people, and their capitol, Jerusalem.

What an encouragement to the Jews who returned with Zerubbabel. At the moment the city was in ruins, but God was zealous for Jerusalem. He will restore joy, and safety, and people, and blessing to the city's streets.

Note 8:5, “The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing...”

When we visit the Jewish Quarter in the Old City I read this verse by one of the playgrounds. It's a prophecy that's being fulfilled today!

These prophecies, and others like them, are why no Bible-believing Jew will ever give Jerusalem back to the Muslims. God is zealous for Zion...

And let me add, He's zealous for our community. He doesn't just live in Jerusalem. He's on our streets, in our schools, in your workplace.

Chapter 9 records judgments against Damascus and the Philistines.

And in the midst of these judgments Jesus becomes the focus over and over again. Zechariah's visions become **Messianic** and **Millennial**.

They speak of Jesus – *His first coming* and *His second coming*.

Notice verses 9-10, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey."

Oriental kings rode horses into battle, but among their people they were more comfortable on a burro. A donkey made them more accessible. They were in touch with the people. It was a symbol of the king's concern.

When Jesus made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem the Sunday before His crucifixion, He came on a donkey. Jesus was fulfilling this Scripture, and showing us He *came not to be served, but to serve!*"

Verse 9 speaks of Jesus' first coming. Verse 10 jumps to His second coming... It tells us Jesus will speak peace and rule from "sea to sea."

In 10:3 Zechariah says the Lord will visit the house of Judah. He's speaking of the Messiah – and He describes Jesus in four ways...

He's the "cornerstone" – the strength for every situation.

He's the "tent peg" – the solution to every problem.

He's the "battle bow" – the victory over every enemy.

And He's "every ruler together" – the unity for every division.

In chapter 11 Zechariah acts out a parable. He takes two shepherd staffs, and names them, "Beauty" and "Bonds." We have two staffs. They're named "Jessica" and "Ana" – they're also real beauties.

But Zechariah takes the rod called "Beauty" and breaks it in two. He's predicting that God will break the covenant He's made with His people.

Destruction will come. As the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem so will the Romans. Chapter 11 mentions the event that causes God to break *beauty* and *bonds*. The Jews will reject their Messiah and follow a False Christ.

Zechariah sees destruction on the horizon. He'll soon be without a job. He's entitled to a final paycheck, and he asks for it in verse 12. And guess what they pay him? "Thirty pieces of silver." Exodus 21 labels this the price of a slave. It shows you how much the people valued a faithful shepherd.

Listen to God's sarcasm in verse 13, "Throw it to the potter" – that princely price they set on Me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter." Thirty pieces of silver was the price Judas Iscariot received for betraying Jesus.

Judas sold out the most important life in history for the price of a slave.

Afterwards he felt so guilty he tried to return the money, but when they refused to take it he threw it down in the Temple... Later, it was used to buy a potter's field. And it was all a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy.

How ironic. The Jews rejected the True Christ, but in the last days they'll embrace a False Christ. Zechariah 11 describes both events.

Verse 17 calls the infamous Antichrist, **"the worthless shepherd."**

His arm will be withered and he'll be blind in his right eye.

Chapter 12 opens with an amazing prophecy about Jerusalem...

Verse 3 **"And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it."**

It's interesting why anyone even cares about Jerusalem... It has little strategic value, no natural resources, no inherent riches, is far from a body of water. Yet, it's the most hotly contested piece of real estate on the planet. Every nation on earth has a position on Jerusalem.

It is indeed, **"a heavy stone for all peoples."**

And God will gather all the nations of the earth against Jerusalem. It's a divine ambush. Verse 9 **"It shall be in**

that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” Jerusalem will be the flashpoint.

When Jerusalem is under siege God judges the nations, and He'll save the Jews. Chapter 11 is the *lowest point* in Jewish history. The Jews reject their Messiah. But chapter 12 is the *high point* – the Jews finally believe.

Zechariah 12:10 quotes God, "I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son..." One day the Jews will admit their mistake.

Once betrayed by the False Christ, they'll realize they missed the True Christ. And when Jesus appears at His second coming they'll be ready. We're told, "*They will look on Him whom they pierced.*" The Jews alive at the time will repent and believe. In the end all Israel will be saved.

The end of chapter 13 also has amazing prophecies about Jesus.

In verse 6 Jesus says, "I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Verse 7 refers to Jesus as God's "Man" - and God's "Shepherd."

We're also told what happened on the night Jesus was arrested. "*Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*" That night, all His disciples forsook Him or

denied Him. For 3 days the disciples were scattered sheep.

Chapter 14 describes the battle of Jerusalem - the final battle before Jesus returns. Verse 2 says all nations will gather against Jerusalem.

And they'll deal the city a heavy blow. They'll have the upper hand.

Until the Lord comes to the rescue, verse 3, **"The LORD will go and fight against those nations..."** And they'll be no match for Jesus. At His second coming Jesus isn't on a donkey, but on a white war-horse. He comes with a drawn sword, and a robe splattered with the blood of His enemies.

Jesus came to earth the first time to *save souls* and *heal broken hearts*, but He'll come the second time to *kick butt* and *break some kneecaps*.

Verse 4 adds **"In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives..."** In the spot where Jesus ascended into heaven He'll return to earth.

Forty-five years ago when Pan Am constructed a hotel on the Mount of Olives their seismic studies detected a fault down its center. They ended up building further south - away from the fault line. The hill is unstable.

It's waiting on the pressure of one foot. Jesus' big toe will cause it to split in two, and the whole topography of Jerusalem will be altered.

Verses 8-9 tell us a river will flow from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean - and from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea – thus, connecting the two bodies of water. This will bring life to the Dead Sea, and turn Jerusalem into a port.

Verse 9 declares, “**And the LORD shall be King over all the earth...**”

Zechariah 14:12 is a provocative verse. When God strikes down the armies that fight against Jerusalem here's what happens, “**Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.**”

The disintegration of soft tissue is a symptom of radiation poisoning. Is it possible nuclear weapons come into play in the battle over Jerusalem?

The end of the book describes life when Jesus establishes His Kingdom on earth. He'll rule the world from the Temple in Jerusalem. His throne in the Temple becomes the center of the universe. *I've stood in that spot...*

Once a year everyone will pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship Jesus.

And when they arrive they'll see a motto engraved everywhere – it's all over the Temple. It reads, “**HOLINESS TO THE LORD.**” That's the motto of God's Kingdom... *But what's our motto?* Are you trying to live a holy life?

This is why *our dreams* are important! You say “no” to the world - you stay committed to God - you press on - because of God’s promises.

It’s the dreams God gives us that promote holiness in our lives.

Building a Temple and serving God can be hard-sledding at times.

Zerubbabel and his crew were easily discouraged. You can get so overwhelmed in the details you lose sight of the overarching plan.

The stress of the moment blinds us to the significance of the task.

Thomas Watson took over a small company that made meat slicers, time clocks, and punch card machines. But Watson had a dream of manufacturing machines that could handle and store information.

He named his company, “**International Business Machines**” or “**IBM.**”

Years later, Watson was asked, when did he first see his company growing so large... Thomas Watson replied, “**Right at the beginning...**”

From the outset of the work, God wanted the Jews who had returned to Jerusalem to know they were setting the stage for a glorious future. Their rebuilding and pioneer spirit, were necessary first steps in God’s plan.

And it was Zechariah's dreams for the future that kept them on the right course. God was and is zealous toward Israel. He has plans for her future.

And God is zealous for you. He also has dreams He wants you to fulfill.

In Christ you're as indestructible as a myrtle. God is a ring of fire around you. Jesus takes away our filth. His work gets done through *grace* not *grit* or *genius*. It's by His Spirit. Some of His greatest works are small in scale. And don't hold on to past sins. Return them to sender.

Woodrow Wilson put it, "We grow great by dreams... Some of us let these great dreams die, but others nurse them through bad days until they bring us into sunshine." Hold on to the dreams God gives you.

Dreams for ministry... or relationships... or business... or family...

Some people work, and never dream. Others dream, but never work. Be like Zechariah. Let your dreams cause you to serve God faithfully.