

The Minor Prophets #26

Zechariah

by: Ronald L. Dart

It seems odd in a way that Satan is not mentioned more than he is in the Old Testament, at least by name. There may be other references but the word, 'Satan', occurs only once in all the historical books of the Bible, once in the Psalms, he is mentioned eleven times in the book of Job, but he's a major player there in the whole drama. In all of the prophets, the only prophet that ever refers to Satan, is Zechariah.

When you read Zechariah, it's useful to know, where you are in the history of the Old Testament. The Jews were beginning to drift back into Judah and Jerusalem after their long exile in Babylon. According to Ezra, two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, rebuilt the altar and laid the foundation of the Temple and began to build. Their work was stopped by opposition, according to some, by persons who remained in Palestine during the exile, and they were not taken captive. Why they stopped it, isn't exactly clear.

But Darius granted the Jews permission to continue rebuilding the Temple and they did. Under the urging of Haggai, later by Zechariah, then Zerubbabel who's now the governor and Joshua the high priest work on it and finally complete the Temple in 515 B.C.

The second Chapter of Zechariah's prophecy ends on a remarkable note, a high note. He ends it by saying, {10} "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of you, says the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."

A lot of commentators look at this, and it's hard not to see it, that this is a prophecy of the day when Jesus will establish His kingdom in Jerusalem at the time of the end. It really only makes a lot of sense that way, but it's still set in a historical context. And it's rather interesting to think about what Zechariah, Joshua and Zerubbabel might have thought it meant, in their own day.

Satan the Accuser

The vision continues into Chapter 3, Zechariah speaking, said. "He showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the messenger of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him."

Now it's curious, when you look at the Hebrew word for "accuse" it is the same Hebrew word that is translated 'Satan.' Interesting. An accuser standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Verbal Icons

There is an interesting comparison to make in the book of Revelation. In Revelation chapter 12 there's this wonderful vision of a woman, "A great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

When you see twelve stars like this you automatically think of the twelve tribes of Israel.

"She being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. {3} And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads."

Now this passage is kind of useful in understanding the verbal icons we find in prophecy. They're not just arcane symbols that nobody knows what they mean. They are icons which stand for things, a shorthand way of conveying to the reader a broad idea of what is being described. It's a lot like what you see on your computer screen, one little icon, and you click on it and a whole series of commands goes through your computer and then perhaps if you clicked on your printer, prints out sheets of paper with your document intact.

The dragon is very clear in this; it is an icon for Satan. What's really surprising and is not explained here, is that the dragon has seven heads. Horns we recognize as an icon for power and crowns is an icon for kingship. It's suggestive of a system of power, not merely a single adversary, but all we can do is listen to the suggestion and think about it because it doesn't become immediately clear.

Satan The Dragon

Verse 4 of Revelation 12 goes on to say, "His tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman, ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born."

Stars are identified earlier in the book of Revelation as icons for angelic beings. The assumption is that in the great rebellion, one third of the heavenly host followed Satan and two thirds remained loyal to God, but that's an assumption.

Verse 5: "The woman brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne."

That's easy to follow if you're a Christian reader, you know what that's talking about, that's talking about the birth of Jesus, who was to rule all nations, who was indeed after his crucifixion and resurrection, caught up unto God in the sight of his apostles (Acts 1:9).

"The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God that they should feed her there for a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

This period of time crops up again and again in Revelation and in Daniel, its three and a half years, the symbolism of it, well we'll have to talk about that another day.

But then John goes on to say, {7} "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels."

Ah, the Devil has his own angels.

"And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. {9} And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, who deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. {10} And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night. {11} And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Ok, so we have something sorted out here, the accuser that we're talking about back in the book of Zechariah is obviously Satan, standing at Joshua's right hand to accuse him. Who's doing this? The angel in Revelation tells John that the "Accuser of the brethren" is Satan the devil. His icon is a dragon or a serpent.

Now when did this war take place that's described here in Revelation? Or is it something far off in the future. Well, there was a remark that Jesus made to His disciples, it was after He had sent the seventy out with the Gospel message, going everywhere preaching the Gospel. They came back to Him with joy saying, in Luke 1 verse 17, "Lord even the demons are subject to us through your name." {18} And He replied and said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

Now when did that happen? When was Satan cast down? Did it happen while they were on their journey? We don't know, whatever the case, it appears to have been past tense, by the time Jesus made this statement. So he had been cast down at sometime in the past, maybe in the far distant past.

Joshua The High Priest

Now let's turn to the book of Zechariah again, Joshua the high priest is a player at this time, as is Zerubbabel the governor. He stands before "Malak Jehovah." The word 'malak' means 'messenger' which is another way of saying, the Word of God. We have to try to keep the names and the pronouns straight in this passage, it's not going to be easy to do. To help, I'm going to read the divine name where it occurs.

Zechariah 3 verse 1, "And he showed Joshua the high priest standing before the messenger of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. {2} And Yahweh said to Satan, "Yahweh rebukes you, O Satan; even Yahweh that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you: is not this," talking about Joshua, "a brand plucked out of the fire?" {3} Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the messenger. {4} And he, the messenger, answered and spoke to those that stood before him, saying, "Take all the filthy garments off of him." And he said, "Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment." {5} And I said; "Let them set a fair mitre on his head." So they set a fair mitre on his head, and clothed him with garments."

The mitre by the way is the priestly garment.

"And the messenger of Yahweh stood by. {6} And the messenger of Yahweh protested to Joshua, saying, thus saith Yahweh of hosts; "If you will walk in my ways, and if you will keep my charge, then you shall judge my house, and shall keep my courts, and I will give you places to walk among those that stand by. {8} Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you, and your fellows that sit before you: they are men wondered at: for, behold I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH."

Now the N.I.V. is a little better here it says, "Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are symbolic of things to come, I am going to bring my servant, the Branch."

In other words, Joshua and the other priests were symbolic of the Messianic High Priest to come, Jesus Christ.

Joshua The High Priest Represents Jesus Christ

Zechariah 3 Verse 9: "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold I will engrave the graving thereof, says Yahweh of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. {10} In that day, says Yahweh of hosts, shall you call every man his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree?"

Now this is an obscure prophecy, and all we can do with it, is just think through what the icons here might represent. Some of it you can pursue on your own. If you have a concordance you can take something like 'the stone,' and you can just work your way through the Bible reading everywhere you can what you might learn about 'the stone.'

Now don't try to see this as a literal picture. I've seen some really bizarre art, representing some Biblical prophecies. It isn't meant to be painted, the icons are verbal, and they are supposed to call your mind to something else.

Now Joshua is the high priest and the high priest in Biblical types represent none other than Jesus Christ, our high priest.

This 'stone' is laid before Joshua and is suggestive of Christ as well, because Joshua and Zerubbabel are laying the 'corner stone' of the Temple.

Now if I want to also think about this, Paul has an interesting use of the stone back in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 19: "Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, you are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; {20} And you are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

Seven Eyes On The Stone

So Jesus Christ is that stone. The imagery here is hard to avoid, but then you have to ask the question, what about these seven eyes on this stone? If you try to visualize that in a work of art, you are talking about weird. You can only go so far with this, but we might as well go as far as we can go with it.

Let's go back to the book of Revelation and see how John speaks of this sort of thing. Now John is in vision, he's been carried into this vision right up to the very throne room of the whole universe, and that's God's throne, and there is one sitting on that throne.

John says, in Revelation 5 verse 1: "And I saw in the right hand of him that sat upon the throne a book written within and on the backside, and sealed with seven seals." Actually it's a scroll that he is seeing. {2} "And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll, and to loosen the seals thereof?" {3} And no man in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth, was able to open the scroll, couldn't even look at it. {4} And John said, "I wept much, because no one could be found worthy to open and read the scroll, neither to look at it.""

This is a strange thing. John is standing there in the throne room of the universe, weeping like his heart would break. It's a strange sensation if you have ever cried in a dream, you kind of know what he felt like.

Verse 5, "And one of the elders said to me, don't weep: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll, to loosen the seven seals thereof." This is a reference to Jesus Christ

Then John said this and describes what it is he saw,

"And I looked," {6} "and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, right in the middle of this whole group, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

Now that's enough to give you nightmares. Can you imagine what a work of art would look like, with a lamb that has been slain, throat cut, and yet it's got seven horns on it and seven eyes scattered around its head? What in the world does it mean, well it was explained to John that it's the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Now if the vision and the icon are not literal, then we have to consider the possibility that the numbers aren't literal either, otherwise we might be left with say, seven holy spirits, which seem kind of unlikely given what else we know about it.

What it probably means is, that the lamb who I think we all understand to be Christ, is 'all powerful,' that's what seven horns means, and 'all seeing', that's what seven eyes means. The number seven, scholars tell us is the number of completion, of maturity, of perfection, of the whole. So we're not talking necessarily about something that's actually got seven blinking eyes on it. The eyes are the icon that basically means there is nothing that is hidden from His sight.

Zechariah goes on in Zechariah 3 verse 9, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon that one stone shall be seven eyes: I will engrave an inscription thereon, says Yehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."

One fell swoop and everything was removed that was bad.

Sit Under Your Vine and Fig Tree

Zechariah 3 verse 10, "In that day, each of you shall invite your neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree, declares the LORD almighty. "

The vine and the fig tree appear to symbolize a return to a settled life and to secure private property.

For example in 1st Kings 4 verse 25, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the way from Dan in the north even to Beersheba in the south, all the days of Solomon."

In other words, Solomon created a peace where everybody could sit under his own vine and his own fig tree and enjoy his own property, all those days in security.

Micah would use the same sort of expression, talking about the last days and he says.

Micah Chapter 4: "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people will flow unto it."

It's pretty easy to establish if you study this out, that the mountain is an icon for a kingdom, a hill I guess for a small kingdom.

He goes on and says in verse 2, "And many nations shall come and say; "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD," otherwise the kingdom of God, "and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. {3} And he," that is God,

"will judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations way off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more."

You read that, and one thing is clear; we're not there yet, so here's a prophecy that looking way off into the future.

But then he said this in Micah 4 verse 4, "But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it."

Zechariah now poses us with some really difficult puzzles and some of them I think are really beyond any solution we have at hand right now, but it's really useful to walk through this landscape and take note of what we see because I really think it may make sense only when we see things come to pass.

For now, understand that every man sitting under his own vine and his own fig tree and calling his neighbor to come over and sit with him simply means we have private property, we are secure, we can go about growing our crops and rearing our kids and be happy.

Golden Candlesticks

Zechariah 4 verse 1, "And the messenger that talked with me came again and he awakened me as a man that is wakened out of his sleep. {2} And he said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "Well I've looked, and behold a candlestick (a menorah) all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are on top of it."

This is quite important in Jewish culture, but it's not the nine branch lamp stand that you see at Hanukkah time in December. I remember one December seeing this repeated, first of all one of the lamps lighted, then two, then three, then four, as they make their way through the days of the festival of Hanukkah.

Now what we have here in Zechariah is the seven branch Menorah, which is probable the oldest symbol used in Judaism. I'm told that for Jewish people it symbolizes the burning bush where God spoke to Moses, but actually it was part of the paraphernalia that was put in the tabernacle for the service of God.

What's interesting about it for a Christian perspective, is that there is a Christian connection, if you go back to Revelation again.

Revelation chapter 1 Verse 12: John is now speaking: "I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And when I turned around, I saw seven golden candlesticks, or lampstands, {13} And in the middle of the seven candlesticks one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the middle with a golden girdle. {14} His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were like a flame of fire; {15} And his feet

like fine brass, like they had been burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. {16} And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and His countenance was like the sun that shines in his strength."

Now that's a bizarre image if you tried to paint it, as some people have done, but not so much if you take it as an icon or a combination of icons,

John continues in verse 17 to say this, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet like I was dead. And he laid his right hand on me, and he said to me, "Don't be afraid; I am the first and the last: {18} I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am now alive for evermore, Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death. {19} Write what you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are going to come after this: The mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks is this."

Ah ha, now the icons will be explained to us.

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches:" Stars are angels. These particular seven angels have assignments.

"And the seven candlesticks you saw are the seven churches."

Now once again seven being the numbers representing the whole or completeness, these seven churches named in the following two chapters would represent the whole. All the churches that exist, in any time down through history.

But from the stone before Joshua to the seven lamps, one can see the connection with Jesus, the church and the vision of the book of Revelation.

Two Olive Trees

Now returning to Zechariah chapter 4 verse 2, "What do you see" he asked? And I said, "I looked, and behold a candlestick, a menorah, all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are on the top of the seven lamps: {3} Two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl, and the other on the left side thereof." {4} So I answered and spoke to the messenger that talked with me, saying, "What are these, my lord?" {5} Then the messenger that talked with me answered and said to me, "You don't know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord. " {6} Then he answered and spoke to me, saying, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel, saying, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts. {7} "Who are you, O Great Mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof (the capstone or top stone) with shouting, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." {8} "Moreover," he says, "the word of the LORD came to me, saying."" Up till now it's been the 'messenger of Yahweh' and now it is the "word of the LORD" and he explains.

Verse 9, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it."

Now at this point, at least in type, he is talking about the Temple that they were building, he went on to say.

"He will finish it; you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. {10} For who hath despised the day of small things?"

He might even say of small beginnings because all they did was lay the foundation stones.

"For they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel".

The builder's plummet is a surveyor's device.

"With those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD that run to and fro through the whole earth."

Now that harkens back to the seven eyes on the great stone which means basically the eyes of the Lord see everything. They see all that there is to see.

I think it's interesting to think that the oil that is flowing down into that lamp from the bowl which has its original source in the two olive trees that are there, actually represents the Holy Spirit as it is laid out for us here, and it's not going to be the power of men, it's not going to be the strength of men, but it is the spirit of God that accomplishes all that there is to accomplish. Now he still has a question.

Verse 11, ""What are these two olive trees on the right side of the candlestick and on the left side thereof?" {12} And I answered again, and said unto him, "What are these two olive branches through which the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" And he answered me and said, "You don't know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord.""

Well neither do we, but there is an answer; unfortunately it will have to wait till next time.

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