

ZECHARIAH

Introduction

Author. Literally, the name "Zechariah" means "God remembers." It is a common name, used of more than twenty persons in the Old Testament. Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly descent. He is identified in this book as the "son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo" (1:1), but as simply the "son of Iddo" in Ezra 5:1--6:14. The explanation is most likely that Iddo was his grandfather and his father, Berechiah, may have died young or simply was not as well known as his grandfather.

Date. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, beginning his ministry only two months after Haggai, in October-November, 520 B. C. (5:1). His last dated prophecy was two years later in 518 B.C. (7:1). The final portion of the book, chapters 9-14, are undated but many feel that it was written by Zechariah later in his life.

Structure. The book of Zechariah is easily divided into four sections: 1) an introductory address, (1:1-6); 2) a series of eight visions all given to the prophet in a single night, (1:7--6:15); 3) an address in the fourth year of Darius concerning fasting, (7:1--8:23); and 4) a later prophecy, dealing with the future of Israel, Gentile world powers and the Messianic kingdom, (9-14). The final portion divides into two distinct oracles, 9-11 and 12-14, each beginning with the words "the burden of the word of the Lord."

Occasion. Zechariah himself describes the situation, so painful to the Jewish world to which he writes, in the words, "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest" (1:11). With Gentile powers dominating Israel and with no sign of God "shaking the nations" (Haggai 2:7), the situation looked bleak to Zechariah's audience. All this, and a temple which was only partially constructed, called for the encouraging words of a poetic prophet such as Zechariah.

Message Statement. *God will preserve His people though Gentile world powers threaten her existence.*

Argument

- 1A THE CALL TO REPENTANCE 1:1-6
This introductory address clearly sets the tone for all that is to follow. While much of Zechariah's thrust will deal with the eschatological future, his purpose in all of his prophecy is simple and practical: to call Israel to repentance and to spur commitment to the rebuilding of the Temple. The threat of judgment must have been very real to this generation.
- 2A THE EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS AND A SYMBOLIC ACT 1:7-6:15
Zechariah here reveals eight visions which were delivered to him in the course of one night. These rather cryptic visions are followed by a symbolic act, the crowning of Joshua the High Priest, (6:9-15).
- 1B The Horses and Riders: God Will Avenge Israel 1:7-17
In this vision a rider sits on a red horse, standing among some myrtle trees in a ravine with other horses of various colors standing behind him. These riders are actually angelic beings which God has dispatched to patrol the earth. Their message, which most certainly chagrined an observant Jewish audience, was that the earth was at peace and still. The angel's question was when YHWH would assert himself. According to the prophets, after the necessary 70 years of chastening, the return was to have been accomplished by a full restoration of the God's blessings to the nation (Deuteronomy 30:1-11). The message of comfort was that YHWH was not pleased with the nations which had gone beyond what was necessary in their destruction of the land. Further God would rebuild his house which was yet unfinished and He would, indeed, fill the towns of Israel with prosperity one day.
- God had not forgotten his covenant with the nation. He was prepared to shake the nations in order to establish his nation as the preeminent one of all nations. This should have been an encouragement to those who had become sinfully indifferent to the task of Temple reconstruction.
- 2B The Four Horns and Craftsmen: God Will Punish the Nations 1:18-21
This vision is a satisfying play on the four nations of Daniel 2 and 7. The vision teaches that just as a craftsman would have his way with a horn, so also God will, in time, destroy each of the oppressors of Israel. As with the first vision, this was intended as an encouragement to those involved in the immediate task of Temple reconstruction.
- 3B The Surveyor: God Will Reestablish Jerusalem 2:1-13
The content of the vision is a man measuring the city of Jerusalem in anticipation of the massive building projects which God will conduct there one day. The interpretation applies to the future when the city will be thoroughly prosperous and will no longer need a wall because of God's presence "I myself will be a wall of fire around it . . ." (2:5).
- The implications of this scene are that God will also punish the nations which have harmed Israel in the past. Therefore God issues a call to those who still inhabit Babylon to flee her, thus protecting themselves, and return to Jerusalem. In the future God will bless the city with his presence and the nations will come there as well. The truth about the future of the capital city would encourage those in the rebuilding process to pursue their endeavors with vigor.
- 4B The Cleansing of Joshua: Purification & Acceptance of the Priesthood 3:1-10
The Jews had returned under Zerubbabel, reconstructed an altar and recommenced the sacrificial system. The Temple however was still incomplete and because of the lack of an ark, the glory cloud, a Davidic king, and a high priest who possessed urim and thummim, the people had some reason to doubt the efficacy of this eviscerated system. Not only this,

but because of the prophecies which so intertwined the facts of a regathering and the sending of Messiah, many wondered about God's commitment to the Messiah and the rest of his millennial promises. In this vision, YHWH speaks powerfully to both matters.

He first establishes that the levitical priesthood and service are in fact legitimate and condoned. This is taught through the symbolic cleansing of Joshua the priest.

He next establishes the fact that what this generation of returnees is experiencing is not the final fulfillment of God's covenant promises. Although the service of Joshua and his fellows is acceptable, it is only a foretaste of an infinitely greater service to be performed by the Messiah. By using the priest to symbolize Messiah and by referring to him with the term "Branch" (a decidedly royal term, [6:12, 13; Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15]), YHWH is introducing the nation to the dual function of the Messiah as both king and priest. This truth is made more explicit in chapter 7.

Both of these facts ought to have motivated the audience both to worship heartily at the temple, knowing such service was acceptable to God, and to worship with anticipation knowing that God would fulfill his promise of a coming Messiah whose blessings would affect not only the royal but also the priestly offices.

- 5B The Golden Lampstand: God Will Empower Rebuilding 4:1-14
 The vision involves a candlestick which was constantly supplied with fresh oil drawn from two olive trees. A contemporary analogy might be a car motoring along with a constant supply of fuel from a mobile source! The candlestick seems representative of the witness to be realized from the finished temple. The point seems to be that the temple will be finished by the one who laid the foundation, Zerubbabel. The exhortation is then given for the people not to despise a work which is empowered by God, no matter how humble the project may seem to them. The LORD's two agents in this venture are the two offices which were anointed, the royal representative, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the priest. The people could be confident of success because these two were serving the "LORD of *all the earth*" (4:14).
- 6B The Flying Scroll: God Will Punish the Wicked 5:1-4
 In the previous visions God has established his willingness to deal with the sin on the part of the repentant with forgiveness. For those who refuse his forgiveness however, he will respond with swift (flying, 5:2), extensive (whole land, 5:3), and complete (timbers and stones, 5:4) judgment. Whether the focus of the warning is for the future or the present is difficult to determine. Certainly it would be an encouragement to the faithful that the wicked would be recompensed at some time.
- 7B The Woman in the Ephah: God Will Remove Sin From the Land 5:5-11
 The point of this vision seems to be made with a sarcastic tone. The personification of wickedness in the land, a woman, is not only removed from Israel but is also transported to a foreign capital, Shinar, where it is placed in a foreign temple. The import seems to be that if one would be idolatrous then he should live in a land of idolatry. The exact point of the wickedness (a spirit of avarice which prevented the completion of the temple? Haggai 1) is not explicitly stated.
- 8B The Four Chariots: God Avenges Himself of Israel's Enemies 6:1-8
 This, the last of the eight visions, seems to answer to the first vision which also involved four horses. While the first vision involved horses which only patrolled for reconnaissance, these horses seem to patrol with the purpose of vanquishing world powers. The result of their maneuvers, found in verse eight is, "Look, those going toward the north country have given my Spirit rest in the land of the north." Thus, this vision once again would give Israel encouragement with God's promise to one day avenge her enemies.

- 9B The Conclusion: The Crowning of Joshua the High Priest 6:9-15
Zechariah is commanded to forge a crown and then inappropriately place it on the head of the High Priest. The symbolic act of crowning Joshua with a royal crown indicated that one day the "Branch" (a clear reference to the Davidic Messiah. See 2A4B on Page 4 above) would incorporate both offices at once. The point would be that Joshua's work, though important and acceptable, was only an adumbration of the greater work to be performed by the Messiah. This act was designed as an encouragement to the people as they saw God's plans for the functions of the Messiah. The crown was then placed in the temple as a perpetual memorial of the divine promise to raise up a priest-king of the tribe of Judah who would build a temple and then effectively administer the temple service.
- 3A HISTORICAL INTERLUDE: AN INQUIRY AND AN ANSWER 7:1-8:23
The dating of this interlude places it about two years after the eight visions. A group of men present Zechariah with a question concerning fasting and he seizes the opportunity to address the issue of the genuineness of the people's spiritual life.
- 1B The Inquiry Concerning Fasting Over the Destruction of Jerusalem 7:1-3
The inquiry of the men from Bethel involved the necessity of fasting over the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 2B The Answer From YHWH 7:4--8:23
Zechariah seizes the opportunity to address the people's real motives in the issue. Much of their worship, the fasting included, was hypocritical and superficial. He first rebukes the people's motives and reminds them that only a short time ago a generation of Israelites ignored warnings like his and found themselves exiled for their stubbornness. He then invites the people to repent of their sin, again reminding them of the fate of the exiled generation.
- The next emphasis in Zechariah's response involves the encouragement that stems from God's future restoration of Jerusalem. The strategy here seems to be that the kindness of God will lead the people to repentance.
- 3B A Description of Future Celebrations of Jerusalem's Blessedness 8:18-23
This section answers to the original question of fasting. God informs the people that when he restores the nation, the question of fasting will be moot, as fasting will be replaced by feasting. No longer will the nations surround Jerusalem to devour her but to be blessed by her and no longer will the Israelite be despised, but rather honored.
- 4A TWO REVELATORY ORACLES OF END-TIME EVENTS 9:1-14:21
The purpose of these two oracles is to describe the course of events which God will use to finally bring His nation into their place of blessing and prominence which was alluded to at the end of the preceding chapter. The basic elements of these oracles are the: 1) deliverance of Israel from her enemies, 2) the destruction of Gentile powers and, 3) the establishment of God's rule upon the earth.
- 1B The First Oracle 9:1-11:17
The first oracle traces the theme of the protection of Israel from the nations which was fulfilled at least as an anti-type by means of Alexander the Great (9:1-8). The section then moves to the blessings which will attend the coming of the Messiah. As Zechariah wrote he mixed the first and second comings together, a distinction which neither he nor his contemporaries could have made (cf. 9:9 and 9:10). He then moves to the rejection of the Messiah by the nation. In their ignorance, and to their destruction, they will reject the True and accept a false shepherd.

2B The Second Oracle

12:1-14:21

The second oracle revolves around two scenes: the final siege of Jerusalem and the Messiah's return to defeat the enemies of Israel and to establish his millennial kingdom. The promise is made that Messiah will return to split the Mount of Olives as he comes to destroy the nations, rescue his people, and establish his holy government in Jerusalem.

Outline

1A	THE CALL TO REPENTANCE	1:1-6
1B	<u>The Superscription</u>	1:1
2B	<u>The Call to Repentance</u>	1:2-6
1C	The admonition to repent	1:2-3
2C	The warning based upon the destruction of the exile generation	1:4-6
2A	THE EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS AND A SYMBOLIC ACT	1:7--6:15
1B	<u>The Four Horns and Craftsmen: God Will Punish the Nations</u>	1:18-21
1C	The date	1:7
2C	The vision	1:8-11
1D	The question	1:9
2D	The answer	1:10
3D	The report	1:11
3C	The comforting conversation	1:12-17
1D	The question	1:12
2D	The content	1:14-17
1E	YHWH is angered at the nations for going beyond	
2E	what was necessary	1:14-15
3E	YHWH will bless his people	1:16-17
1F	rebuilding the temple	1:16
2F	rebuilding the cities	1:17
2B	<u>The Four Horns and Craftsmen: God Will Punish the Nations</u>	1:18-21
1C	The four horns	1:18-19
1D	The vision	1:18
2D	The interpretation	1:19
2C	The four craftsmen	1:20-21
1D	The vision	1:20
2D	The interpretation	1:21
3B	<u>The Surveyor: God Will Reestablish Jerusalem</u>	2:1-13
1C	The vision	2:1-5
1D	The description	2:1-2
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2C	The implications	2:6-13
1D	God will punish the nations	2:6-9
2D	God will possess Israel	2:10-12
1E	God will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem	2:10
2E	Gentile nations will come to Jerusalem	2:11
3E	God will set his special love on Jerusalem	2:12

	3D	Men should be silent	2:13
4B		<u>The Cleansing of Joshua: Purification & Acceptance of the Priesthood</u>	3:1-10
	1C	The vision	3:1-5
	1D	The scene	3:1-3
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5B		<u>The Golden Lampstand: God Will Empower Rebuilding</u>	4:1-14
	1C	The framework of the vision	4:1-5
	2C	The explanation of empowerment	4:6-10
	1D	The power of Zerubbabel	4:6-7
	1E	its source	4:6
	2E	its extent	4:7
	2D	The success of Zerubbabel	4:8-10
	1E	a promise of success	4:8-9
	2E	a warning not to despise what God has empowered	4:10
	3C	The explanation of instruments	4:11-14
6B		<u>The Flying Scroll: God Will Punish the Wicked</u>	5:1-4
	1C	The description	5:1
	2C	The question	5:2a
	3C	The answer	5:2b
	4C	The interpretation	5:3-4
	1D	The significance: God's punishment of sin	5:3
	2D	The extent: every sinner punished completely	5:4
7B		<u>The Woman in the Ephah: God Will Remove Sin From the Land</u>	5:5-11
	1C	The circumstances	5:5
	2C	The question	5:6a
	3C	The answer	5:6b-7
	4C	The interpretation	5:8
	5C	The purging	5:9-11

8B	<u>The Four Chariots: God Avenges Himself of Israel's Enemies</u>	6:1-8
1C	The description	6:1-3
2C	The question	6:4a
3C	The answer	6:4b-6
4C	The patrol	6:7-8
1D	The command	6:7
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9B	<u>The Conclusion: The Crowning of Joshua the High Priest</u>	6:9-15
1C	The command concerning the crown	6:9-11
2C	The explanation of the event	6:12-13
3C	The reminder	6:14
4C	The result	6:15
3A	HISTORICAL INTERLUDE: AN INQUIRY AND AN ANSWER	7:1-8:23
1B	<u>The Inquiry Concerning Fasting Over the Destruction of Jerusalem</u>	7:1-3
2B	<u>The Answer From YHWH</u>	7:4--8:23
1C	A rebuke of empty ritualism	7:4-7
2C	Repentance	7:8-14
1D	The demand	7:8-10
2D	The refusal	7:11-12
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1D	God's intentions for the nation	8:1-3
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4D	The application to rebuild the temple	8:9
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6D	The proper response	8:16-17
3B	<u>A Description of Future Celebrations of Jerusalem's Blessedness</u>	8:18-23
1C	Fasting will be replaced by feasting	8:18-19
2C	Gentiles will come to Jerusalem to worship rather than destroy	8:20-22
3C	The Israelite will be favored rather than despised	8:23
4A	TWO REVELATORY ORACLES OF END-TIME EVENTS	9:1-14:21

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	1D Over Damascus	9:1
	2D Over Hamath, Tyre & Sidon	9:2
	3D Over Tyre	9:3-4
	4D Over Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron	9:5
	5D Over Ashdod & Philistia	9:6-7
	6D For Israel	9:8
2C	Comings of the Messiah	9:9-10
	1D The first	9:9
	2D The second	9:10-17
	1E universal peace	9:10
	2E destruction of Israel's enemies	9:11-15
	3E deliverance of Israel	9:16-17
3C	Blessings of Messiah	10:1-12
	1D God is the source	10:1
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2B	<u>The Second Oracle</u>	12:1-14:21
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	2D The descent and deliverance Messiah	14:4-5
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2E	geographic changes	14:8
3E	governmental changes	14:9
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