

Zechariah - Introduction & Background

Introduction

The post-exilic prophet Zechariah was a Levite born in Babylon (Neh 12:1,16). Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest (Ezra 5:1-2; Zech 3:1; 4:6; 6:11). Zechariah returned to Jerusalem from Babylon with almost 50,000 other Jewish exiles. He was probably a relatively young man at the beginning of his prophetic ministry (Cf. 2:4) while Haggai might have been considerably older.

- Zechariah = "Yahweh Remembers."
- Son of Berechiah = "Yahweh Blesses"
- Son of Iddo = "The Appointed Time"

Nehemiah speaks of an Iddo as one of the priestly families returning to Judah (Neh 12:4,16). Both Jeremiah (Jer 1:1) and Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3) were also priests.

There are 29 "Zechariahs" in the OT; at least 30 total.

Matt 23:35: *so that upon you will fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*

Zechariah, in effect, closes the OT. Luke opens with the account of another Zechariah ("Yahweh Remembers") and his wife Elizabeth ("His Oath"). Also a priest, the angel ends 400 years of silence with the announcement of the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist. Written in 520 BC; contemporaneous with Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Zechariah contains more *Messianic* prophecies than all of the other "Minor" prophets put together. Zechariah reveals more about the coming Messiah than all the other Minor Prophets combined. He is truly the minor prophet with the major message. Within the pages of Zechariah are found many of messianic prophecy's "greatest hits".

It is the longest book of the 12 "Minor" prophets, and it is the most frequently quoted:

- 71 quotes or allusions in NT; 1/3 of these in the Gospels
- 31 [name of God, *EI*] in Revelation; 20 from Chapters 1-8; 8 from Chapters 9-14

The Historical Background of Zechariah

The historical backdrop to the vibrant and encouraging message of this prophet is the tremendous discouragement the returning Jewish exiles had experienced in the 16 years they had been back in their land. The previous glory of Judah and, particularly, Jerusalem could not be recaptured, and the rebuilt Temple, although sixteen years in the works, was unimpressive and still unfinished. Yet until the completion of the Temple and

the full restoration of covenantal Levitical worship, neither the glory of Jerusalem nor the prosperity of the Jewish people could be reestablished.

This pervasive discouragement and passivity is the ambiance which links all the post-exilic works together and especially permeates the work of Zechariah and his contemporary, the prophet Haggai. Haggai, whose ministry has a one-month overlap with Zechariah's, having begun to motivate the people to once again take up the task of rebuilding the Temple, exits the spotlight of Jewish history, but not before passing the motivational prophetic baton to Zechariah.

The prophet Zechariah, whose name means, "the Lord remembers," is first mentioned in the list of the 50,000 returning Jewish exiles given in Ezra 5:1, 6:14. He was born in the Babylonian exile, of priestly descent, and thus is the third in the trinity of prophet/priests surrounding the Babylonian exile: Jeremiah, whose ministry was pre-exilic; Ezekiel, whose ministry was exilic; and Zechariah, whose ministry was post-exilic. He is careful to date his prophecies, which begin in late 520 BC.

| 4. Scope | | |
|------------------|--|------------------------|
| <u>SCRIPTURE</u> | <u>SCRIPTURAL DATE</u> | <u>DATE</u> |
| 1:1 | 8th month, 2nd year of Darius | 10 or 11/520 BC |
| 1:7 | 24th day, 11th month, 2nd year of Darius | 2/15/519 BC |
| 7:1 | 4th day, 9th month, 4th year of Darius | 12/17/518 BC |

In the second regnal year of Darius (520 BC) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in rebuilding (Ezra 5:1-2; Haggai 1:1). Haggai preached four sermons in four months and then disappeared from the scene. Two months after Haggai delivered his first sermon, Zechariah began his prophetic ministry (Cf. Haggai 1:1; Zech 1:1), encouraging the people to spiritual renewal and motivating them to rebuild the temple by revealing to them God's plans for Israel's future. With this prophetic encouragement the people completed the temple reconstruction in 515 BC (Ezra 6:15).

Date

- Zech 1-8 were written immediately after the visions were given
- Zech 9-14 - either at same time or possibly ~40 years later (519-518 BC or 470-469 BC)
- Scope of time: Oct/Nov 520 BC to Dec 17 518 BC
- Zechariah 9-14 written 40 years later?
 - Plausible, but not confirmed; Zechariah could've written entire book later
 - No dates given in Zech 9-14
 - If true, scope could be from 520-470 BC
- Zechariah was a contemporary of:
 - Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14) - Zechariah & Haggai prophesied together
 - High Priest Joshua
 - Governor Zerubbabel

Audience

- Zerubbabel (Zech 4:6-9)
- Joshua (Zech 3:1; 6:9-15)
- but his ultimate audience was the Jewish returnees from the 70-year captivity in Babylon (Zech 7:4-7)
 - Ezra 5:1; 6:14

Dates of Key Events

- August 29, 520 BC - Haggai's first sermon (Haggai 1:1-11; Ezra 5:1)
- September 21, 520 BC - Temple building resumed (Haggai 1:12-15; Ezra 5:2)
- October 17, 520 BC - Haggai's second sermon (Haggai 2:1-9)
- October - November, 520 BC - Zechariah's ministry begun (Zech 1:1-6)
- December 18, 520 BC - Haggai's third and fourth sermons (Haggai 2:10-23)
- February 15, 519 BC - Zechariah's eight visions (Zech 1:7—6:8)
- December 7, 518 BC - Delegation from Bethel (Zech 7)
- March 12, 515 BC - Temple dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18)

| Nebuchadnezzar's 3 Sieges of Judah | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Year | 605 BC | 597 BC | 586 BC |
| Scripture | 2 Kings 24:1 Dan 1:1 | 2 Kings 24:10-16 <u>Ezek 1:1-2</u> | 2 Kings 25:1-2 <u>Ezek 33:21</u> |
| Judah's king | Jehoiakim | Jehoiachin | Zedekiah |
| Those taken | Daniel & some princes | Ezekiel & majority 10k | Remnant captured, Jerusalem & Temple destroyed |

| Three Returns from Babylon | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------|----------|------------------------|---------------|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| | DATE | DURATION | PERSIAN KING | JEWISH LEADER | SCRIPTURE | PURPOSE | NUMBER OF RETURNEES |
| 1 st return | 538–515 BC | 23 years | Cyrus Is 44:28–45:1 | Zerubbabel | Ezra 1–6 Is 44:28 | Rebuilding the temple | 50,000 |
| 2 nd return | 458–457 BC | 2 years | Artaxerxes | Ezra | Ezra 7–10 | Adorning of the temple and reforming the people | 2,000 |
| 3 rd return | 444–432 BC | 8 years | Artaxerxes | Nehemiah | Nehemiah | Rebuilding the wall | |

As Zechariah began prophesying after the 1st return, the temple was in the process of being rebuilt.

Israel's Four Temples

(1) Solomon's pre-exilic temple (Kings & Chronicles)

(2) Zerubbabel's post-exilic temple (Ezra 1:6; John 2:20)

(3) Antichrist's temple (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 11:1-2)

(4) Millennial temple (Ezek 40-48)

| | | | |
|---------------|--|-------------------|---|
| 538 BC | Cyrus' decree | 520–518 BC | Ministries of Zechariah & Haggai |
| 536 BC | Temple foundation laid | 519 BC | Darius confirms Cyrus' decree |
| 534 BC | Temple building interrupted | ----- | Resumption of Temple building |
| ----- | Temple project stalled for 15 years | 516 BC | Temple completed |

538 BC - Cyrus' decree

536 BC - Temple foundation laid

534 BC - Temple building stalled for 15 years - persecution (Cf. Ezra 4)

— No wall around the city (Neh 2:17)

— No temple (Haggai 1:4)

— The people had a crisis of faith:

— The prosperity that they were promised for obedience was not materializing

— Their enemies in the land who stopped the construction project seemed to have the upper hand

— The land of Israel was still under Persian authority

520-518 BC - ministries of Zechariah & Haggai

— They afflicted the comfortable and comforted the afflicted

— Their mission was motivating the people to get back to work on temple construction

— Haggai's strategy was "in your face"...motivational speech screaming at them to motivate them to start rebuilding again

— Zechariah's strategy was to motivate them by disclosing God's purpose for the temple.

Zechariah means "God remembers." He had all these visions of a future temple, and he paints a picture about God's purpose for the temple in the messianic age and in the millennial kingdom. His message is: Don't you want to be part of God's great work?

519 BC - Darius' confirmation of Cyrus' decree; temple construction resumes

516 BC - Temple completed

Outline of Zechariah

I. Introductory Call to Repentance (Zech 1:1-6)

(1) Date (1:1a)

(2) Author (1:1b)

(3) Call to Repentance (1:2-6)

II. Eight Night Visions (Zech 1:7—6:15)

(II.) Eight Night Visions (1:7—6:15)

(1) Riders & Horses Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17)

- (A) Date (1:7)
- (B) Description (1:8)
- (C) Interpretation (1:9-11)
 - (a) Zechariah's Inquiry (1:9a)
 - (b) Interpreting the angel's answer (1:9b)
 - (c) Angel of the Lord's answer (1:10)
 - (d) Rider's report (1:11)
- (D) Explanation (1:12-17)
 - (a) God's jealousy for Jerusalem (1:12-14)
 - (b) God's anger with the nations (1:15)
 - (c) Jerusalem to be restored (1:16a)
 - (d) The Temple to be restored (1:16b)
 - (e) Jerusalem's prosperity to return (1:17)

(2) Four Horns & Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)

- (A) Four Horns (1:18-19)
 - (a) Description (1:18)
 - (b) Explanation (1:19)
- (B) Four Craftsmen (1:20-21)
 - (a) Description (1:20)
 - (b) Explanation (1:21)

(3) Man With the Measuring Line (2:1-13)

- (A) Vision (2:1-2)
 - (a) Vision (2:1)
 - (b) Question (2:2a)
 - (c) Answer (2:2b)
- (B) Jerusalem's restoration (2:3-5)
 - (a) Angelic conversation (2:3)
 - (b) Jerusalem's repopulation (2:4)
 - (c) Jerusalem's protection (2:5)
- (C) Exiles to return (2:6-7)
 - (a) Future worldwide return (2:6)
 - (b) Historic local return (2:7)
- (D) God and the nations (2:8-9)
 - (a) God's punishment of the nations (2:8)
 - (b) Israel's elevation (2:9)
- (E) God to inhabit Jerusalem (2:10-12)

- (a) God to inhabit Jerusalem (2:10)
 - (b) Nations to be blessed (2:11)
 - (c) God to choose Jerusalem (2:12)
- (F) Concluding exhortation (2:13)
 - (a) The need for silence (2:13a)
 - (b) Divine emotions (2:13b)
 - (c) Heavenly action forthcoming (2:13c)
- (4) Cleansing of the High Priest Joshua (3:1-10)
 - (A) The Stages of Joshua's Cleansing (3:1-5)
 - (a) Satan's Condemnation (3:1)
 - (b) God's Rebuke (3:2)
 - (c) Joshua's Cleansing (3:3-5)
 - (B) Jerusalem's Future Cleansing (3:6-10)
 - (a) King-Priest (3:6-7)
 - (b) Future Branch (3:8)
 - (c) Cleansing (3:9)
 - (d) Peace (3:10)
- (5) Lampstand & Olive Tree (4:1-14)
 - (A) Vision Described (4:1-3)
 - (a) Setting (4:1)
 - (b) Lampstand with seven lamps (4:2)
 - (c) Two olive trees (4:3)
 - (B) Vision Interpreted (4:4-14)
 - (a) God's strength (4:4-7)
 - (b) Zerubbabel to rebuild the Temple (4:8-10)
 - (c) God's two anointed servants (4:11-14)
- (6) Flying Scroll (5:1-4)
 - (A) Vision Described (5:1-2)
 - (B) Vision Interpreted (5:3-4)
 - (a) Covenant judgment coming (5:3a)
 - (b) Sins to be judged (5:3b-4)
 - (i) Stealing (5:3b)
 - (ii) Swearing falsely (5:3c-4)
- (7) Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)
 - (A) The Woman's Identity (5:5-8)
 - (B) The Woman's Destination (5:9-11)
- (8) Four Chariots (6:1-8)
 - (A) The Vision (6:1-3)

(B) The Interpretation (6:4-8)

Conclusion: Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

(1) The Offering (6:9-10)

(2) The Coronation (6:11)

(3) The Branch (6:12)

(4) The King-Priest (6:13)

(5) The Reminder (6:14)

(6) The Testimony (6:15)

III. Questions and Answers About Fasting (Zech 7:1—8:23)

(1) Question (7:1-3)

(A) Date (7:1)

(B) Questioner (7:2)

(C) Question (7:3)

(2) Four divine answers (7:4—8:23)

(A) Condemnation of empty ritualism (7:4-7)

(B) Condemnation of past covenant failure (7:8-14)

(a) Covenant requirements (7:8-10)

(b) Covenant rebellion (7:11-12)

(c) Covenant judgment (7:13-14)

(C) Prediction of Jerusalem's restoration (8:1-17)

(a) Prediction (8:1-8)

(b) Application (8:9-17)

(i) Rebuild the Temple (8:9-13)

(ii) Trust in God's promises (8:14-15)

(iii) Obey the covenant (8:16-17)

(D) Prediction of future blessing (8:18-23)

(a) From fasting to feasting (8:18-19)

(i) New oracle (8:18)

(ii) From fasting to feasting (8:19)

(b) Jerusalem's exaltation (8:20-23)

(i) The gathering (8:20)

(ii) The reason (8:21)

(iii) The location (8:22)

(iv) The preeminence (8:23)

IV. Two Burdens (Zech 9:1—14:21)

(1) Israel's postponed deliverance due to her rejection of her Messiah (Zech 9:1—11:17)

(A) Divine warrior hymn (Zech 9:1-17)

(a) Judgment on the oppressing nations, through Alexander the Great (9:1-8)

- (1) Hadrach (9:1a)
- (2) Damascus (9:1b)
- (3) Hamath (9:2a)
- (4) Tyre & Sidon (9:2b-4)
- (5) Philistines (9:5-7)
 - (i) Ashkelon (9:5a)
 - (ii) Gaza (9:5b)
 - (iii) Ekron (9:5c)
 - (iv) Gaza (9:5d)
 - (v) Ashkelon (9:5e)
 - (vi) Ashdod (9:6a)
 - (vii) Philistines (9:6b-7a)
 - (viii) Ekron (9:7b)
- (6) Jerusalem (9:8)
- (b) The Messiah (9:9-10)
 - (i) First advent (9:9)
 - (ii) Second advent (9:10)
- (c) God's protection of Israel during the Inter-testamental period (from Antiochus IV Epiphanes) (9:11-17)
 - (i) Blood covenant (9:11a)
 - (ii) Prisoners liberated (9:11b-12)
 - (iii) Victories (9:13-17)
- (B) True shepherd (Zech 10:1-12)
 - (a) Messianic prosperity (10:1-3)
 - (i) Challenge (10:1)
 - (ii) Idols inhibiting prosperity (10:2)
 - (iii) True shepherd to judge the false shepherds (10:3)
 - (b) Restoration of the Northern & Southern kingdoms (10:4-7)
 - (i) The king (10:4-5)
 - (ii) The kingdoms (10:6-7)
 - (c) Messianic regathering (10:8-12)
 - (i) The regathering (10:8-9)
 - (ii) The geography (10:10-11)
 - (iii) The strengthening (10:12)
- (C) False shepherd (Zech 11:1-17)
 - (a) The personified as wailing (11:1-3)
 - (i) Cedars of Lebanon (11:1)
 - (ii) Cypress & Oaks of Bashan (11:2)

- (iii) Shepherd & Lions (11:3)
- (b) Reasons for the wailing (11:4-14)
 - (i) Zechariah pastors a doomed flock (11:4-7)
 - (ii) God no longer favors the flock (11:8-11)
 - (iii) Israel to reject her Messiah (11:12-13)
 - (iv) Cessation of the nation's unity (11:14)
- (c) The coming False Shepherd (11:15-17)
 - (i) Raised up (11:15-16)
 - (ii) Destroyed (11:17)
- (2) Israel's future deliverance due to her acceptance of her Messiah (Zech 12:14—14:21)
 - (A) Israel's physical deliverance (12:1-9)
 - (a) The nations that will attack Israel (12:1-3)
 - (b) The God who will protect Israel (12:4-9)
 - (B) Israel's spiritual deliverance (12:10-14)
 - (a) God's Spirit: the cause of revival (12:10a)
 - (b) Israel's remorse: the result of revival (12:11-14)
 - (C) Spiritual cleansing (13:1-5)
 - (a) Fountain (13:1)
 - (b) Idolatry removed (13:2a)
 - (c) False prophets removed (13:2b-5)
 - (D) Comprehensive deliverance (13:6-9)
 - (a) Shepherd struck (13:6-7a)
 - (b) Sheep scattered (13:7b)
 - (c) Two-thirds perish (13:8a)
 - (d) One-third rescued & refined (13:8b-9)
 - (E) Jerusalem's Deliverance (14:1-7)
 - (a) The theme (14:1)
 - (b) The crisis (14:2)
 - (c) The warrior (14:3)
 - (d) The return (14:4)
 - (e) The remnant (14:5)
 - (f) The darkness (14:6)
 - (g) The uniqueness (14:7)
 - (F) Kingdom Conditions (14:8-11)
 - (a) Jerusalem's waters (14:8)
 - (b) Earthly reign (14:9)
 - (c) Topographical changes (14:10)

- (i) Abundant rainfall (Ezek 34:26-27)
 - (ii) Water in the desert (Is 35:6-7)
 - (iii) Life to the Dead Sea (Ezek 47:1-12)
 - (iv) Sun seven times brighter (Is 30:26)
 - (v) Physical healing (Is 35:5-6)
- (d) Millennial Jerusalem (14:11)
- (G) Enemies' Judgment (14:12-15)
 - (a) Plague (14:12)
 - (b) Panic (14:13)
 - (c) Plunder (14:14)
 - (d) Pets (14:15)
- (H) Kingdom Worship (14:16-21)
 - (a) The Pilgrimage (14:16)
 - (b) The Punishment (14:17-19)
 - (c) The Purity (14:20-21)

Message

The message of Zechariah is: The Messiah's future restoration of Israel and millennial reign is depicted through various divine visions (1:7—6:15), responses (7:1—8:23), and burdens (9:1—14:21), and these are given to induce hope and obedience among the beleaguered remnant.

Zechariah gives them a glimpse of their future and their role in building the temple that the Messiah will one day inhabit.

Purposes

- (1) To encourage the returnees to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14)
- (2) To provide eschatological hope in the challenging post-exilic world
- (3) To prepare the returnees for Temple worship
- (4) To exhort the returnees toward covenant obedience

Haggai vs. Zechariah

| HAGGAI | ZECHARIAH |
|--|--------------------|
| Exhortation | Encouragement |
| More concrete | More abstract |
| Concise | Expanded |
| Present concern | Future concern |
| Take part! | Take heart! |
| Older activist | Younger missionary |
| Wilkinson and Boa, <i>Talk Thru the Bible</i> , p. 291 | |

Themes

- (1) 1st and 2nd Advents
- (2) Temple
- (3) Israel's Eschatology
- (4) Israel Status as God's Elect Nation (Zech 2:8)
- (5) Covenant Renewal

Unique Characteristics

- Interpreting angels
- Longest minor prophet
- Many messianic prophecies (only Isaiah has more)
- Multiplicity of literary styles
- Times of the Gentiles
- Israel's eschatology
- Two burdens focused upon in the Passion narratives
 - In Jesus last week, Jesus quoted from Zech 9-14 often, particularly the 1st burden
- Third most alluded to book in the Apocalypse (Revelation)
 - 278 out of 404 total verses in Revelation are references to the OT
 - Daniel is quoted most frequently, Ezekiel 2nd most, Zechariah 3rd most
- Imputation (3:1-5)
 - Zechariah gives a clear explanation of the imputation of Christ's righteousness

- Summation of prophetic themes disclosed in earlier prophets

Additional Resources on Zechariah

Exegetical Studies in Zechariah (16).

Zechariah: Minor Prophet with a Major Message

The Structure of the Book of Zechariah