

38 - Zechariah

Zechariah

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO ZECHARIAH

Cyrus king of Persia conquered Babylon in 538 B.C. He issued a decree allowing the Jewish exiles who had been deported to Babylon 70 years before to return to Judea and rebuild the temple. They finished the foundation, but the work stopped because some of the Samaritans in the city became jealous and worked against them. But when King Darius came to power in Persia, he permitted work to begin again. Zechariah was born in Babylon of a priestly family. He was among those who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel in 538 B.C. He co-worked with Haggai to bring spiritual revival and to encourage the Jews to overcome fear and lethargy and rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1,2; 6:14). "Zechariah" means "The Lord Remembers." Zechariah proclaims God's faithfulness to keep his covenant promises.

The key verse of the book of Zechariah is 1:3: "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the Lord Almighty, 'and I will return to you.'"

Chapters 1-6 contain eight visions of Zechariah. These visions are God's message to his people. They teach that God is sovereign and he is in control of history. He will faithfully carry out his promises, punishing a sinful people and pouring out blessing on those who obey him. When people repent, he will surely restore them.

RETURN TO ME AND I WILL RETURN TO YOU

Zechariah 1:1-21 (Fri.) January 15

Key Verse: 1:3

1. A call to repentance (1-6)

Zechariah spoke God's word to the returnees in the second year of Darius' reign. Returning to Jerusalem was good, but the real need was to return to the Lord. They had been exiled to Babylon because they ignored God's word and served idols. The prophets of the past were dead, but their words lived on, for they spoke the word of God. When the people repented, God opened the way for them to return; God is faithful and his punishment was just.

2. Visions in the night (7-21)

The first of eight visions in the night was of a man standing among the myrtle trees. The horses represent those who returned from an inspection trip of the world; they reported to him that the whole world was at rest and peace. But how could the world be at peace when God's people are suffering under the heel of oppression? The angel assured the prophet that God would restore

Jerusalem. The four powerful horns had scattered God's people, but four craftsmen would rebuild.

Prayer: Lord, turn the hearts of the people to you--beginning with me. Heal the brokenhearted.

One Word: Return to the Lord; he will rebuild

THE LORD HIMSELF IS A WALL OF FIRE

Zechariah 2:1-13

Key Verse: 2:5

1. A wall of fire; glory within (1-9)

Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the returned exiles were trying to build the city and temple again. God showed Zechariah a preview of the new Jerusalem, a city without walls. The Church of Jesus is a spiritual city around which no wall can be built. God himself is a wall of fire to protect his people; and God's people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, God's glorious presence. God's people are the apple of his eye. He will protect them.

2. Many nations will become God's people (10-13)

God promised to come and live among his people. He chose them to be a kingdom of priests--a missionary nation. So he wants them to embrace the people of all nations. This is a fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (Ge 12:3). This is God's great missionary vision.

Prayer: Lord, take down my walls and protect me with your wall of fire. Hasten the day when all people of all nations will be your people. Let your glory fill the earth.

One Word: A wall of fire around; God's glory within

I WILL REMOVE SIN IN A SINGLE DAY

Zechariah 3:1-10

Key Verse: 3:4

1. A burning stick snatched from the fire (1-7)

This is the 4th vision. Joshua, the high priest, represents God's people, a kingdom of priests, who are attacked by Satan. God rebukes Satan and snatches his people from the burning fire. He wants them to be the holy people of God. To be God's holy people and a kingdom of priests we must put off the filthy rags of our sins and our own righteousness and be dressed in the rich robes of his righteousness.

2. God's Servant the Branch (8-10)

How can we be clothed in God's righteousness? God promised to bring his servant, the Branch--the Christ. The stone with seven eyes represents God's omniscience--he knows all our sins and sorrows. He kept his promise and removed the sins of his people in a single day--the day Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world. We must put off our filthy clothes and put on the rich robe of his righteousness. We must then walk in his ways and claim his peace.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my sins and dress me in the robes of Christ's righteousness.

One Word: See, I have taken away your sin

"BY MY SPIRIT," SAYS THE LORD

Zechariah 4:1-14

Key Verse: 4:6b

1. Two olive trees (1-9)

Rebuilding the temple was not easy. There was much opposition. Zerubbabel, a descendant of King David, was the governor and Joshua was the high priest. They were the two olive trees--two men anointed by God to rebuild the temple and put God's life back in the center of God's people. The task God gave them was impossible to do with human strength. So God promised, "Not by might or by power, but by my Spirit." God had given them strength to begin the task; he would give them strength to complete it.

2. Don't despise the day of small things (10-14)

The plumb line is a small thing. With it one can measure even the smallest deviation from the perfect standard. God's eyes range throughout the earth, seeking those whose hearts are turned toward him (2Ch 16:9a). When God's servants serve with their whole hearts, his Spirit works in their behalf.

Prayer: Lord, help me to pay attention to small things and depend on your Spirit.

One Word: "By my Spirit," says the Lord

A FLYING SCROLL AND A WOMAN IN A BASKET

Zechariah 5:1-11

Key Verse: 5:3,4

1. The flying scroll (1-4)

Many people deliberately hindered the construction of the temple. These people had not shared in the captivity. They were full of lies and deceit. The vision of the flying scroll is a warning to those who have no truth in their hearts. It was a bold, clear message from God that God's curse is on those who lie, steal, or oppose the work of God by deceit. God's word would cleanse the land of such unrighteousness. God's word--whether a promise of blessing or curse--accomplishes the purpose for which it is sent.

2. The woman in a basket (5-11)

The woman in the basket represented the iniquity of the people who dwelt in the land. The basket of wickedness would be carried away to Babylon. So the land would be cleansed.

Prayer: Lord, don't let me be discouraged by those who oppose your work. Purge my heart and lips of all deceit and let your word dwell in me.

One Word: God will defeat his enemies

HERE IS THE MAN WHOSE NAME IS THE BRANCH

Zechariah 6:1-15

Key Verse: 6:12

1. The four chariots (1-8)

This vision is similar to the first one (1:8). In the first vision, four horses had returned to report on their inspection trip of the earth. In this vision, the four chariots eagerly go out to inspect the whole earth. God is the Sovereign Ruler of all the earth. War, famine and pestilence are the result of man's sin; but these things do not happen without God's hand moving. The chariots go throughout the whole earth and return to announce God's victory.

2. The Branch will build the temple (9-15)

The coronation of Joshua the high priest looks forward to Jesus who is prophet and priest and king--and to the royal priesthood of his household (1Pe 2:9). Jesus is the Branch from David's house who will build the true temple--the temple not made with hands. The temple of his body was destroyed by evil men; but he rose from the dead on the third day and became the Cornerstone.

Prayer: Praise God, the Sovereign Ruler of all the earth. Help us to build his temple on earth (15,16).

One Word: The Branch will build his temple

PAY ATTENTION TO GOD'S WORD

Zechariah 7:1-14

Key Verse: 7:10

1. Was it for God or for yourselves? (1-10)

The people of Israel spent 70 years in Babylonian captivity. During that time they observed the 5th and 7th months with mourning and fasting. Should they continue this practice now that they had returned? God asked them a question. Were their religious activities for themselves or for God? More than superficial worship, God wants his people to administer justice, care for the weak, and live together in peace and good will. He does not want us to think evil of each other in our hearts (8-9).

2. Listen to the word of the Lord (11-14)

God said, "When I called, you would not listen--so when you called, I would not listen." When we ignore God's word, our hearts become hard like flint, and finally, we lose spiritual discernment. This was why Israel was sent into captivity. Now that they were home and were rebuilding their land, they must not make the same mistake.

Prayer: Lord, help me to obey your word until I learn your compassionate heart.

One Word: Listen to the word of the Lord

YOU WILL BE A BLESSING

Zechariah 8:1-23

Key Verse: 8:13

1. Let your hands be strong to build (1-13)

The first step in becoming a blessing to all the nations was to really become the holy people of God. The Jews were rebuilding the temple to make a place for God to come and dwell in their midst. If God dwells in Jerusalem, it becomes the City of Truth. If God dwells in the midst of his people, they are holy; they have peace and God's blessing. People will speak the truth to each other and will care about each other. Their days of fasting will become days of joyful feasting.

2. We have heard that God is with you (14-23)

God hates falsehood. His people must love truth and peace. When God dwells with his people, love, truth and peace will be in their hearts. Then the people of all nations will come to them seeking God.

Prayer: Lord, help the people of our land--beginning with me--to speak truth and love peace. Come and dwell with us so that we can be a blessing to the people of the world.

One Word: Love truth and peace; be a blessing.

SEE, YOUR KING COMES

Zechariah 9:1-17

Key Verse: 9:9

1. Those who are left will belong to God (1-8)

God used Alexander the Great as his instrument of judgment on Israel's enemies. Alexander's march began in the north and Tyre fell to him in 332 B.C. The Philistine cities of Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron trembled in fear; they would be overrun. The survivors would be absorbed into Judah and become a part of God's people, as had the Jebusites of Jerusalem (7). Jerusalem would be spared.

2. Your King comes (9-17)

The Messiah-king would not be like Alexander. He would be a king of peace. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy more than 400 years later when he made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. He is the righteous king who brings salvation. He is king of all the nations of the world. His righteous rule alone brings peace. When he comes again to judge the earth, his people will sparkle like jewels in his crown.

Prayer: Lord, rule in my heart; come again to rule and bring peace and order to our confused world.

One Word: Only Jesus is our hope

THE LORD WILL CARE FOR HIS FLOCK

Zechariah 10:1-12

Key Verse: 10:3

1. Shepherdless people (1-3)

When there are no shepherds, people wander without direction; they are easy prey for oppressors. Idols plant false hope and diviners give false direction and false comfort. But the Lord is a Good Shepherd. He sends rain in the springtime.

2. From Judah will come the cornerstone (4-12)

The cornerstone from Judah is the Messiah--Jesus. He is God who comes personally to lead his people. He is a shepherd who strengthens and saves and restores his people. He is compassionate. The people of Israel rejected God and worshiped idols after they entered the

Promised Land. So God punished them by scattering them throughout the world. But God never gives up. He looks forward to the time when his people will repent and return to him. He welcomes and restores all who come to him.

Prayer: Lord, raise up shepherds and Bible teachers for these shepherdless times. Come and be the cornerstone of your church and of our lives.

One Word: The Lord is my shepherd

WORTHLESS SHEPHERDS

Zechariah 11:1-17

Key Verse: 11:7

1. Sheep marked for slaughter (1-9)

When people reject God their true shepherd and the under-shepherds whom he sends, exploiters become their shepherds. The Lord told Zechariah to demonstrate this in a parable. The sheep he pastured were marked for slaughter. He fired three false shepherds, and tried to help the sick and oppressed sheep. The sheep, however, did not like him, so they paid him and sent him away. The thirty pieces of silver thrown to the potter remind us of the rejection of the true Good Shepherd (Mt 26:15).

2. Favor and Union, broken staffs (10-17)

He had two staffs, one called Favor (or Grace) and the other, Union. Favor represented the Lord's covenant and protection. When he broke this, powerful neighbors invaded and oppressed God's people. The second staff represented the united kingdom. When the union was broken between Judah and Israel, the brothers became enemies.

Prayer: Lord, help us not to be foolish sheep. Help us to hear the voice of our Shepherd and obey him.

One Word: Obedient sheep and a good shepherd

BECAUSE THE LORD ALMIGHTY IS THEIR GOD

Zechariah 12:1-14

Key Verse: 12:5b

1. God's people are strong (1-9)

Jerusalem represents the people of every age who belong to God. God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the one who forms man and puts his Spirit in him. God makes his

own people strong so that they can be his witnesses. They are strong because God is with them. This prophecy looks forward to the world mission of God's people. God's people are a cup of wine; they are an immovable rock; they are a burning firepot whom God will use to ignite the world. The Messiah Jesus is a descendant of David; he is the Son of God. It is his gospel that ignites the world.

2. The weeping city (10-14)

"They will look on...the one they have pierced, and...will mourn." (cf. Jn 19:37) This time of weeping looks forward to the crucifixion of Jesus. But God is in control, and after the weeping of the cross comes resurrection and victory.

Prayer: Lord Almighty, be with us and make us your strong and useful servants.

One Word: The Lord Almighty is our God

CLEANSING FROM SIN

Zechariah 13:1-9

Key Verse: 13:1

1. A fountain to cleanse sin (1-6)

God hates sin and wants to remove it from all people. Zechariah looks forward to the fountain which God will open in the house of David to cleanse the sin-sick soul. Prophets should call people to repent and return to God. They look forward to the coming of the Good Shepherd. When Jesus comes, he exposes false prophets. They will be shamed and silenced. God alone can remove idolatry and the spirit of impurity from the land, for he cleanses the heart.

2. The shepherd is struck; the sheep scattered. (7-9)

Jesus quoted verse 7 to his disciples the night he was arrested, for they fulfilled this prophecy (Mt 26:31). Jesus is the true shepherd of God's people. He refines his people in the fire of suffering so that they might be purified.

Prayer: Lord, wash my sins in the fountain filled with Jesus' blood. Cleanse me from all sin. Remove the idols from my heart and from this land.

One Word: A Fountain for cleansing

THE LORD WILL BE KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

Zechariah 14:1-21

Key Verse: 14:9

1. Jerusalem will be secure (1-11)

The prophet looks forward to the day of the Lord--a terrible day and a glorious day. "Jerusalem" is symbolic for the people of God--the people of Jesus. The nations of the world who attack her are the satanic forces which try to destroy God's people. The Lord himself will intervene in the great life and death struggle, and God's people will be secure.

2. Holy to the Lord (12-21)

The sinful nations of the world will be struck by an awful plague. The survivors will repent and worship God. The Feast of Tabernacles is a celebration of liberation from Egypt. It is a reminder of God's deliverance. He delivers his people from bondage to sin. God's people are a holy people because he makes them holy. This prophecy looks forward to the Day of the Lord, when God's kingdom will come and the Lord will be king of the whole earth.

Prayer: Lord, hasten the day when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that you are Lord of all.

One Word: The Lord is King of all