

Repentance & Visions

Zechariah 1
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Introduction

- The book of Zechariah was written by the prophet Zechariah, a young man (Zech 2:4)
- It was written in Jerusalem following the return of the Jews after their 70 years of exile in Babylon.
- Timeline:
 - 538 B.C. – Cyrus’ decree
 - 536 B.C. – Temple foundation laid
 - 534 B.C. – Temple building interrupted, Temple project stalled for 15 years
 - 520–518 B.C. – Ministries of Zechariah & Haggai
 - 519 B.C. – Darius confirmation of Cyrus’ decree, Resumption of Temple building
 - 516 B.C. – Temple completed
- Structure:
 - Introductory call to repentance (1:1-6)
 - Eight-night visions (1:7–6:15)
 - Question and answers about fasting (7–8)
 - Two burdens (9–14)
- Message: The Messiah’s future restoration of Israel and millennial reign is depicted through visions, responses, and burdens given to induce hope and obedience among the beleaguered remnant to encourage them to rebuild the temple.
- Themes: 1st and 2nd advents – Temple - Israel’s Eschatology - Israel’s elect status - Covenant renewal
- Unique Characteristics: Interpreting angel - Longest minor prophet - Messianic prophecies - Multiplicity of literary styles - Times of the Gentiles - Israel’s Eschatology - Two burdens focused upon in the passion narratives - Third most alluded to book in the Apocalypse - Imputation (Zech 3:1-5)
- Genre: apocalyptic literature... characteristics: (1) a person who received God’s truths in visions. (2) makes extensive use of symbols or signs. (3) revelation concerning God’s program for the future of Israel. (4) Prose, rather than poetic style which was normal in most prophetic literature.
- Christ in Zechariah
 - the angel of the Lord (Zech 3:1-2)
 - the righteous branch (Zech 3:8; 6:12-13)
 - the servant (Zech 3:8)

- the stone with seven eyes (Zech 3:9)
- the King-Priest (Zech 6:13)
- the cornerstone, tent peg, and the bow of battle (Zech 10:4)
- and there are prophecies about both Christ’s first & second coming

Zech 1:1-6 – A Call to Repentance

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, ² “The Lord has been very angry with your fathers. ³ Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Return to Me,” says the Lord of hosts, “and I will return to you,” says the Lord of hosts. ⁴ “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts: “Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.”’ But they did not hear nor heed Me,” says the Lord.

⁵ “Your fathers, where are they?

And the prophets, do they live forever?

⁶ Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers?

“So they returned and said:

‘Just as the Lord of hosts determined to do to us, According to our ways and according to our deeds, So He has dealt with us.’ ” ” ”

v1 – When did the Word of the Lord come to Zechariah?

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius: Zechariah served the LORD in the years after the remnant returned from the 70-year Babylonian exile.

- The timing of Zechariah's prophecy sets it two months after Haggai's first prophecy (Haggai 1:1). This was between October & November of 520 B.C.
- The Prophecy of Zechariah is noted for its rich use of visions, pictures, and symbols. In this way it is much like the Book of Revelation or Daniel which also have significant visions. Haggai lays down the mind of God to the people more plainly in direct and downright terms.

What does the lineage of Zechariah tell us about him?

The name Zechariah means "The LORD Remembers," and is a fitting name for a prophet of restoration.

- Nehemiah 12:4,16 describes the genealogy of those returning to the land, Iddo's name is mentioned among the list of priests... so Zechariah was probably a priest.
- The fact that Zechariah was a priest explains his special interest in the temple.

v2 – With whom is the Lord angry and why?

The ancestors of the Jews returning from exile.

- The sin of their fathers doomed the nation to exile, and Zechariah warns the people to remember the same could happen to them.
- Hundreds of thousands of people went into the Babylonian captivity and only about 50,000 returned. Those who did were the most committed to the LORD and to the restoration of Jerusalem.
- Yet even they, some 18 years after returning to the Promised Land, needed to hear and heed the warning of the LORD.

What kind of challenges did the exiles have upon their return to Israel?

- The land was still desolate after 70 years of neglect
- The work was hard to rebuild and restore
- They didn't have a lot of money (Haggai 1:6) or manpower
- They suffered crop failures and drought (Haggai 1:10-11)
- Hostile enemies resisted the work (Ezra 4:1-5)
- They remembered easier times in Babylon

Each of these circumstances made them feel that God was far away; through Zechariah God assures them that He is not distant.

v3 – Why does God tell us to return to Him?

God wants our freely given love, so He prompts us to choose Him and return to Him.

James 4:8 – *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

God promises to meet us running when we return to Him. We are also reminded that if we are far from God, He hasn't distanced Himself from us. We have distanced ourselves from Him.

- Zechariah charges God's people to not only rebuild the temple, but to rebuild their relationship with Him and learn from the lessons of their fathers.

v4 – What does the title, "Lord of hosts" tell us about God?

Scripture generally uses the word "hosts" to refer to angels. God is commander-in-chief of an army consisting of unfallen, holy angelic beings. The use of military terminology shows that the angelic hosts are organized for the battle against the enemies of God.

From what evil ways and deeds did the fathers of the returning exiles need to turn?

Their compromising with the world's idolatry neglecting their relationship with God.

How should the returnees pursue their relationship with God?

By acting in obedience in observing the Law... which directly related to getting on with rebuilding the temple. If they were to observe the Law, they needed a place to conduct the provisions of the Law.

What is the principle in this call to repentance?

Obedience to God is critical to our relationship with Him...

James 4:8, 10 – *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ...Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*

Is James 4:8-10 advocating salvation-by-works?

No, the book of James was written to believers, not unbelievers. Obedience is critical to sanctification... salvation present.

- The prerequisite for sanctification is justification which happened when we put our trust in what Jesus accomplished on the cross on our behalf.
- And we look forward to our glorification which is salvation future.

v5-6 – The prophets are dead but their message continues. Why is that?

Because they spoke God's Word.

- The idea is, pay attention to the Word of God because, though the prophets die, it endures.
- The proof that that God's Word endures, is that its warnings come true.

Were the returnees open to this call for repentance?

Yes, their response in the rest of verse 6 shows that they knew Israel's 70 years of exile was just and they realized there would likewise be consequences for them if they did not get on board with what God was doing.

Since Zechariah is mainly about consolation and hope, why does it begin with a charge to repent?

The purpose, no doubt, is to preclude any false security on the part of the ungodly in Israel who might think themselves to be the recipients of the blessings and promises of God regardless of their spiritual condition.

What application do we see in this passage for us today?

There is something everyone needs to repent of, even believers. Growth in our relationship with the Lord involves being responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and making the changes we need to make to grow closer to Him.

Zech 1:7-11 – Vision of the Horses

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet: ⁸ I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and it stood among the myrtle trees in the hollow; and behind him were horses: red, sorrel, and white. ⁹ Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" So the angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are." ¹⁰ And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth." ¹¹ So they answered the Angel of the Lord, who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have walked to and fro throughout the earth, and behold, all the earth is resting quietly."

v7 – What does this time-stamp tell us?

This particular vision took place three months after the call to repentance.

What did Zechariah see in his vision?

A man riding on a red horse leading other horses and their riders, "patrolling" to and fro throughout the earth. Zechariah sees them among myrtle trees, in a ravine.

- Just as Satan walks about the earth for evil (Job 1:7, 2:2; 1 Peter 5:8), so the Lord has His representatives walking up and down in the earth to examine the affairs of men.

Who is the man who stood among the myrtle trees?

This man is the Angel of the LORD (v 11), no doubt an Old Testament appearance of Jesus before His incarnation in Bethlehem.

- There are many examples in the Old Testament of an encounter with a heavenly man known as the Angel of the LORD who is revealed to be God Himself (Genesis 16:7-13, Genesis 22:11-18, Exodus 2:3-9, Judges 2:1-4, and many other places).
- These pre-incarnate appearances of Jesus are often called a Christophany or Theophany.

What is the significance of the myrtle trees & ravine?

Myrtle trees were common in Persia, which was the empire in place when these events took place.

- A ravine is a place of depth. It's like being in a ditch, and a lot of people think that's sort of a hint of what's coming because Israel is in a ditch.

How was it that Israel was in a ditch?

Israel had no temple, which is a big deal in Judaism. She has no wall around her city and she is being oppressed by the people of the land. Life seemed to be going great for everybody except God's people.

Do you ever feel about yourself? Gosh, the rest of the world is doing fine. Lord, what about me?

This is often part of the human condition and it is a feeling that it is time for us to draw closer to God.

v9 – How does the explaining angel's response to Zechariah's question argue for literal interpretation?

The angel directly addresses Zechariah's question; he doesn't go off on some tangent to answer some unasked question instead.

What was the report of the riders?

The patrol has found that the world is at peace, but it is not the right kind of peace (I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease). God is angry with the nations of the world because they are at ease while God's people suffer (v 15). In God's thinking if the earth is at rest at the expense of his people, there is no rest at all.

- God's thoughts are not ours. When the world was busy with its own affairs, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah were on the lowly estate of Israel and upon the temple in Jerusalem.

What is the principle here that we should apply to our own lives?

God's thoughts are not the world's thoughts. Life is better when we conform our thoughts to God's. The way we do that is to study and meditate on God's Word.

Zech 1:12-17 – The Lord Will Comfort Zion

¹² Then the Angel of the Lord answered and said, “O Lord of hosts, how long will You not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which You were angry these seventy years?”

¹³ And the Lord answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words. ¹⁴ So the angel who spoke with me said to me, “Proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts:

“I am zealous for Jerusalem
And for Zion with great zeal.

¹⁵ I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease;
For I was a little angry,
And they helped—but with evil intent.”

¹⁶ ‘Therefore thus says the Lord:

“I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy;
My house shall be built in it,” says the Lord of hosts,
“And a surveyor’s line shall be stretched out over
Jerusalem.” ’

¹⁷ “Again proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts:
“My cities shall again spread out through prosperity;
The Lord will again comfort Zion,
And will again choose Jerusalem.” ’ ’

v12 – What is going on here with the pre-incarnate Jesus asking the Lord of hosts how long He would withhold mercy for Israel?

It sure looks like one member of the Trinity bringing to attention something to another member of the Trinity. Look here, everything you care about is in desolation. There’s no temple, there’s no wall around the city. You know, that could be interpreted as you’re unconcerned.

v13-14 – What does it mean that God is zealous for Jerusalem and Zion?

The Angel of the LORD shows his heart of compassion for Israel and Jerusalem. God relented and allowed Israel back after 70 years of exile yet the effects of exile were still painfully evident.

- The word for zealous in Hebrew means "to become intensely red" and it has the thought of a face becoming flushed with deep emotion.

v15 – Why was God angry with the nations He used to discipline Israel?

While they were useful tools in the discipline of Israel, they went too far and had “evil intent.” Their motivation became evil as a result of their opposition to God. The opposition to God always results in evil actions against God’s people. They couldn’t touch God but they could hurt Him by hurting His people.

v16 – How would God show mercy to Israel?

He assured them that the temple would be rebuilt in Jerusalem... the one they were to build. But this one would only foreshadow the ultimate one during the Millennial Kingdom which He would occupy... that one is the reference to “My house.”

- There would be 4 temples in Jerusalem: Solomon’s (destroyed by Babylon), Zerubbabel’s (visited by Jesus and destroyed by Rome), the Antichrist’s (built in unbelief), and the Millennial Kingdom’s.
- The very day that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple in 586 BC is the exact same day Titus of Rome destroyed the rebuilt temple in AD 70... the 9th of Av, August 5th this year (2022).

What is with the surveyor’s line?

What does this represent?

This is described in the vision of the Measuring Line, Chapter 2... to measure Jerusalem to see if it is big enough to contain God’s future blessings.

v17 – How would God’s mercy to Israel be seen?

Prosperity would return to Jerusalem and the cities of Israel. This certainly was the case when Jesus came even under the tyranny of Rome. But it will even be more prosperous leading up to and during the Millennial Kingdom.

Did the prophetic ministry of Zechariah have its desired impact?

Yes... about four years from the time of this prophecy Zion was comforted and Jerusalem was specially chosen - the temple was rebuilt four years after Zechariah gave this prophecy.

What principle stands out from this passage that we should apply to our lives?

God wants to bless us... all we need to do is pursue our relationship with Him.

Zech 1:18-20 – Vision of the Horns

¹⁸ Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns. ¹⁹ And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these?”

So he answered me, “These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”

²⁰ Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. ²¹ And I said, “What are these coming to do?”

So he said, “These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it.”

What do the horns represent in this vision?

In Biblical times horns spoke of the strength and authority, because the power of a bull or an ox is expressed through its horns.

- As trophies of the hunt they represented conquest of strength.

What are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem?

He has to be speaking in a broad prophetic sense including a scattering that had not yet come to God's people in his own day... then the likely four horns are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.

What will the craftsmen in the vision do?

The craftsmen are coming to terrify those who went too far in their oppression of Israel. God raised up other nations to judge the nations that abused His people.

- From of old, God promised to curse those who cursed Israel (Genesis 12:3).

Why do you think these judges of the judges are described as craftsmen?

Their overthrowing those they succeeded involved skill from God... The Persians diverted the Euphrates so that they could enter Babylon via the river bed while they were partying.

When will the current times of the Gentiles oppression of Israel end?

When Jesus himself serves as Craftsman judging the revived Roman Empire of the Antichrist at the end of the Tribulation.

What application do we see here for us during our times?

As we see the stage being set for the final phase of the times of the Gentiles, the rise of the Antichrist, we get a sense that the Church Age is coming to an end.

- Draw closer to God and, get on with what God is calling us to do.

What thoughts comes to mind from our discussion of Zechariah Chapter 1 come to mind?

Summary of applications:

- Respond to the Holy Spirit and repent so we may grow closer to God.
- Life is better when we conform our thoughts to God's.
- God wants to bless us... all we need to do is pursue our relationship with Him.
- The Church Age is coming to an end; draw close to God and get on with what God is calling us to do.