

## THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

### Introduction and Overview

The book of Zechariah is essential for us to understand in this hour of history. Its centerpiece is the burning heart of God for Jerusalem. As the nations of the earth are gathering round her for devastation and war, what is really happening? With a sea of opinions all at odds, where do our hearts settle over the issue of Israel? Zionists have been rallying Jews to re-gather in the land strongly for over a century while Torah believing Jews reject vehemently any attempt to re-gather from God-ordained exile prematurely. Islam despises Zionism, parts of Judaism reject it and most of the church doesn't have an informed opinion about it. Outside the church is confusion and rage, and within the church is confusion and faulty information circulating. We need to understand this book.

#### I. UNDERSTANDING THE MAJOR THEMES OF THE BOOK

In one night Zechariah receives 8 visions (Zech 1:7-6:15) that reveal the passion of God's heart towards Israel, the nations of the earth and the House of Prayer (in this age and the age to come). The following sections of the book (7-14) develop the ideas that are cryptically given in the first 6 chapters. The book of Zechariah revolves around a few primary themes:

##### A. God's Zeal for Zion & the Nations

Zechariah addresses God's jealousy for the people and land of Israel in the past, present and future. The book is predominantly eschatological. It gives insight into the failures of the people and the pursuit of God a generation ago when they were led into captivity just as their fathers promised (Zech 1:2-6) which serves as a grid for understanding the future leadership of God at the end of the ages when the nations surround Israel to destroy her completely (Zech 12-14).

<sup>12</sup> Then the Angel of the LORD (Pre-Incarnate Jesus) 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?" <sup>13</sup> And the LORD answered the angel who talked to me, with good and comforting words. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease; For I was a little angry, And they helped--but with evil intent." (Zech 1:12-15)

<sup>1</sup> Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts: "I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her." <sup>3</sup> "Thus says the LORD: "I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain." (Zech 8:1-3)

1. Within the book, and modern politics concerning the nation-state of Israel, there is a tension. Many believers have an inappropriate patriotism towards Israel and hatred towards Islam because of the current conflicts. The question we must answer is – HOW DO WE BIBLICALLY SUPPORT ISRAEL?

2. Jesus asks a question of His Father in intercession for His brethren that will help us understand how to hold our hearts towards Israel. His question is one of ultimacy. He asks whether or not Israel has sinned away the promises of God or if they're still valid; and if they are when will mercy run its course. The answer is two-fold.

a. **I am zealous for Zion with Great Zeal**

Like Paul we're to be gripped with the revelation of the zeal and jealousy of God for the people and land of Israel (Rom 9-11). The answer confirms that God is not finished with Israel, but His heart longs to extend mercy to them. As we'll see in the final section of the book (12-14), the nation is saved in her climactic collision with wicked nations. This collision brings about great military victory attributed to God and God alone (Zech 12:1-9) as well as causing the greatest humiliation and devastation Israel has ever experienced. The zeal of God is going to bring about the greatest victory and the greatest crisis Israel has ever walked through. The result will be a redeemed nation with the Lord Himself dwelling within it (Zech 14:9).

**<sup>12</sup> And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. (Zech 2:12)**

**<sup>12</sup> Then speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: "Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out. And He shall build the temple of the LORD; <sup>13</sup> Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech 6:12-13)**

**<sup>8</sup> And in that day it shall be That living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. <sup>9</sup> And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be-- "The LORD is one, And His name one. (Zech 14:8-9)**

b. **I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease**

It's essential we understand the role of nations as we look at Israel. The two can never be divorced from our thinking. In this verse the Father answers the Son's intercession by saying that He raised up nations (Babylon/Assyria) to be the agent of judgment upon Israel. The nations executed judgment upon Israel and crossed the line. Their wickedness matured to ripeness that, in the perfect economy of God, brought forth the judgment of them as well. So, in one event, mercy and justice is ministered as Jew and Gentile experiences the judgment of God.

B. **Lifestyles of Purity and Prayer**

The exiles are back in the land and struggling in sin and despair. Zechariah then comes with a message of purity and prayer. The community asks whether or not they should continue the fasts that were instated because of the exile (Zech 7:1-3). Zechariah tells them that fasting isn't really the issue. They were commanded to fast so that their hearts were united with the Lords hearts and that they'd be a people in love, not function (Zech 7:4-10). The entire book is laced with the promises of a coming Temple that would

function as a global House of Prayer in which their Messiah would rule from. They were commanded to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem in their generation as they look forward to the day when the Branch of the Lord will rule as King and Priest from the Millennial Temple in Jerusalem (Zech 1:16; 2:11; 3:7; 4:6-10; 6:11-13; 8:1-3, 9; 8:18-23). The Temple was a pillar in the culture of encountering the God who loves them foreshadowing the age to come – The Millennial Kingdom functions under the governing office of prayer.

1. This validates the building Houses of Prayer now as we behold the zeal of God to establish it in that generation. And surely it validates it as we see that the government in the age to come is the House of Prayer.
2. Zechariah chapter 7 is another 'Sermon on the Mount (the Temple Mount).' The purity of hearts was emphasized in this generation because a culture of prayer devoid of a culture of purity is a dangerous thing.

### C. **The Coming King of Israel**

Isaiah, 200 years before, predicted Babylonian exile and that they would return and be restored physically to some degree but that they would remain spiritually bankrupt. Isaiah, in light of their shortcomings in every area on return from exile, introduced the Messiah as a Servant. Zechariah takes that idea of a Servant and elaborates greatly on its implications – redemptively and eschatologically. To understand Zechariah rightly, we should understand the Messianic portrait of Isaiah in some introductory way as the one develops what the other started. Zechariah displays the Messiah in a number of places throughout the book, in theophanies as well as prophetically.

<sup>10</sup> "Receive the gift from the captives--from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon--and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. <sup>11</sup> Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. <sup>12</sup> Then speak to him, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: "Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; <sup>13</sup> Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory. And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech 6:12-13)

#### 1. "The Branch of the Lord"

Isaiah introduced the Messiah in 4:2. This is the first mention of Him in the book. The term 'Branch' is used here, as well as in Zechariah and Jeremiah. It is a term that emphasizes (1) the progressive expansion of His sway in the Millennial Kingdom, (2) His humanity, (3) His Deity, (4) the Davidic Kingdom and (5) the Kingly and Priestly dimension of His rule.

<sup>2</sup> In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped. (Is 4:2)

<sup>8</sup> "Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, You and your companions who sit before you, For they are a wondrous sign; For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. <sup>9</sup> For behold, the stone That I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will

engrave its inscription,' Says the LORD of hosts, "And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. (Zech 3:8-9)

2. **"He'll sit on His throne, and be priest"**

Zechariah introduces an unimaginable idea to the returnees. In the night visions he sees the Promised Seed of David's lineage and speaks very clearly about His identity. He will rule as a King but function as a Priest. Zechariah was commanded to go crown Joshua – the high priest. Liberal scholars call this a typo saying that Zechariah meant to say Zerubbabel as he was the governing man in Jerusalem after exile. The point that they've missed however, is that the God was making a clear statement that the Man who will rule the nation in the age to come will act as priest in the House of the Lord synonymous with His Kingly office.

3. **"He shall build the Temple of the Lord...and rule on His throne"**

Isaiah declared that the Millennial Kingdom would have a House of Prayer for all nations at its center. Zechariah, again elaborating on Isaiah's depiction of the age to come, reveals that the King of Israel will rule from the Temple – the House of Prayer. The NIV says that the Branch will bring harmony between the office of King and Priest, just like Melchizedek.

**<sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." <sup>6</sup> As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";<sup>7</sup> who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear,<sup>8</sup> though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.<sup>9</sup> And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,<sup>10</sup> called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek."<sup>11</sup> of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (Heb 5:5-11)**

D. **The events at the end of the age**

Zechariah has the most information about the end of the age in the Old Testament behind Daniel and Isaiah. It's critical we embrace the God-given truths related to the most spoken of generation in the word of God.

II. **THE CLIMAX SECTIONS OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH**

The book is very climactic in that it displays the glory and the crisis concerning Israel at the end of the age. To miss this is to miss the point of the book altogether. It helps to know the high points of the book prophetically to get a feel for the purpose of the book.

A. Paul emphatically stated that Israel is currently in a season blindness, but there is a yet future time called 'Israel's fullness.' Her fullness is at the end of the age when the Branch of the Lord dwells with man forever on earth.

**I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. Now if their fall is riches for the world, and**

their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy those who are my flesh and save some of them. For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Rom. 11:11-15)

“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. 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.” (Zech. 1:13-17)

Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; with great fervor I am zealous for her.’ “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain.’ (Zech. 8:1-3)

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- B. Before the glory of the age to come is actualized there is a necessary conflict. It's necessary conflict in that it exposes the hearts of all men of all nations and brings about the Divine Purposes with precision and brilliance that makes the earth ready for the Coming of the Lord.
- C. There is coming a great battle for Jerusalem in which all the nations will surround her in attempt to destroy her. This Sovereignly calculated scenario will produce multiple desired ends.
  - 1. The battle will be marked by extreme victory for Israel (Zech 12:1-9, 14:3-9)
  - 2. The battle will be marked by extreme horror with unprecedented death and desolation for Israel. (Zech 13:7-14:2)
  - 3. The battle will culminate with the Second Coming of Jesus in the midst of the greatest calamity Israel has ever or will ever know. (Zech 14:3)

4. The battle will lead all remaining Jews to bow their knees to Jesus as Messiah as He delivers them. (Zech 12:10-6)
5. The battle will polarize humanity exposing where their true allegiance lies. Those who hate God and His leadership agree with Israel's destruction; but those who love the Lord and His leadership distance themselves from all the activity against the Jews.

### III. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SECTIONS OF THE BOOK

- A. A Note about interpreting the book: Many commentaries and scholars attempt to deem the correct interpretation as anything but literal. This is damaging to anyone trying to read and understand it. Like the book of Revelation we read it and understand it by way of face value. The more accurate term for interpreting would be to read it 'as it was intended to be understood.' Meaning that all the imagery was given as imagery to aid in our understanding not hinder it. Apart from Isaiah, Zechariah has more information about the person of the Messiah than any other book in the Bible. Observing the way in which many prophecies were fulfilled at the first coming substantiates a literal approach to the entire book. For example - He came in meekness riding on a donkey (**Zech. 9:9 cf. Mt 21:5**). He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver and rejected by men, specifically the nation of Israel (**Zech.11:12-13 cf. Mt 26:15; 27:9-10**). He suffered and died (Zech.13:7 cf. Mt 26:31,56; 9:11; Mk 14:24; 12:10; 13:7 cf. Mt 26:31,56; John 19:37)
  - B. The **first section** of the book (chapters 1-8) is primarily aimed at the ones who have returned from their captivity to give confidence in their mandate to build the house of prayer. Intercession, the priesthood, the fasted lifestyle, and the prayer movement in Jerusalem are the primary themes that were emphasized to returned captives from Babylon participating with God's passion to establish Jerusalem as the place from which the whole earth would be blessed (Zech. 8). This had a dim historical fulfillment, but has a yet future fullness surely and undeniably.
    1. 1-6 is one night when Zechariah received 9 visions regarding Israel and the dominating Gentile Empires. (Many commentaries call it 8 visions, but for sake of simplicity, I call it 9 sometimes as 2 flow together)
    2. 7-8 is an address to those who've returned to Jerusalem and are questioning whether or not to continue their fasting because of the now past exile. God addresses the core of the fasted lifestyle in chapter 7, and in chapter 8 pours out His zeal for Jerusalem and His plans for the Messianic Kingdom; which is the fullness of what the 9 visions speak of.
  - C. The **second half** of the book (9-14) is focused on the salvation of the nations, the crisis related to Israel at the end of the age and the historical and eschatological Second Coming of Jesus. 1-8 focused on the peace concerning Israel, and 9-14 is focused on the war concerning Israel.
    1. 9-11 has much to do with other nations, the coming of Messiah, the End-Time Exodus and the problem of worthless leaders (i.e. The Antichrist).
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2. 12-14 is primarily about God's plan to raise up a wicked shepherd (antichrist) (11); draw the nations of the earth to surround Israel and seek to destroy her (12); reveal Jesus the Good Shepherd who was pierced and crushed by the wrath of the Father too (12-13); intervene in the darkest hour and set up the Millennial Kingdom on earth in Jerusalem (14).

D. **Two-fold Message** – Zechariah's preaching and prophesying had very direct application, relevance, and implication in his generation. It's very clear that the fullness of this book was not intended for a small Jewish community that returned from Babylon to build a temple that would be destroyed in 70 AD. There is coming a greater army from the north, a greater military crisis, a greater return, a greater temple, and a greater King and Priest ruling and reigning from a redeemed and exalted Jerusalem. The two-fold message of Zechariah is aimed towards:

1. Exiled community returning from historical Babylon in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.
2. End time captives returning from end time Babylon the Harlot and the nations during the Tribulation.

E. **The Four Sections Briefly Summarized**

1. **The 9 Night Visions (1-6)** Zechariah receives in one night a series of nine visions. The key to understanding this section is the reality of administering Justice and Mercy in Israel and nations, and Jesus, King and Priest Ruling the nations from the literal Millennial Jerusalem.
  - a. **The man and the horses** – Final Restoration of Israel
  - b. **The four horns, four craftsmen** – Persecution, Dispersion, and Justice
  - c. **The surveyor** - Jerusalem the Eternal City, Salvation of Israel and Nations
  - d. **The High Priest** – Jesus the King, Priest, Judge, and Redeemer
  - e. **The lamp stand and the two olive trees** – Building the House of Prayer
  - f. **The flying scroll** - Judgment for Covenant Breaking
  - g. **The basket** - Wickedness Matured in Babylon the Harlot
  - h. **The four chariots and two mountains** - Jesus' Ultimate Authority and Dominion over the earth
  - i. **Crowning the High Priest as King** - Jesus King and Priest ruling and reigning from the House of Prayer
2. **The Fasted Lifestyle and Millennial Israel (7-8)**
3. **The Coming King, the Gentile Nations and the Two Shepherds (9-11)**
4. **Israel's End-Time Victory and Devastation and the Coming of the King (12-14)**