

INTRODUCTION TO 38TH BIBLEBOOK

ZECHARIAH (520-518 B.C.)(16th)

| | |
|--|---|
| A. The writer, recipients and date of the book of Zechariah. | 1 |
| B. The division of the book of Zechariah. | 1 |
| C. The main messages of the book of Zechariah. | 1 |

A. THE WRITER, RECIPIENTS AND DATE OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

Zechariah is the eleventh of the twelve Minor Prophets. The name 'Zechariah' means 'the Lord has remembered'¹. He was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai and prophesied between 520 – 518 B.C. (7:1).

B. THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

The book of Zechariah may be given the title, "The future glory of Zion and its Shepherd-King."

It has five parts:

1. Zechariah 1:1-6. A call to repentance.
2. Zechariah 1:7 to 6:8. Eight visions.
3. Zechariah 6:9-15. Symbolic act. **The coming Messiah would build the future temple.**
4. Zechariah 7:1 to 8:23. An answer to a question concerning the fasting days.
5. Zechariah 9-14. Predictions and promises regarding the future of Zion, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King.

C. THE MAIN MESSAGES OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

1. A call to repentance (1:1-6).

In spite of Israel's return from exile, God's wrath had not departed from Israel. God proclaimed his message through the prophet Zechariah, "Return to me, and I will return to you."

2. Eight visions (1:7 to 6:8).

Zechariah 1:7-17. First vision. The men on horses reporting to the Angel of the Lord.

These men on horses were scouts who had gone throughout the earth and reported that all the nations were continuing to live without God and without fear. This is a disappointment for God's people, who expected God's judgement of the nations to take place immediately. *The Angel of the LORD² here represents the Mediator between God and man, that is, he represents the second person of the Triune God (Jesus Christ before his incarnation).* He is the Intercessor of God's people, asking God how long it would be before the time of salvation would come. God answered that the time was close. He would act to save his people and punish the nations. The message is that *God's people have an Intercessor. This continues to be true during the New Testament period (Hebrews 7:25).*

Zechariah 1:18-21. Second vision. The four horns thrown down by the four blacksmiths.

The message is that because of God's raised hand in judgement, oppressors of God's people will be destroyed.

Zechariah 2:1-5. Third vision. The man with a measuring line and the interpreting angel.

The message is that with God Himself in their midst, *God's people would expand among the nations. This is particularly fulfilled during the New Testament period, when disciples are made in all the nations³.*

This vision is followed by a prophecy concerning Babylon's ruin and Israel's exaltation.

Zechariah 2:6-13 is an exhortation of the prophet directed at the Jews living in Jerusalem, to flee from Babylon⁴ because of God's raised hand in judgement. Those who touch God's people, 'touch the apple of his eye' (12:8), God emphasizes with his suffering people and his wrath will punish the aggressor so that "their slaves will plunder them".

to rejoice because the glory of the Lord, which had departed from the temple in Ezekiel's vision, was going to return⁵. Many people of the nations of the world would join God's people Israel. This is a clear *prophecy that the Gentile nations would also share in the salvation of the Lord.* This is also prophesied in Isaiah 2:1-4 and Isaiah 45:23, even though these prophecies are still represented in the Old Testament way as Gentile believers joining the nation of Israel. Thus, God would attain his plan to have as his inheritance a chosen people living in the holy land.

During the New Testament revelation the mystery is revealed, namely, that through the proclamation of the Gospel, the Gentile believers would be heirs together with the believers in Israel, members together of one Body (the Church) and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (the Messiah) on complete equal footing with Israel⁶.

¹ Hebrew: zakar=to remember, JaH=the LORD.

² Hebrew: mal'ak JaHWeH

³ Matthew 28:19

⁴ Isaiah 48:20

⁵ Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4,18; 11:22

⁶ Ephesians 3:2-6

Fourth vision. Joshua, the high priest is cleansed as a sign for Israel.

The message is that *the sin of God's people would be taken away in a single day in the future. The New Testament revelation reveals that the sins of people are atoned for by the sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross, thus leaving the sins committed beforehand unpunished*⁷.

Fifth vision. The golden lampstand and the olive trees.

The lampstand represent God's people. The oil represent the Holy Spirit. And the two olive tree-containers represent heaven from where every enablement must come. The Holy Spirit will be with God's people and his power will level every mountain of opposition. The message is that God's people would *derive their ability to build the Church* and their strength to accomplish great things *from the illumining and never-failing Spirit of God. The New Testament revelation reveals that believers would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them and they would be the witnesses of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*⁸.

Sixth vision. The flying scroll.

The message is that *the sin of God's people would be completely destroyed* and the land would be sanctified.

Seventh vision. The woman in the corn measure.

The message is that *the sin of God's people would be completely banished. In the New Testament revelation God says, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more"*⁹.

Eighth vision. The four horse-drawn chariots.

They were symbolic of God's Spirit (6:8) who descended upon all places in the world, to judge (1:20; 2:6-7)¹⁰ and to save (4:6). In contrast to the first vision, where the world was at rest and in peace (1:11), this vision teaches that wherever the Spirit of God descends, this complacent rest will come to an end, and both Jews and Gentiles will turn to the living God (8:8,22). The message is that *God's Spirit would go to all places in the world to judge and to save.*

3. The coming Messiah would build the future temple (6:9-15).

Exiles from Babylon brought gifts of silver and gold for building the temple¹¹. The prophet had a crown made and put it on the high priest Joshua. This announced the coming Messiah (3:8). The coming Messiah would be *the Branch*¹² who branches out from a small beginning. While Zerubbabel built the second temple, which was temporary, the coming Messiah would build the future temple, which would be eternal. The Messiah would be both Priest (the task of Joshua) and King (the task of Zerubbabel) and unite these two tasks harmoniously into one task (6:13)¹³. To this coming Messiah belonged the majesty. The crown was hung in the temple as a prophecy of a time when people who lived far away, both Jews and Gentiles (2:11), would come and help build the future temple. *The Old Testament could only describe this future temple in terms of the Old Testament revelation and its illustrations. However, in the light of the New Testament revelation we know that this future temple would be a spiritual temple, namely, the Christian Church*¹⁴.

4. Predictions and promises regarding the future of Zion, and the rejection and subsequent glory of its Shepherd-King (chapter 9-14).

Zechariah 9-10 contains prophecies of *the continuing return of people who were still living in exile* and concerning the coming Messiah.

Zechariah 11 contains prophecies concerning Israel's judgement in the light of world judgement. The Lord himself was the Shepherd of Israel. But *Israel's failure to appreciate the Lord's shepherding function, which would climax in Israel's rejection of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, would result in God laying down his shepherding function of Israel! When God would finally lay down his shepherding function of the whole world, that is, when God would break his staffs called 'Favour' and 'Union', which represent his general goodwill to people and the harmony between people, then the end of the world would arrive!*

Zechariah 12-13 contains prophecies concerning *Israel's salvation, which would be possible only through the coming Messiah. The coming Messiah would be pierced on the cross.*

Zechariah 14 contains prophecies concerning *the survivors of the nations who would share in the salvation of the remnant of Israel, the last great oppression/tribulation, the Final Judgement Day on which God's people would escape, but God's enemies would be struck with the plague, and some aspects of the renewal of the earth.*

⁷ Romans 3:21-26; 1 Peter 2:24

⁸ Acts 1:8

⁹ Hebrews 8:12

¹⁰ Isaiah 4:4

¹¹ Ezra 8:25-30; Nehemiah 7:70-72

¹² Hebrew: Ish Tsemach = the Man (called) the Branch/the Sprout

¹³ Psalm 110:4. Jesus is the High priest and King in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews chapter 7 and Revelation chapter 1)

¹⁴ Haggai 2:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:18-22; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Hebrews 3:6