

Zechariah

Fall 2008, Adult Bible Classes, Sunday Morning

prepared by Bob Young

Introduction

Living messages of the OT prophets

Background of text, social setting, and prophet provides parallels in our day

Points of interest

The name of the prophet means “He whom Jehovah remembers”; 29 biblical persons have this name.

Historical setting

One of three writing prophets of the Persian period (post-exilic).

Contemporary of Haggai.

Possibly his grandfather, Iddo, was among the returnees under Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:4, 16).

Zechariah is listed among the priests that made the journey with Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:16).

Activity dated by the reign of Darius. Three dates in the book are identifiable: (1) the call to repentance, Nev. 520 (Zech. 1:1-6); (2) the night visions, Feb. 519 (Zech. 1:7-6:8); (3) the response to the questions about fasting, Dec. 518 (Zech. 7-8).

Zechariah is one who appears on the scene, and then is seen no more.

The return under Zerubbabel began in 538 B.C., but the effort to rebuild the temple was delayed for 16 years due to opposition from enemies (Ezra 5:16; 3:1-6). As a result of the efforts of Haggai and Zechariah, the temple was completed in 516 B.C. (Ezra. 6:15).

We know nothing more of the post-exilic community until 457 B.C. when Ezra returned to Jerusalem to continue reforms.

Structure/Outline

Section One

~Call to repentance, Zech. 1:1-6.

~Eight Night Visions, Zech. 1:7-6:8

- Rider on red horse, 1:7-17, despite indications to contrary, the Lord is stirred and Jerusalem will be rebuilt.
- Four horns and four smiths, 1:18-21, power and destruction in tension indicate that the way is cleared, with no continuing opposition, for the building of the Lord’s house.
- Man with measuring line, 2:1-13, is restrained from laying out the walls since Jerusalem will be inhabited as a city without walls. The Lord will be a protecting wall of fire about her.
- Joshua in filthy garments, 3:1-10, is accused by Satan as in a court trial, for he is unsuitable to offer sacrifices. Joshua was the grandson of Seraiah, the last high priest to minister in the temple before its destruction. The outcome of the vision is that Satan is denounced, the filthy garments removed, replaced by clean clothes. The vision means that the priesthood will be cleansed and acceptable for service. God will send his servant, the “Branch” (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 6:12).

- Golden candlestick, seven lamps, two olive trees, 4:1-14, likely representing Zerubbabel and Joshua as civil and religious heads of the community, given assurance that the temple will be completed. The seven lamp stands represent God's presence, seeing and ruling.
- The flying scroll, 5:1-4, removes crime from the land and destroys the houses of thieves and perjurers.
- The woman sitting in the basket, 5:5-11, represents wickedness, but is carried to Shinar so sin can have its new abode, the point being that the rebuilding of the temple will find evil removed from the land.
- The four chariots, 6:1-8, symbolize God's providence, with the earth at peace under the control of God.

~Coronation, 6:9-15, reminds of the promise and coming of the Branch.

~Questions of fasting, 7:1-7, reminds that it is not the act but the attitude, not the fasting but the obedience, justice and kindness that matters. Judah has been scattered because of her disobedience, 7:8-14.

~Ten short oracles of encouragement, 8:1-23, introduced by "thus saith the Lord." These affirm that God dwells in Zion and prosperity will come.

Section Two

The three sections which conclude the book are less connected to the problems of rebuilding the temple. The literature is of the "apocalyptic" type or genre.

- Zech. 9:1-10:12. Denunciation of neighboring nations and assurance that Zion will triumph through the Messiah.
- Zech. 11:1-17. Good and foolish shepherds picture the challenge of leadership, with three leaders/shepherds cut off (identity not known with certainty). When the shepherd despairs of governing and asks for his pay, the pay is so small that it is cast to the potter. Then Zechariah is commanded to become the worthless shepherd.
- Zech. 12-14. In two distinction sections, enemies attack Jerusalem but Judah is victorious through the help of the Lord, with mourning for the one pierced and the opening of a fountain as false prophets are cut off. The second section announced the approach of the Day of the Lord with an assault on Zion, the intervention of Jehovah, and the final result that all worship Jehovah.

Influence/Results of Zechariah

Zechariah has a considerable influence on the NT Messianic picture, with many passages referring to events in Jesus' life (riding on donkey, 30 pieces of silver, the Branch, looking on one pierced, smiting the shepherd, cleansing fountain).

Questions

What is the major concern of the prophet Zechariah?

What does Zechariah say about fasting?

What specific sins does Zechariah denounce?

What does Zechariah say that appears to apply directly to the Messiah? Are these literal or allegorical?