

SESSION #50

ZECHARIAH

1. Context

As we noted in the last session, Zechariah was a priest who was called to be a prophet and in that capacity worked alongside of Haggai. The timeline chart reflects this partnership. Their main task was to encourage the returnees to complete the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem.

Haggai's specific role focussed on the building of the present physical temple. Zechariah has a similar ministry of encouragement, but his role goes far beyond that of Haggai. Zechariah pointed not just to the immediate physical temple but also to a future temple yet to come. He was a visionary prophet who saw far out into the future to a temple which would be part of God's coming kingdom.

2. Message

So, Zechariah – like Haggai – appeals to the people of his day to get their hearts right with God so that the work of their hands will be prospered as they build the Jerusalem temple. That was his “now” focus, urging the people to get their hearts right so that their work will be right.

However, Zechariah soon moves on to a much bigger picture, a “then” focus, prophecies about Israel's future which deal with the coming again of Jesus, the Messiah. As a result, his book is the most “messianic” book in the entire OT, even more so than the book of Isaiah.

His messages involve visions which are quite difficult to understand and consequently this book of Zechariah is also considered to be the most mysterious of all the OT books. There is a considerable similarity to the NT book of Revelation as both contain lots of visions, focussed on Jesus Christ. So, Zechariah is sometimes called “The Revelation of the Old Testament”.

3. Structure

The visions here may be complex but the structure itself is quite simple. There is an overall structure in terms of when the book was written. Chapters 1 – 8 are written prior to the completion of the building of the temple and chapters 9 – 14 were written after the temple is completed. The first section contains encouragements for the builders to get this job done. But once the temple is finished, Zechariah can then focus all his attention on the future. And chapters 9 – 14 deal with that longer term future as God gives Zechariah some amazing prophecies and visions.

There is a three-part structure in terms of content. Chapters 1 – 6 contain 8 visions concerning not only God's people but the peoples of the Gentile nations. In 1:14-15 God declares, *"I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal. I am exceedingly angry with the nations at ease..."* God will show mercy towards Israel (referred to as Zion or Jerusalem), but He will deal with global wickedness and sin in the distant future and will bring in a kingdom of righteousness. These are strange but striking visions.

For example, in chapter 5 he sees wickedness in the form of a woman who is stuffed into a basket and DHL-ed back to Babylon.

These visions emphasize the reality that God has become "jealous" for Jerusalem. He will show favor to His people but destruction for the Gentile nations.

Chapters 7 and 8 contain four messages. These are basically sermons exhorting the people to live lives of righteousness and zeal in their walk with God, with the promise of blessing.

The final chapters, 9 – 14, contain some direct prophecies which are very specific about the coming of the Shepherd-King. The Messiah is seen in this two-fold role. He will be a Shepherd who loves and cares for his sheep, but He is also the King who rules on a throne. Some of the most unusual specifics about the Messiah in the OT are found here in these chapters.

For example, 11:12-13 says, *"So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said to me, 'Throw it to the potter' – that princely price they set on me*

[an ironic, sarcastic statement].” Thirty pieces of silver was the price normally paid for a slave. Verse 13 continues, *“So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.”*

You can hardly imagine a more specific description of what would happen when the Shepherd-King comes and is betrayed into the hands of the Roman authorities by His friend, Judas. He betrayed Jesus for what? Thirty pieces of silver, exactly as Zechariah prophesied. Then, having repented, in a sense, Judas took the 30 pieces of silver and threw them – where? Into the house of the Lord. And the priests picked them up and used them to buy – what? The “potter’s field” – a field belonging to potters which would be used to bury poor people. You can see how all of these elements are prophesied very specifically by Zechariah 500 years before it all happened.

Zechariah saw the Shepherd-King coming and being offended and rejected by His own people, with tragic results.

It isn’t the end of the story of the Shepherd-King nor the end of Zechariah’s prophesies either. Much of the final three chapters give us a powerful, dramatic picture of the triumph of the Shepherd-King who some day will return again in power and in glory to judge sin and set up His own Messianic Kingdom.

Chapters 12 – 14 show us the final travail of Zion/Jerusalem, of the people of Israel; and then a powerful picture of God’s final judgment on the world and the final triumph: the coming of the Kingdom of the Messiah.

The prophecy about the 30 pieces of silver came true exactly as Zechariah said. So we can have confidence that the rest of his prophecies will also come to pass just as God showed him.

14:9 says, *“And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be – ‘The LORD is one, and His name the only name.’”*

And as Philippians 2:10 tells us, *“...at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow ...and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* *“On that day”*... Zechariah saw something of the reality, the wonder and the power of

that day and describes it for us. If you are among the people of God, by faith in Jesus Christ, you have something amazing to look forward to!

Our next session will take us to one of the most interesting stories in the Old Testament, the story of Esther.
