

ZECHARIAH

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Introduction and Background:

The prophet Zechariah was a priest, the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. He was a member of a prominent priestly family who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel in about 538 B.C. (Neh. 12:4)

Nearly 20 years after their return from the Babylonian exile in the time of Cyrus (538 B.C.), discouragement dogged God's people, replacing their earlier enthusiasm. The foundation of the temple had been laid shortly after the initial return, in 536 B.C., but powerful opposition had prevented any further progress on rebuilding the temple. Though Persian foreign policy accorded a significant role to local traditions—unlike the previous overlords, the Babylonians (prior to 538 B.C.)—life was still hard in the province of Judah (often referred to as “Yehud” in this period). Taxes were high, especially as the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes, prepared for a campaign against Egypt. There was little evidence of the kind of transformation of the state of things that the earlier prophets had anticipated, whether externally in a restoration of Jewish sovereignty, or internally in a moral reformation of the people. In particular, the city of Jerusalem was still only partially rebuilt and was on the sidelines of world significance. Under the circumstances, it was easy for the people to conclude that theirs was a “day of small things” (4:10) in which God was absent from his people. In such a context, faithful obedience was viewed by many as useless: pragmatically, it made more sense to pursue the best life possible in spite of the present difficulties.

Zechariah addressed such discouragement by reminding his hearers that, though hidden, God's envoys were watching everything, and that when the time was right, he would act to reorder the universe (1:8–11). Their forefathers had discovered God's faithfulness to judge his people if they failed to heed the words of the prophets (1:4–6). If the people would heed the words of the prophets and turn to the Lord, they would discover him turning to them. He would trouble the nations who were enjoying rest and grant rest to his troubled people, making Jerusalem once again the center of the world, a place of universal pilgrimage (1:14–17). The temple that was being rebuilt and the priesthood that would serve in it were signs of the Lord's commitment to his people, a commitment that would be demonstrated by the ultimate removal of all their sin from the land (3:8–10). This would happen when the promised Davidic king, the Branch, arrived (3:8). The result would be peace, harmony, and prosperity for all the inhabitants of the land, as the Lord once more dwelt in their midst.

The latter chapters of Zechariah also show that the coming of this Davidic ruler will not be without challenge. A new ruler will come to Jerusalem, a ruler who will not be like the existing rulers but will be righteous and humble, bringing salvation (9:9–11). In contrast to the shepherds who feed themselves at the expense of the flock, this good shepherd will take care of the flock and provide for them (9:16). He will cleanse them of all their iniquities (13:1). Yet the flock will themselves reject this good shepherd, and the Lord's own sword will be unleashed against him (11:4–16; 13:7). The sheep will be scattered and left to their oppressors in a time of trial and testing. Yet ultimately God will redeem his flock and rescue his city. Final judgment will come upon all the nations that assaulted God's people, and the end result will be the complete holiness of Jerusalem. It will be restored as God's chosen city, to which the nations will come on pilgrimage (ch. 14).

The book of Zechariah is densely mined for quotations by the NT, whose authors discerned in it several prophecies concerning the Messiah's coming. The clearest instances come from Zechariah 8:16 (in Eph. 4:25), Zechariah 9:9 (in Matt. 21:5 and John 12:15), Zechariah 11:12–13 (in Matt. 27:9–10), Zechariah 12:10 (in John 19:37), and Zechariah 13:7 (in Matt. 26:31 and Mark 14:27). In addition to these are numerous allusions, which are sometimes difficult to assess; one estimate, however, finds about 54 passages from Zechariah echoed in about 67 different places in the NT, with the lion's share of these found in the book of Revelation.

Zechariah 9-14 is the most quoted section of the Prophets in the Gospel Passion narratives...because of the twist that God himself will strike his appointed shepherd... there is a death/suffering of the Messiah that comes before the restoration of God's people at the hands of the Messiah.

The Near East at the Time of Zechariah

c. 520 B.C.

Zechariah prophesied to the people of Judah soon after they had returned from exile in Babylon. Several years earlier, in 539 B.C., Cyrus the Great, who had united the Persians and the Medes under his rule, conquered Babylon and absorbed its territory into his empire. A year later he permitted the people of Judah to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple. He and his son Cambyses extended the Persian Empire until it stretched from Egypt and Lydia to the borders of India.



Key Themes

1. The need for repentance and turning to the Lord (1:1–6).
2. The necessity of sincerity in serving the Lord (ch. 7).
3. The Lord's concern and care for the plight of his people (1:8–17; 4:10).
4. The future expansion and blessing of Jerusalem (2:4, 12; 8:1–8; 14:16).
5. The complete and permanent removal of the sin of the people (ch. 3; ch. 5).
6. The removal of false prophecy and idolatry from the land (13:2–6).
7. The centrality of the temple as the source of God's blessing (ch. 4).
8. The Lord's wrath at the nations that plundered Judah and Jerusalem (1:18–21; 14:3–5).
9. The return of the Divine Warrior to terrorize Israel's foes (9:1–8).
10. The coming of the Branch, a Davidic ruler who will save his people, cleanse their sins, and establish peace (3:8; 6:9–15; 9:9–10).
11. The pouring out of God's Spirit, resulting in repentance, and the opening of a fountain for the cleansing of sin (12:10–13:1).
12. Judgment on the wicked shepherds of God's people and their replacement by a good shepherd (11:1–17).
13. The striking of the good shepherd and the scattering of the flock (13:7–9).
14. The final triumph of the Lord over the nations (ch. 14).

History of Salvation Summary

After the horrors of the exile, God is renewing his commitment to restore Judah as his treasured people. They will still suffer more distress, but in the end God will judge the Gentile oppressors and Judah will produce the Messiah, who will rule over the whole world, bringing them to worship the true God.

Outline: (Based on the key quotes of each chapter)

Present Assurance of Finished Temple	Don't Fear Strengthen Hands Fear the Lord Build the Temple I Will Dwell I Will Forgive	1	My house will be built in Jerusalem
		2	I will dwell in your midst
		3	I have taken away your iniquity
		4	Not by your might or power but by my Spirit
		5	I have measured your iniquities
		6	Those far off will come to build the temple
		7	The past hard heartedness of the people
		8	Do not fear, let your hands be strong, love truth and peace
Future Assurance of Glorious Temple	The Gathering The Conquering The Reigning Israel will be Blessed Through Christ!	9	Judgment on surrounding nations, Messiah, God will fight, Israel will flourish
		10	Israel will be mighty, treading the enemy; I will gather and strengthen
		11	The Shepherds of the flock are worthless
		12	I will destroy all the nations that come against Israel
		13	Shepherd is struck, flock scattered, 2/3 rd perish—1/3 rd be blessed
		14	Lord comes and is king over all the earth

What we learn about God:

1. Zealous for Zion (1:14)
2. Comforts his people (1:17)
3. Desires to dwell with his people (2:5-11)
4. He is holy (2:13)
5. Rebukes Satan—our Advocate and protector (3:2)
6. Forgives sin (3:4)
7. Spirit of power (4:6)
8. Full of grace (4:7)
9. Desires to get glory for the building of the Temple (6:15)
10. Desires obedience (6:15)
11. Jealous for his name (7:5-6)
12. Turns his full wrath on sin and hard heartedness (7:12)
13. Jealous for Zion and will restore its glory (8:3)
14. God of truth and righteousness (8:7-8)
15. Defends his people (9:15-16)
16. Grants salvation (9:15-16)
17. Promises to defeat enemies, gather people (10:4-7)
18. Shepherd and redeemer of his people (10:6-7)
19. Creator—made the heavens and earth, gave the spirit of life to men (12:1)
20. Watches over his people (12:4)
21. Saves those who call on his name (13:9)
22. He is the only God (14:9)
23. Does great things so the nations will see his glory (14:16)
24. He is the King, the Lord of Hosts (14:16)

What we learn about the Messiah:

3:8-10 says that He is the Branch who removes iniquities and brings peace.

6:12-13 says that He is the Branch who will build the temple, rule on the throne, bring peace to the offices of Priest and King.

9:9-10 says that He is the King who brings salvation but comes in humility, riding on a donkey. Under his rule, there will be no more war and his dominion will fill the earth.

14:3-9 says that He will fight against evil nations with his holy people at his side. He will come to the Mount of Olives and become King over all the earth.

Questions:

**What is going on in chapter 11 with the leaders of Israel? Why does God disapprove?
How have they broken the covenant in chapter 10? What is God's solution?**

Have left the flock (17), became rich off the buying and selling of the flock then had the audacity to praise God for it (5)...They did not follow the word of the Lord and his covenant to care for the poor, Prophets: deceptive speech, false dreams, lying visions, vain comfort. God will come to shepherd his flock (10:3), strengthen, save, restore, gather, redeem!!

Parallel Passage: Jeremiah 23:1-8 (ESV)

¹ “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. ² Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: “You have scattered my flock and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil deeds, declares the LORD. ³ Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴ I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, declares the LORD. ⁵ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’ ⁷ “Therefore, behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,’ ⁸ but ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.’ Then they shall dwell in their own land.”

(MBEWE OUTLINE)

“I will contend with the evil shepherds”

- God takes seriously the failure of leadership because he loves his people dearly.
- The leaders are blamed for the failure of the people to follow to God.

“I will bring my flock back and set up good shepherds”

- Where there is failure in leadership, God steps in! Why? Because he is a faithful God and wants to be with his people in peace.

“I will send the **Branch** to make the peoples righteous.”

- God will bring the Messiah... Isaiah 9:6-7 he is God and King and will reign in justice forever!
- But also, a suffering servant... Isaiah 53—pierced for our sins so that we can have peace with God. Fulfilled in Christ—“I am the Good shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep.” (John 10)
- A great deliverance for God’s people by the Good Shepherd!

When and how will the events of 13-14 happen?

Sheep will scatter but there will be a surviving remnant as the product of the shepherd’s death. In them, the new covenant relationship will be fulfilled... Jesus applied this to himself as he said he was the smitten shepherd who preserves the remnant by his death (Mt 26:31).

Nations fight against Jerusalem and the city is captured. Half city goes into exile. The Mount of Olives is leveled to construct a processional route for God to return with his holy ones. A new created order involves living water flowing from Jerusalem. There will be a universal reign in Jerusalem...the surrounding area is flattened and the city is elevated. The nations come to the city for sustenance and peace. The book concludes with Jerusalem as the center of the new creation—which is the royal city where God reigns.

This is the picture in REVELATION 21-22.

How does/will Christ fulfill the prophecies about him?

Zechariah 8:16 (ESV)

16 These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; (in Ephesians 4:25 (ESV)²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.),

Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (in Matthew 21:5 (ESV)⁵ “Say to the daughter of Zion, ‘Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.’ ” and John 12:15 (ESV)

15 “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”),

Zechariah 11:12–13 (ESV)

12 Then I said to them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver. 13 Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD, to the potter. (in Matthew 27:9–10 (ESV)⁹ Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, 10 and they gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord directed me.”),

Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

10 “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. (in John 19:37 (ESV)³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “They will look on him whom they have pierced.”).

Zechariah 13:7 (ESV)

7 “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. (in Matthew 26:31 (ESV)³¹ Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ and Mark 14:27 (ESV)²⁷ And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’).

Key Verse:

Zechariah 8:7–8 (ESV)

⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts: behold, I will save my people from the east country and from the west country, ⁸ and I will bring them to dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.”

Central Lessons:

1. God greatly desires to dwell with his people and is jealous for them.
2. The Messiah will come to conquer the enemies of God and establish an eternal throne of peace over all the earth forever.
3. God is the Great Shepherd—he comes to the rescue when the leaders of the people fail to shepherd in a God honoring way—Jesus is our Good Shepherd.
4. There will be a bright and glorious future for Israel—a time of great fruitfulness and peace.
5. God despises sacrifices that are offered to him from people who have hard hearts toward his ways and who come to him with insincere motives.
6. God loves the nations—they will come and be gathered by the Lord. As they entreat his favor, they will be blessed.

Big Idea:

This book was written to encourage the people of Israel...

...by assuring them that the present temple will be rebuilt through God's strength

...by promising a future reign of God through the Messiah.

The Lord will Rebuild and Reign!**APPLICATION**

- What stands out to you? What hits you as something particularly important or meaningful? How can you apply what you have learned to your everyday life?

Resources:

ESV Study Bible

Conrad Mbewe TGC Talk 2011