

# Overview of Zechariah

Tuesday, May 08, 2012  
8:55 PM

## Introduction

- We are switching back to the Old Testament and starting Zechariah this morning
- This morning, I want to give a brief, mostly-educational sermon on the background and overview of Zechariah this morning
- So, I want to start in Scripture, giving Zechariah a historical background
- **Read Ezra 1:1-4, 3:1-9, 4:1-6, 17-24, 5:1-5**
  
- Six points this morning - mostly educational, but will help us look at the book well together
  - Historical Setting
  - Author
  - Genre
  - Content 1 - Prophetic Promises
  - Content 2 - Theological Themes
  - Application - The Applicability of Zechariah to Us

## 1. The Historical Setting

### a. The dates for the prophecies in Zechariah

- i. The first half of the book (Zechariah 1-8) is explicitly dated
  - 1) The 8th month of the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)
    - a) Zechariah 1:1-6
    - b) This is the first vision
  - 2) The 11th month of the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)
    - a) Zechariah 1:7-6:8
    - b) This is the eight visions in the night
  - 3) The 9th month of the fourth year of Darius (518 B.C.)
    - a) Zechariah 7
    - b) This is the response to the question about fasting because of the temple destroyed/rebuilt
  - 4) Zechariah 6:9-15 and Zechariah 8 are not dated
    - a) Zechariah 6:9-15 happened sometime between 520 and 518 B.C., probably quickly after the night visions (maybe the next day, or on new years day (seven days later), or on Rosh Hashanah (seventeen days later))
    - b) Zechariah 8 is closely tied to Zechariah 1, and closes off the first half of the book, it probably happens in time relatively close to Zechariah 7
- ii. The second half of the book is not explicitly dated
  - 1) It shares much more in common with the book of Malachi than Haggai, indicating it could have been written sometime later
  - 2) It also has completely different writing style and genre from the first half of the book, being poetic oracle as opposed to narrative vision
  - 3) Malachi probably started prophesying around 450 B.C., being a contemporary of Ezra and Nehemiah
  - 4) Zechariah may have had a substantial term as a prophet, beginning prophesying around 520 B.C. and perhaps ending close to 470 B.C. (50 years as a prophet), although this doesn't necessarily have to be true

## **b. Ezra (Ezra 5:1-2)**

- i. The exiles of Judah had returned from the Babylonian Exile in ~537 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-11)
- ii. The exiles start to rebuild the temple by rebuilding the altar in 537 B.C. (Ezra 3:1-2)
- iii. Work on the actual temple starts in 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8)
- iv. Work continues despite opposition until 530 B.C. (Ezra 4:1-5)
- v. Opposition finally causes the cessation of temple building activity for ten years (Ezra 4:24)
- vi. In the second year of Darius (520 B.C.), temple rebuilding starts again (Ezra 5:2)
- vii. In the sixth year of Darius (516 B.C.) the temple is completed (Ezra 6:15)

## **c. Haggai**

- i. First prophecy - the sixth month of the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)
  - 1) Two months before Zechariah's first prophecy
- ii. Second prophecy - the twenty-first day of the seventh month of the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)
  - 1) One month (or less) before Zechariah's first prophecy
- iii. Third prophecy - the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month of the second year of Darius (520 B.C.)
  - 1) About one month after Zechariah's first prophecy
  - 2) About two months before Zechariah's second prophecy

## **2. Author**

- a. Iddo was a priest that returned to Jerusalem in the first wave of returning exiles (Nehemiah 12:4)
- b. Zechariah was Iddo's grandson (Zechariah, son of Barachiah, son of Iddo)
- c. Zechariah was a priest during the high priesthood of Joiakim
  - i. Joiakim was the son of Joshua, the high priest that appears frequently in the first half of the book
  - ii. So, Zechariah may have become a priest after his first set of visions (he may have been very young at the start of the book)
  - iii. Zechariah has many qualities in common with Jeremiah being a very young man of the priestly line that has been called by God to be a prophet, although they existed at very different times

## **3. Genre**

### **a. Zechariah is contains three types of prophecies**

- i. Many Visions (revelation that the prophet sees supernaturally and describes)
  - 1) Zechariah 1-6,8
- ii. One Sign Act (a behavior by the prophet that is supposed to demonstrate God's message- think Ezekiel lying on his side 390 days or Isaiah walking around naked for three years)
  - 1) Zechariah 6
- iii. Two Oracles (or two sets of closely related oracles - messages from God in the prophets mouth)
  - 1) Zechariah 7, 9-14

### **b. The mixture of visions and oracles and the richness and symbolism of the revelation make it similar to apocalyptic books in many ways**

- i. The visions and oracles are similar to both Daniel and Revelation
- ii. In fact, there are some substantial points of overlap between Revelation and Zechariah
  - 1) The horses of Zechariah bear similarity to the horses of Revelation
  - 2) The lampstand of Zechariah bears similarity to the lampstand of Revelation
  - 3) The two olive trees of Zechariah bears similarity to the two olive trees of Revelation

## 4. The Prophetic Promises

### a. The Redemption of Jerusalem

- i. Zechariah 1-2, 8, 12:1-9
- ii. God will save His people, and the focus of this will be to reinstate Jerusalem as the City of God

### b. The Rebuilding of the Temple

- i. Zechariah 3-4
- ii. God will again dwell with His people and build a temple for His dwelling

### c. The Removal of Sin

- i. Zechariah 5
- ii. God will purify His people from the iniquities that had caused their earlier exile and prevent it from happening again

### d. The Restoration of the Kingship

- i. Zechariah 6:9-15, 9
- ii. God will reinstate the Davidic king and restore the glory of Israel as He had promised in the past

## 5. The Theological Themes

### a. Understanding the Exile and Repentance

- i. Zechariah 1:1-6, 7
- ii. How ought the returned exiles to understand the exile and show proper repentance for the sins of Israel?

### b. The Sovereign Presence of God

- i. Zechariah 1-2, 4, 6:1-8, 8
- ii. Is God still going to be present with His people to accomplish His purposes?

### c. The Messiah/Shepherd Priest/King Bringing Salvation

- i. Zechariah 3, 6:9-15, 9-13
- ii. Who is going to work out God's purposes in Israel?

### d. The Final Victory of God

- i. Zechariah 1:18-21, 2, 5, 12:1-9, 14
- ii. Has the exile and the persecution of the returned exiles overthrown God's purpose?

## 6. The Applicability of Zechariah to Us

### a. The Already and Not Yet

- i. Zechariah 3:8-9 - Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch. For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day.
- ii. The 'Already and Not Yet' is a fancy theological 'by-phrase' that means in some sense God has fulfilled His promises already, but in another sense, God has not yet fulfilled His promises
- iii. Usually, this is talked about in terms of what we possess, in some sense, we possess the blessings of God in their fullness, but in another sense, we do not yet possess the blessings of God

### b. Zechariah prophesied to a people who were very aware of the already and not yet

- i. They had already returned from exile
- ii. They had already started to build the temple
- iii. But they had not yet fully returned from exile
- iv. They had not yet finished the temple
- v. The people started to despair that God was going to truly restore Jerusalem

### c. Because Zechariah prophesied the already and not yet, many of his prophecies have multiple layers of applicability

- i. They may describe an immediate fulfillment (something that would happen in the hearers lifetime)
- ii. They may describe a redemptive fulfillment (something pertaining to Christ)
- iii. They may describe a consummative fulfillment (something that will happen at the end of all things)
- iv. These multiple understandings are important to understanding the book of Zechariah
  - 1) Many of the visions and prophecies will have all three levels of fulfillment inscribed in them

### d. We too live in the already and not yet

- i. Redemption has been completed, but we do not see the full effects yet
- ii. The kingdom of Christ has been inaugurated, but not fully consummated
- iii. We have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but not completed fellowship with God
- iv. We are still living in the already and not yet of the promises of Zechariah
  - 1) God has redeemed Jerusalem, but we still wait for the city of God
  - 2) God has 'built' His temple, but we still wait for the dwelling of God to be among man
  - 3) God has defeated sin, but we still wait for the perfection of our bodies
  - 4) God has restored the Davidic king, but we still wait for His perfect reign

### e. So, the prophecies of Zechariah are very applicable to us

- i. We can see the fulfillment of these prophecies by God to the people of Zechariah's day and take hope that God is active in the already and not yet
- ii. We can see the multiple layers of prophecy in Zechariah and see how God worked to bring about our great salvation
- iii. We can see the multiple layers of prophecy in Zechariah and look forward to the final fulfillment of prophecy in the future reign of Christ, God will eventual consummate our already but not yet

**Read Zechariah**