



A Course

In

**ZECHARIAH,
STUDIES IN**

Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

Pineland, Florida 33945

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The compiler of this course is using by gracious permission the EXPOSITORY NOTES OF DR. THOMAS CONSTABLE of Dallas Theological Seminary as the basis for this course. Dr. Constable is a fundamental/evangelical Bible scholar who compiled these commentary notes over years as a pastor and seminary professor at Dallas Theological Seminary. Dr. Constable holds to the verbal, plenary and infallible inspiration of the Word of God. We encourage our readers to further study Dr. Constable's other commentary notes found on the Internet at <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries>.

Also, we wish to thank Dr. David Sorenson for his gracious permission to use his writings. Here, we are using ZECHARIAH, in the commentary series, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, Vol. 38, by David Sorenson. The American Bible College recommends our students purchase the complete set, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE from Northstar Ministries located at 1820 West Morgan Street, Duluth, MN 55811 or call (218) 726 0209. Dr. Sorenson, a pastor, seminary professor, church-planter and soul-winner, is an outstanding fundamental Bible scholar who holds to the verbal, plenary, infallible inspiration and preserved Word of God.

Likewise, large portions of Dr. David Baron's commentary on Zechariah will be quoted as from a fundamental Hebrew scholar. The reader is encouraged to read his exhaustive commentary, ZECHARIAH, A COMMENTARY ON HIS VISIONS AND PROPHECIES. We encourage the student to purchase and read these full length commentaries.

As linguistic scholars, Drs. Constable, Sorenson and Baron will often use applicable Hebrew and Greek words and quotes in support of their interpretation and in accordance with the King James Version. This should not be construed to imply that the American Bible College is correcting God's Word. The American Bible College believes the King James Version is the preserved Word of God, and this method of study allows the writer to accurately present the historical meaning in a relevant, current setting.

During this course the student is required to read through the entire Book of Zechariah ten times.

It is our desire that this study will be spiritually enlightening and rewarding as you understand Zechariah's history and prophecy as relevant to the Church. All additional references will be footnoted and bracketed.

Respectfully your servant in Christ Jesus,

Dr. Marvin W. Royse

FOREWORD

APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THESE BOOKS

The Book of Zechariah is very relevant to the present and future restoration of Israel. It is profound in its prophetic promises to the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A lifetime of study would be too short to master it. The thoughts are deep, and the student who is not willing to do prolonged and patient thinking ought not to undertake this book. Each phrase and each verse is of value, and to get at the meat of this book it must be carefully broken down and analyzed into its component parts. Each part must be studied for itself and then in its relation to the other parts. Analysis is not enough. We must synthesize each phrase to see Zechariah as a whole.

Suggestions for Study

As we undertake these studies in Zechariah, our primary effort should be to familiarize ourselves with the text itself. This we may do through careful reading and rereading. Following Dr. James M. Gray in his book, *How to Master the English Bible*, we suggest the following five rules for this reading:

- (1) Read the whole book at one time, ignoring chapter and verse divisions.
- (2) Read it continuously, right through at a single sitting, without break or interruption.
- (3) Read it repeatedly, over and over again; not twice, but ten or fifteen times.
- (4) Read it independently, without consulting other people's interpretations until you have direct contact and immediate acquaintance with the book itself.
- (5) Read it prayerfully, seeking your interpretation from the Holy Spirit who is present in the subject matter and also in the heart of the devout reader.

Reading is our first step, but mere reading is not study. Having read the book, we should study it carefully and purposefully, closing the book from time to time to summarize our study. We will use as our guide in this study the comments of Dr. Constable and other recognized Bible scholars. Additional books should be consulted where available, and a comparative study made of the different interpretations.

Some Values to Be Sought

Closely connected with our purpose in reading and with the problems that we face are the values that we seek. First, we want a working knowledge of the *content* of Zechariah. Then, we want to know its *aim* and *purport*. Finally, we want to lay hold of the message of the book both for its original writing and its present century readers. The final test of value will be not how much of the text we have mastered, but how much Christ has mastered our lives through these *Studies in Zechariah*.

ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

ZECHARIAH THE PROPHET

Of his personal history we know but little. He is called in his prophecy the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, whereas in the book of Ezra (5:1; 6:14) he is said to have been the son of Iddo. This, however, is hardly a probable hypothesis. It is surely more natural to suppose, as the prophet himself mentions his father's name, whereas the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah mention only Iddo, that Berechiah had died early, and that there was now no intervening link between the grandfather and the grandson.

The son, in giving his pedigree, does not omit his father's name: the historian passes it over as of one who was but little known or already forgotten. This view is confirmed if we suppose the Iddo here mentioned to have been the Iddo the priest who, in Nehemiah 12:4, is said to have returned from Babylon in company with Zerubbabel and Joshua. He is there said to have had a son Zechariah (ver. 16), who was contemporary with Joachim the son of Joshua; and this falls in with the hypothesis that owing to some unexplained cause—perhaps the death of his father Zechariah—became the next representative of the family after his grandfather Iddo. Zechariah, according to this view, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel before him, was priest as well as prophet. He seems to have entered upon his office while yet young (☐☉■ Zechariah 2, 4; comp. Jeremiah 1:6), and must have been born in Babylon, whence he returned with the first caravan of exiles under Zerubbabel and Joshua.

It was in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, that he first publicly discharged his office. B.C. 519. In this he acted in concert with Haggai, who must have been considerably his senior if, as seems not improbable, Haggai had been carried into captivity, and hence had himself been one of those who had seen “the house” of Jehovah “in her first glory” both directed all their energies to the building of the second Temple. Haggai seems to have led the way in this work, and then to have left it chiefly in the hands of his younger contemporary. The foundations of the new building [Temple] had already been laid in the time of Cyrus, but during the reigns of Cambyses and the pseudo Smerdis the work had been broken off through the jealousies of the Samaritans. When, however, Darius Hystaspis ascended the throne (B.C. 521) things took a more favorable turn. He seems to have been a large-hearted and gracious prince, and to have been well-disposed towards the Jews. Encouraged by the hopes, which his accession held out, the prophets exerted themselves to the utmost to secure the completion of the Temple. From this time, for a space of nearly two years, the prophet's voice was silent, or his words have not been recorded. But in the fourth year of king Darius, in the fourth day of the ninth month, there came a deputation of Jews to the Temple, anxious to know whether the fast-days which had been instituted during the seventy years captivity were still to be observed. On the one hand, now that the captivity was at an end, and Jerusalem was rising from her ashes such set times of mourning seemed quite out of place. On the other hand, there was still much ground for serious uneasiness; for some time after their return they had suffered severely from drought and famine (Haggai 1:6-11), and who could tell that they would not so suffer again? The hostility of their neighbors had not ceased; they were still regarded with no common jealousy; and large numbers of their brethren had not yet returned from Babylon. It was a question, therefore, that seemed to admit of much debate. It is impossible not to see of how great moment, under such circumstances, and for the discharge of the special duty with which he was entrusted, would be the priestly origin of Zechariah. Too often the prophet had to stand forth in direct antagonism to the priest. In an age when the service of God had stiffened into formalism, and the priests lips no longer kept knowledge, the prophet was the witness for the truth, which lay beneath the outward ceremonial, and without which the outward ceremonial was worthless. But the thing to be dreaded now was not superstitious formalism, but cold neglect. There was no fear now lest in a gorgeous temple, amid the splendors of an imposing ritual and the smoke of sacrifices ever ascending to heaven, the heart and life of religion should be lost. The fear was all the other way, lest even the body, the outward form and service, should be suffered to decay. The foundations of the Temple had indeed been laid, but that was all (Ezra 5:16). Discouraged by the opposition which they had encountered at first, the Jewish colony had begun to build, and were not able to finish; and even when the letter came from Darius sanctioning the work, and promising his protection, they showed no hearty disposition to engage in it. At such a time no more fitting instrument could be found to rouse the people, whose heart had grown cold, than one who united to the authority of the prophet the zeal and the traditions of a sacerdotal family.

Accordingly, to Zechariah's influence we find the rebuilding of the Temple in a great measure ascribed. "And the elders of the Jews builded," it is said, "and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo" (6:14). It is remarkable that in this juxtaposition of the two names both are not styled prophets—not "Haggai and Zechariah the prophets," but "Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo." Is it an improbable conjecture that Zechariah is designated by his father's (or grandfather's) name, rather than by his office, in order to remind us of his priestly character? Be this as it may, we find other indications of the close union which now subsisted between the priests and the prophets. Various events connected with the taking of Jerusalem and the captivity in Babylon had led to the institution of solemn fast-days; and we find that when a question arose as to the propriety of observing these fast-days, now that the city and the Temple were rebuilt, the question was referred to "the priests which were in the house of Jehovah, and to the prophets" a recognition not only of the joint authority, but of the harmony subsisting between the two bodies, without parallel in Jewish history. The manner, too, in which Joshua the high-priest is spoken of in this prophecy shows how lively a sympathetic Zechariah felt towards him.¹

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

I. **Contents.** — The book naturally falls into two principal divisions, which, as will be seen more fully in the sequel, are marked not only by certain peculiarities of expression, but obviously by the absence of any historical data in the latter portion such as are given in the former.

(A.) The first part, embracing ch. 1-8, divides itself into three sections by the chronological indications given respectively in Zechariah 1:1, 7, and Zechariah 7:1; and these are still further subdivided by the recurrence of the phrase "the word of the Lord came unto me." This part, therefore, consists, first, of a short introduction or preface, in which the prophet announces his commission; then of a series of visions, descriptive of all those hopes and anticipations of which the building of the Temple was the pledge and sure foundation; and finally of a discourse, delivered two years later, in reply to questions respecting the observance of certain established fasts.

1. The short introductory oracle (Zechariah 1:1-6) is a warning voice from the past. The prophet solemnly reminds the people, by an appeal to the experience of their fathers, that no word of God had ever fallen to the ground; and that therefore, if with sluggish indifference they refused to cooperate in the building of the Temple, they must expect the judgments of God. This warning manifestly rests upon the former warnings of Haggai.

2. In a dream of the night there passed before the eyes of the prophet a series of nine (essentially seven) visions, followed by an emblematical scene, descriptive in their different aspects of events, some of them shortly to come to pass, and others losing themselves in the mist of the future (Zechariah 1:7-6, 15). These visions are obscure, and accordingly the prophet asks their meaning. The interpretation is given, not as to Amos by Jehovah himself, but by an angel who knows the mind and will of Jehovah, who intercedes with him for others, and by whom Jehovah speaks and issues his commands; at one time he is called "the angel who spake with me" [or "by me"] (Zechariah 1:9); at another, "the angel of Jehovah" (ver. 11.12; 3, 1-6).

a. In the first vision (Zechariah 1:8-17) the prophet sees, in a valley of myrtles, a rider upon a roan horse, accompanied by others who, having been sent forth to the four quarters of the earth, had returned with the tidings that the whole earth was at rest (with reference to Haggai 2:20). Hereupon the angel asks how long this state of things shall last, and is assured that the indifference of the heathen shall cease, and that the Temple shall be built in Jerusalem. This vision seems to have been partly borrowed from Job 1:7, etc.

b. The second vision (Zechariah 2:1-17, A.V. 1:18-2:13) explains how the promise of the first is to be fulfilled, and is composed of three separate emblems. The four horns are the symbols of the different heathen kingdoms in the four quarters of the world, which have hitherto combined against Jerusalem. The four carpenters or smiths symbolize their destruction. The measuring line betokens the vastly extended area of Jerusalem, owing to the rapid increase of the new population. The old prophets, in foretelling the happiness and glory of the times which should succeed the Captivity in Babylon, had made a great part of that happiness and glory, to consist in the gathering together again of the whole dispersed nation in the land given to their fathers. This vision was designed to teach that the expectations thus raised the return of the dispersed of Israel should be fulfilled; that Jerusalem should be too large to be compassed about by a wall, but that Jehovah himself would be to her a wall of fire, a light and defense to the holy city, and destruction to her adversaries. A song of joy, in prospect of so bright a future, closes the scene.

The next two visions (ch. 3, 4) are occupied with the Temple, and with the two principal persons on whom the hopes of the returned exiles rested.

¹ John McClintock and James Strong, *CYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL, THEOLOGICAL AND ECCLESIASTICAL LITERATURE*, Vol. 10, pp. 75-78. Hereafter referred to as [MCCLINTOCK].

c. The permission granted for the rebuilding of the Temple had, no doubt, stirred afresh the malice and the animosity of the enemies of the Jews. Joshua the high-priest had been singled out, it would seem, as the especial object of attack, and perhaps formal accusations had already been laid against him before the Persian court. The prophet, in vision, sees him summoned before a higher tribunal, and solemnly acquitted; despite the charges of the Satan or Adversary. This is done with the forms still usual in an Eastern court. The filthy garments in which the accused is expected to stand are taken away, and the caftan or robe of honor is put upon him in token that his innocence has been established. Acquitted at that bar, he need not fear, it is implied, any earthly accuser. He shall be protected, he shall carry on the building of the Temple, he shall prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, and upon the foundation stone laid before him shall the seven eyes of God, the token of his ever-watchful providence, rest.

d. The succeeding vision (ch. 4) supposes that all opposition to the building of the Temple shall be removed. This sees the completion of the work. It has evidently a peculiarly impressive character; for the prophet, though his dream still continues, seems to himself to be awakened on of it by the angel who speaks to him. The candlestick (or, more properly, chandelier) with seven lights (borrowed from the candlestick of the Mosaic tabernacle, Exodus 25:31 sq.) supposes that the Temple is already finished. The seven pipes which supply each lamp answer to the seven eyes of Jehovah in the preceding vision (Zechariah 3:9), and this sevenfold supply of oil denotes the presence and operation of the Divine Spirit, through whose aid Zerubbabel will overcome all obstacles; so that as his hands had laid the foundation of the house, his hands should also finish it (Zechariah 4:9). The two olive branches of the vision, belonging to the olive-tree standing by the candlestick, are Zerubbabel himself and Joshua.

The next two visions (Zechariah 5:1-11) signify that the land, in which the sanctuary has just been erected, shall be purged of all its pollutions.

e. First, the curse is recorded against wickedness in the whole land (not in the whole earth, as in the A.V.), Zechariah 5:3; that due solemnity may be given to it, it is inscribed upon a roll, and the roll is represented as flying, in order to denote the speed with which the curse will execute itself.

f. Next, the unclean thing, whether in the form of idolatry or any other abomination, shall be utterly removed. Caught and shut up as it were in a cage, like some savage beast, and pressed down with a weight as of lead upon it so that it cannot escape, it shall be carried into that land where all evil things have long made their dwelling (Isaiah 34:13); the land of Babylon (Shinar, Zechariah 5:11), from which Israel had been redeemed.

g. The night is now waning fast, and the morning is about to dawn (Zechariah 6:1-8). Chariots and horses appear, issuing from between two brazen mountains, the horses like those in the first vision; and these receive their several commands and are sent forth to execute the will of Jehovah in the four quarters of the earth. The four chariots are images of the four winds, which, according, to Psalm 104:4, as servants of God, fulfill his behests, and of these one that goes to the north, it is particularly said, that it shall let the Spirit of Jehovah rest there; is it a spirit of anger against the nations, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, or is it a spirit of hope and desire of return, in the hearts of those of the exiles who still lingered in the land of their captivity? Stahelin, Maurer, and others adopt the former view, which seems to be in accordance with the preceding vision; Ewald gives the latter interpretation, and thinks it is supported by what follows.

Thus the cycle of visions is completed. Scene after scene is unrolled till the whole glowing picture is presented to the eye. All enemies crushed the land re-peopled, and Jerusalem girt as with a wall of fire; the Temple rebuilt, more truly splendid than of old, because more abundantly filled with a Divine Presence; the leaders of the people assured in the most signal manner of the Divine protection; all wickedness solemnly sentenced, and the Iliad forever purged of it such is the magnificent panorama of hope which the prophet displays to his countrymen. Very consolatory must such a prospect have seemed to the weak and disheartened colony in Jerusalem. For the times were dark and troublous. According to recent interpretations of newly discovered inscriptions, it would appear that Darius I found it no easy task to hold his vast dominions. Province after province had revolted both in the east and in the north, whither, according to the prophet (Zechariah 6:8), the winds had carried the wrath of God and if the reading Mudraja, i.e. Egypt, is correct (Lassen gives Kurdistan), Egypt must have revolted before the outbreak mentioned in Herod. 7:1, and have again been reduced to subjection. To such revolt there may possibly be an allusion in the reference to "the land of the south" (ver. 6). It would seem that Zechariah anticipated, as a consequence of these perpetual insurrections, the weakening and overthrow of the Persian monarchy and the setting-up of the kingdom of God, for which Judah, in faith and obedience, was to wait (ver. 9-15).

h. Immediately on these visions there follows a symbolical act (Zechariah 6:9-15). Three Israelites had just returned from Babylon, bringing with them rich gifts to Jerusalem, apparently as contributions to the Temple, and had been received in the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. Thither the prophet is commanded to go whether still in a dream or not is not very clear and to employ the silver and the gold of their offerings for the service of Jehovah. He is to make of them two crowns, and to place these on the head of Joshua the high-priest a sign that in the Messiah who should build the Temple the kingly and priestly offices should be united. This, however, is expressed somewhat

enigmatically, as if king and priest should be perfectly at one, rather than that the same person should be both king and priest. These crowns, moreover, were to be a memorial in honor of those by whose liberality they had been made, and should serve at the same time to excite other rich Jews still living in Babylon to the like liberality. Hence their symbolical purpose having been accomplished, they were to be laid up in the Temple.

3. It is remarkable, as has already been noticed, that the question relating to the fast days (Zechariah 7:1-3) should have been addressed to priests and prophets conjointly in the Temple. This close alliance between two classes hitherto so separate, and often so antagonistic, was one of the most hopeful circumstances of the times. Still Zechariah, as chief of the prophets, has the decision of this question. Some of the priests, it is evident (ver. 7), were inclined to the more gloomy view; but not so the prophet. In language worthy of his position and his office, language which reminds us of the most striking passages of his great predecessor (Isaiah 58:5-7), he lays down the same principle that God loves mercy rather than fasting, and truth and righteousness rather than sackcloth and a sad countenance. If they had perished, he reminds them it was because their hearts were hard while they fasted; if they would dwell safely, they must abstain from fraud and violence, and not from food (Zechariah 7:4-14).

Again, he foretells, but not now in vision, the glorious times that are near at hand when Jehovah shall dwell in the midst of them, and Jerusalem be called a city of truth. He sees her streets thronged by old and young, her exiles returning, her Temple standing in all its beauty, her land rich in fruitfulness, her people a praise and a blessing in the earth (Zechariah 8:1-15). Again, he declares that "truth and peace" (ver. 16, 19) are the bulwarks of national prosperity. And, once more reverting to the question which had been raised concerning the observance of the fasts, he announces, in obedience to the command of Jehovah, not only that the fasts are abolished, but that the days of mourning shall henceforth be days of joy, the fasts be counted for festivals. His prophecy concludes with a prediction that Jerusalem shall be the center of religious worship to all nations of the earth (ver. 16-23).

II. The remainder of the book consists of two sections of about equal length, ch. 9-11 and 12-14, each of which has an inscription. They have the general prophetic tone and character, and in subject they so far harmonize with 1-8 that the prophet seeks to comfort Judah in a season of depression with the hope of a brighter future.

1. In the first section he threatens Damascus and the sea-coast of Palestine with misfortune; but declares that Jerusalem shall be protected, for Jehovah himself shall encamp about her (where 9:8 reminds us of 2. 5). Her king shall come to her; he shall speak peace to the heathen, so that all weapons of war shall perish; and his dominion shall be to the ends of the earth. The Jews who are still in captivity shall return to their land; they shall be mightier than Javan (or Greece); and Ephraim and Judah once more united shall vanquish all enemies. The land too shall be fruitful as of old (comp. Zechariah 8:12). The Teraphim and the false prophets may indeed have spoken lies; but upon these will the Lord execute judgment, and then he will look with favor upon His people and bring back both Judah and Ephraim from their captivity. The possession of Gilead and Lebanon is again promised as the special portion of Ephraim; and both Egypt and Assyria shall be broken and humbled.

The prophecy now takes a sudden turn. An enemy is seen approaching from the north, who, having forged the narrow passes of Lebanon, the great bulwark of the northern frontier, carries desolation into the country beyond. Hereupon the prophet receives a commission from God to feed his flock, which God himself will no more feed because of their divisions. The prophet undertakes the office, and makes to himself two staves (naming the one Favor and the other Union), in order to tend the flock, and cuts off several evil shepherds whom his soul abhors; but observes, at the same time, that the flock will not be obedient. Hence he throws up his office; he breaks asunder the one crook in token that the covenant of God with Israel was dissolved. A few, the poor of the flock, acknowledged God's hand herein; and the prophet, demanding the wages of his service, receives thirty pieces of silver, and casts it into the house of Jehovah. At the same time, he sees that there is no hope of union between Judah and Israel, whom he had trusted to feed as one flock, and therefore cuts in pieces the other crook, in token that the brotherhood between them is dissolved.

2. The second section (ch. 12-14) is entitled "The burden of the word of Jehovah for Israel." But Israel is here used of the nation at large, not of Israel as distinct from Judah. Indeed, the prophecy, which follows, concerns Judah and Jerusalem. In this the prophet beholds the near approach of troublous times, when Jerusalem should be hard pressed by enemies. But in that day Jehovah shall come to save them "the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of Jehovah" (Zechariah 12:8), and all the nations which gather themselves against Jerusalem shall be destroyed. At the same time, the deliverance shall not be from outward enemies alone. God will pour out upon them a spirit of grace and supplications, so that they shall bewail their sinfulness with a mourning greater than that with which they bewailed the beloved Josiah in the valley of Megiddo. So deep and so true shall be this repentance, so lively the aversion to all evil, that neither idol nor false prophet shall again be seen in the land. If a man shall pretend to prophesy, "his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesied, fired by the same righteous indignation as Phinehas was when he slew those who wrought folly in Israel (Zechariah 12:1-13, 6)."

Then follows a short apostrophe to the sword of the enemy to turn against the shepherds of the people; and a further announcement of searching and purifying judgments; which, however, it must be acknowledged, is somewhat abrupt...

The prophecy closes with a grand and stirring picture. All nations are gathered together against Jerusalem, and seem already sure of their prey. Half of their cruel work has been accomplished, when Jehovah himself appears on behalf of His people. At His coming all nature is moved; the Mount of Olives on which His feet rest cleaves asunder; a mighty earthquake heaves the ground, and even the natural succession of day and night is broken. He goes forth to war against the adversaries of His people. He establishes His kingdom over all the earth. Jerusalem is safely inhabited, and becomes rich with the spoils of the nations. All nations that are still left shall come up to Jerusalem, as the great center of religious worship, there to worship "the King, Jehovah of hosts," and the city from that day forward shall be a holy city. [MCCLINTOCK, Vol. 10, pp. 80-87].

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

by Dr. David Baron²

PART ONE: THE VISIONS AND THE ANSWER TO THE DEPUTATION FROM BETHEL

1. **A Call to Repentance** – Zechariah 1:1-6
2. **The Angel among the Myrtle Trees** – Zechariah 1:7-17
3. **The Horns and the “Carpenters”** – Zechariah 1:18-21
4. **The Man with the Measuring Line** – Zechariah 2
5. **Joshua before the Angel of Jehovah** – Zechariah 3
6. **The Candlestick** – Zechariah 4
7. **The Flying Roll** – Zechariah 5:1-4
8. **The Ephah** – Zechariah 5:5-11
9. **The Four Chariots** – Zechariah 6:1-8
10. **The Crowning of Joshua** – Zechariah 6:9-15
11. **The Negative Answer** – Zechariah 7
12. **The Positive Answer** – Zechariah 8

PART TWO: THE PROPHECIES

13. **An Examination of the Modern Criticism**
14. **The Prince of Peace** – Zechariah 9
15. **The Shepherd-King** – Zechariah 10
16. **Rejection of the True Shepherd** – Zechariah 11
17. **Final Conflict and Deliverance** – Zechariah 12
18. **The Opened Fountain** – Zechariah 13:1-6
19. **The Smitten Shepherd** – Zechariah 13:7-9
20. **The Glorious Consummation** – Zechariah 14

² David Baron, ZECHARIAH, A COMMENTARY ON HIS VISIONS AND PROPHECIES, (HEBREW CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY TO ISRAEL, London), 1918. Hereafter referred to as [BARON]

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Introduction to Zechariah: *The prophecy of Zechariah was written to the restoration remnant beginning in about B.C. 520. Though there are other Zechariahs mentioned throughout the Old and New Testament, the author of this prophecy is not coincident with any other Zechariah mentioned in Old Testament history and certainly not in New Testament times. The name 'Zechariah' in Hebrew literally means 'Jehovah remembers.' As will be noted in the first chapter of the prophecy, Jehovah God indeed remembered His people, their sin, and His promises to them.*

Zechariah was contemporaneous with Haggai. In fact, they both lived in Jerusalem upon the return of Jews to restore the Temple and they both issued prophecies at almost the same time. Zechariah, however, had a longer ministry than that which is recorded of Haggai. His prophecies were presented over a period of about thirty-three years. Both prophets sought to encourage the returned Jews in the struggle to rebuild the Temple in the face of opposition. Zechariah's ministry also is contemporaneous with the events noted in Ezra 1-6. He is even mentioned in Ezra 6:14.

The prophecy of Zechariah is in three sections. The first, (chapters 1-6) deals largely with how Israel will not only be restored, but will rise to great prominence. Though the current difficulties are in view, God through the prophet looks far into the future, seeing the day of the Lord, the millennium, and the Messiah upon His throne. In this section, ten visions are presented dealing variously with the warning of Jews in the land not to backslide, to visions of the Messiah on His throne. The second section (chapters 7-8) deals primarily with the need of the restoration remnant in the land to pay heed to the prophets God had sent and to rebuild the Temple. This section particularly presents practical and ethical admonition for the returned remnant. Section three (chapters 9-14) looks forward to the Messiah in His rejection and yet His coming in great power to rule and reign. Both the first and second comings of Christ are presented clearly in Zechariah. The prophecy of Zechariah sets forth some of the clearest prophecy of Christ in His suffering and glorification.³

³ David Sorenson, UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE, Vol. 38, ZECHARIAH, (Northstar Ministries, Duluth, MN., 2011), pp. 439-440. Hereafter referred to as [SORENSEN].

CHAPTER ONE

Verse 1. In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying.

The writer identified the time when this first word from the Lord came to Zechariah and who he was. "The word of the Lord" is a technical term meaning the prophetic word of revelation. The eighth month of the second year of Darius was October-November of 520 B.C. Evidently Haggai began ministering two months earlier to the same audience and ended his prophetic ministry one month later (Haggai 1:1; Haggai 2:10; Haggai 2:20; cf. Ezra 5:1; Ezra 6:14). Since there was no human king of Israel then, the writer dated the prophecy in reference to Darius, a reminder that Israel was in "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). "The times of the Gentiles" is the time when Gentiles control the destiny of Israel, namely, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar to the future millennial reign of Christ. Zechariah's father was Berechiah, and his more prominent grandfather (or ancestor) was Iddo. Iddo was among the priests who returned from the Captivity with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Nehemiah 12:4; Nehemiah 12:16).

{Dreams happened while asleep; whereas, "a vision is a supernatural presentation of certain scenery or circumstances to the mind of a person while awake" [MCCLINTOCK, Vol. 10, p. 358.] Zechariah does not mention these revelations by the terms "dreams" or "visions." He simply calls them "came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah." (1:1, 7, etc.) Apparently they were visions.}

Verses 1-6

I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-6

That this pericope introduces the whole book seems clear since Zechariah 1:7 introduces the eight night visions that follow it (Zechariah 1:7 to Zechariah 6:8). Its content is also foundational to all that follows.

"It [1:1-6] strikes the keynote of the entire book, and is one of the strongest and most intensely spiritual calls to repentance to be found anywhere in the Old Testament." [Note: George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 150. Cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 253.]

"The initial six verses of the first chapter of Zechariah constitute a synopsis of a sermon of the prophet. Its theme

strikes the keynote of the entire book and forms an indispensable introduction to it. The truth it enunciates is one which runs throughout the revealed ways of God with man; namely, *the appropriation and enjoyment of God's promises of blessing must be prefaced by genuine repentance.*" [Note: Unger, p. 20.]

". . . these introductory verses take the place of a call narrative [cf. Isaiah 6; Jeremiah 1; Ezekiel 1-2]." [Note: Longman and Dillard, p. 491.]

Verses 2-3 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Zechariah's first message was a warning to the restoration Jews in Jerusalem. Further insight into the context of the history of that time might be found in Ezra 5-6 and Haggai 1-2. The Jews were back, after a fashion, in their land. They had attempted to rebuild their Temple, met opposition, became discouraged, and quit. They had turned their pursuits to making money, to building homes, and doing things other than serving God. In that context, Zechariah reminded them that God was "sore displeased with your fathers." The reference is to backslidden Israel prior to the captivity. By implication, Zechariah reminded them that God had dealt with the sin of their forefathers. They reaped the bitter harvest of that chastening to that very day.

Zechariah thus issued his first injunction from the Lord. **3 Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.**

"Lord of hosts" is found over 1,000 times in the Old Testament (never in the New Testament) and is a key phrase found 53 times in Zechariah. It is a term uniquely related to God's covenant relationship with Israel; and in this case it signifies "Israel's covenant God who is the creator of all things", including the nation Israel. Notice the threefold stress on YHWH of Hosts. The threefold witness stresses the truth of what is said.

'YHWH of Hosts'. It is the God of the covenant (YHWH) and Lord of all creation (of Hosts, the hosts of heaven and earth and of all within them) Who is speaking to them. He is keeping His part in the covenant by restoring them to the land. They must respond by obeying His laws and living to please Him in every way.⁴

The words translated as turn (*shoob*, or *shub*) are predominately translated as 'return.' The idea thus is that God said, 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you.' Or, *repent* in getting right with me, and I will return my blessing to you. What is apparent by implication is that though the restored remnant may not have gone back to idolatry, they otherwise were not in an altogether right fellowship with God. There still remained problems of a backslidden heart. There is a remarkable similarity to James 4:8. It very well may be that James was referring to Zechariah 1:3 in his admonition. Note also how the phrase "the LORD of hosts" is mentioned three times in this one verse. [SORENSEN, Vol. 38, p. 441].

Verse 4-6

Their ancestors had perished and the former prophets who warned them were no longer alive to continue warning them. They would not have endless opportunities to repent. The punishments that the former prophets had warned the people about had overtaken them. The Lord had pursued and caught the evildoers like a hunter captures his prey. Then they acknowledged that the Lord had indeed done as He had warned them that He would do (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15; Deuteronomy 28:45; 2 Chronicles 36:16). This would be the experience of the contemporary Israelites too if they failed to heed Zechariah's exhortation (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Even though the Israelites had failed God miserably in the past, this introductory message clarified that the Abrahamic Covenant was still in force. God promised to bless His people, but their enjoyment of that blessing in any given generation depended on their walking with Him in trust and obedience. "Repent" (Heb. *shub*) means "return." It presupposes a previous relationship with God from which His people had departed.

". . . Zechariah enumerates in his introductory address five great principles: (1) The condition of all God's blessings, Zechariah 1:3. (2) The evil and peril of disobedience, Zechariah 1:4. (3) The unchangeable character of God's Word, Zechariah 1:6a. (4) God's governmental dealings with His people in accordance with their deeds, Zechariah 1:6b ('according to our ways and according to our deeds'). (5) God's immutable purposes, Zechariah 1:6b ('as Jehovah ... determined ... so did he with us')." [Note: Feinberg, p. 21.]

Verse 7

Zechariah received another revelation from the Lord three months after his previous one in Darius' second year, 520 B.C. The second year of Darius was 520 B.C., but the eleventh month would have been January-February. In our modern calendar this would have been 519 B.C.

"On the same day (24 Shebat), five months earlier, the rebuilding of the temple had been resumed (cf. Haggai 1:14-15; see also Haggai 2:10; Haggai 2:18; Haggai 2:20). It was evidently a day in which God had special delight because of the obedience of His people." [Note: Barker, p. 610.]

"Also on that day two months previously Haggai had delivered a stern rebuke to the priests for their impurity and to the people for their delay in building the temple (Haggai 2:10-17). On that day, moreover, Haggai had received the far-reaching revelation (Haggai 2:20) of the destruction of Gentile world power previous to the establishment of millennial rule of the greater Zerubbabel-Messiah (Haggai 2:21-23)." [Note: Unger, p. 26.]

Verses 7-8

II. THE EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS AND FOUR MESSAGES 1:7-6:8

Zechariah received eight apocalyptic visions in one night (Zechariah 1:7). As the text shows, they concerned God's purpose for the future of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, the seat of the Davidic dynasty and the site of the temple, and Judah. They deal with issues of more immediate concern to the restoration community, though none of them was fulfilled in Zechariah's day. The broad theme of this section is the coming

⁴ Peter Pett, PETER PETT'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, comments on Zechariah 1:3. Hereafter referred to as [PETT].

of the King. The purpose of these visions was to encourage the returnees to persevere in their work of rebuilding the temple.

Certain features mark each of these eight visions: an introduction, an explanation of what the prophet saw, his request for clarification of its meaning, and the elucidation. Oracles [oracle—a person through whom God speaks] accompany three of the visions making their messages clearer (Zechariah 1:16-17; Zechariah 2:6-13; Zechariah 4:6-10). Some interpreters also connect the oracle in Zechariah 6:9-15 to the vision in Zechariah 6:1-8, but it seems to me, and others, that that oracle was separate from the preceding vision.

". . . The arrangement of the visions follows a chiasmic pattern [*abbccbba*]. The first and last bear a strong resemblance to one another, the second and third, sixth and seventh are pairs, and the fourth and fifth, with their assurance of God-given authoritative leaders, form the climax. All eight visions are meant to be interpreted as one whole, for each contributes to the total picture of the role of Israel in the new era about to dawn." [Note: Baldwin, p. 93.]

A The horseman among the myrtle trees (Zechariah 1:7-17)

B The four horns and the four smiths (Zechariah 1:18-21)

C The surveyor (ch. 2)

D The cleansing and restoration of Joshua (ch. 3)

D' The gold lampstand and the two olive trees (ch. 4)

C' The flying scroll (Zechariah 5:1-4)

B' The woman in the basket (Zechariah 5:5-11)

A' The four chariots (Zechariah 6:1-8)

A. Verses 7-17 The First Vision—The Horsemen

The horseman among the myrtle trees 1:7-17

This first vision emphasizes that God was lovingly jealous of His chosen people and would restore them even though they were troubled at present and the nations that oppressed them were at ease (cf. Habakkuk). In the vision an angelic patrol reported on the state of the whole earth. This vision presents hope for dispersed and downtrodden Israel. [Note: Unger, p. 25.]

Verse 8

The prophet saw a vision, and in his vision it was night. He saw a man sitting on a red (bay, reddish-brown) horse among myrtle trees in a ravine. He also saw red, speckled (sorrel (Heb. *seruqim*, mixed color), and white horses behind the man on the red horse. There were riders on these horses too (Zechariah 1:11).

To Zechariah, who knew the Old Testament and who lived in a particular culture (Persian as well as Hebrew), the meaning of these symbols would have been more readily apparent than they are to the modern reader.

"Viewed from the perspective of a literary type, symbolism has a unique force, impressing itself on the mind and touching the emotions with greater facility and power than prosaic literary types." [Note: Thomas E. McComiskey, "Zechariah," in *The Minor Prophets*, p. 1012.]

Night had connotations of gloom, obscurity and foreboding. The present was such a period for the Israelites. The light of joy, clear sight, and security was yet to break for them. The riders evidently represent some of the Lord's angelic army (host) that serve as His scouts and report world conditions to Him

(Zechariah 1:10). Horses were instruments of war and prestigious possessions (Zechariah 10:3; 1 Kings 10:26), and the colors of these horses apparently represent their mission. The colors doubtless implied something to Zechariah, possibly [red]bloodshed, a [speckled] mixed mission (of judgment and blessing), and [white] victory (cf. Zechariah 6:2; Isaiah 63:1-6; Revelation 6:4). If their color was very significant, the angel probably would have commented on it. Some scholars believed the colors of the horses has no significance. [Note: E.g., Smith, p. 190.] But if so, why did Zechariah mention their different colors?

"Compare Revelation 6:4. The whole period of Gentile world power is characterized by the red horse, i.e. by the sword. Cp. also Daniel 9:26; Matthew 24:6-7." [Note: *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 964.]

Myrtle trees were evergreens used in the feast of Tabernacles to picture future endless messianic blessings that would come to Israel (Nehemiah 8:15; Isaiah 41:19; Isaiah 55:13). [Note: Leupold, p. 33.] Here they represent Israel. The ravine may hint at Israel's present depressed position in Zechariah's day. One amillennialist took the myrtle trees as typifying "the [Old Testament] Jewish Church." [Note: Charles L. Feinberg, "Zechariah," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 898.] Others take them as representing the church or God's people of all ages.

Verse 9

Zechariah asked the angel who was with him in his vision what the horsemen and the horses represented, and the angel said he would explain.

Verse 10

The angel, who looked like a man and who was standing in the grove of trees, said that the horsemen were Yahweh's [Jehovah's] representatives whom He had sent to patrol the earth.

"Like the Persian monarchs who used messengers on swift steeds to keep them informed on all matters concerning their empire, so the Lord knew all about the countries of the earth, including the great Persian state." [Note: Baldwin, p. 95.]

Verse 11

The horsemen then reported to the angel that they had patrolled the earth and had found it peaceful and quiet.

"Darius boasted that in nineteen battles he had defeated nine rebel leaders and had subdued all his enemies. So the empire was again virtually quiet by 520 B.C." [Note: Barker, p. 612.]

The description of the interpreting angel as the angel of the Lord can be understood in one of three ways. He was either the Lord Himself (i.e., the second person of the Trinity), or he could have been an angel sent from the Lord and responsible to the Lord, the Lord's special angel (cf. Zechariah 3:1-2; Genesis 16:11; Genesis 16:13; Genesis 18:1-2; Genesis 18:13; Genesis 18:17; Genesis 18:22; Genesis 22:11-12; Genesis 22:15-18; Genesis 31:11; Genesis 31:13; Exodus 3:2; Exodus 3:4; Joshua 5:13; Joshua 6:2; Judges 2:1-5; Judges 6:11-12; Judges 6:14; Judges 13:3-23; Ezekiel 43:6-7). The third interpretation is that "the angel of the Lord is a representation of Yahweh in a way

that actualizes His immanence, but not in direct theophany." [Note: McComiskey, p. 1038.]

Verse 12

Then the angel of the Lord addressed sovereign Yahweh. Clearly they were separate persons. He asked the Lord how long He planned to remain bent on disciplining Jerusalem and the cities of Judah (i.e., the Israelites), which He had done in His indignation for the last 70 years (i.e., the Captivity; cf. Jeremiah 25:11-12). That prophesied period was now over, but the Israelites were still oppressed and under foreign domination.

Verse 13

The Lord responded to the angel's question graciously and with comforting words. However, what He said Zechariah did not reveal, either because he did not hear it or because he chose not to do so under divine inspiration.

Verse 14

The angel then instructed Zechariah to proclaim that Yahweh was very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. Jealousy when used to describe God's attitude refers to His careful concern, specifically intolerance of rivalry or unfaithfulness, for the wellbeing of others. Often in Scripture it alludes to God as a husband wanting to keep His wife, Israel or the church, true to Himself. [Note: See Baldwin, pp. 101-3.] God's jealousy has none of the negative connotations that we associate with selfish human jealousy. The double names for Jerusalem may be a case of poetic parallelism, or they could suggest Jerusalem of the past and Zion of the future. Zechariah's people evidently thought that the stability that the Persian Empire currently enjoyed indicated that God had turned from them to look favorably on the nations.

Verse 15

The Lord continued to explain that He was very angry with the ["heathen"] Gentile nations who were presently at ease. He was angry because they had compounded the punishment of Israel that God had inflicted on the Chosen People by prolonging it (cf. Genesis 12:3).

Verse 16

Because the people of Jerusalem had experienced so much hostility the Lord promised to return to them and show them compassion. The sovereign Lord promised that the temple would be rebuilt there, and the city again would become a viable entity. The Jews finished the temple in 515 B.C., but the city walls were not complete until 444 B.C. (Nehemiah 7:4; Nehemiah 11:1). Measuring the city pictures its expanded restoration (cf. Jeremiah 31:38-40), the measuring line being a construction tool. [Note: See Baruch Halpern, "*The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song*," Catholic Biblical Quarterly 40 (1978):178, n. 51.]

Verses 16-17

2. The oracle about God's jealousy for Israel 1:16-17

This is the first of four oracles that appear within the visions that Zechariah saw. These were messages that the prophet was to deliver along with the revelation of the vision.

"The vision had lifted the veil which hides the unseen, spiritual world to show that God is in control and active in the earth, but it would not have been of specific comfort without the message in words given by the interpreting angel (Zechariah 1:14-17). This oracle is essential to elucidate the implications of the vision." [Note: Ibid., p. 98. She understood the oracle as beginning with Zechariah 1:14.]

Verse 17

God promised that His cities, the cities of Judah (Zechariah 1:12), would again overflow with the benefits of prosperity. He would again comfort Zion and choose to bless Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kings 8:44; 1 Kings 8:48; 2 Chronicles 6:6; 2 Chronicles 6:34; 2 Chronicles 6:38).

"The distinctive features of comfort for Israel in this first vision are: (1) the presence of the Angel of Jehovah in the midst of degraded and depressed Israel; (2) His loving and yearning intercession for them; (3) the promises of future blessings. We may say, then, that the import of the vision is this: although Israel is not yet in her promised position, God is mindful of her, providing the means of His judgment on the persecuting nations, and reserving glory and prosperity for Israel in the benevolent and beneficent reign of the Messiah.

"The series of visions carry us through God's dealings with Israel from the time of their chastisement by God under the Gentile powers until they are restored to their land with their rebuilt city and temple under their Messiah King. The first vision gives the general theme of the whole series; the others add the details.... When the world was busy with its own affairs, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah were upon the lowly estate of Israel and upon the temple in Jerusalem." [Note: Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 38.]

Verse 18

Zechariah 1:18 begins chapter 2 in the Hebrew Bible. Zechariah then saw another scene in his vision. He observed four animal horns. Presumably they were on living animals since they could feel terror (Zechariah 1:21), though there is no mention of animals. Horns were a common figure for power in biblical and ancient Near Eastern iconography, specifically, of a Gentile king or world empire (e.g., Deuteronomy 33:17; Psalms 18:2; Psalms 75:10; Psalms 89:17; Daniel 2:36-44; Daniel 7:3-7; Daniel 7:24; Daniel 8:20-21; Revelation 17:12).

B. Verses 18-21 The Second Vision—Horns and Carpenters

The four horns and the four ["carpenters"] smiths 1:18-21

The second vision elaborates the concept of comfort promised in the first vision (Zechariah 1:13; Zechariah 1:17). Here we learn how God will execute His anger against the nations that excessively oppressed His people. The nations will meet with retribution, and Israel will triumph over her foes.

Verse 19

In response to the prophet's request for an interpretation, the assisting angel explained that they represented the powers that had scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Assyria took Israel into captivity, and Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem and took the Judahites captive. So perhaps the fact that there were four horns

symbolizes that they represented nations from the four corners of the world, the totality of opposition. [Note: Smith, p. 193.] Another view is that they stand for Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (cf. Daniel 2; Daniel 7). [Note: Charles H. Dyer, in *The Old Testament Explorer*, p. 823; and Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 900.]

"As little as horns can hold their own before powerful smiths, so little can God's enemies lastingly prevail over God's people." [Note: Leupold, p. 51.]

END OF SAMPLE

Verse 20-21

Zechariah was shown another vision of "four carpenters." It is closely related to the previous vision. The word translated as **carpenters** (*khawrawsh*) [a general name, applicable to an artificer in stone, iron, or copper, as well as in wood [MCCLINTOCK, Vol. 2, p. 108.] has the sense of a craftsman such as a carpenter who cuts, planes, and builds (or dismantles). In any event, whoever these 'carpenters' are, they will *fray* (i.e., terrorize) and cast out the gentile nations which have scattered Judah (and Israel). In other words, the day was coming when the nations which have terrorized Israel will in turn be terrorized by God. Though there certainly was intermediate fulfillment of that in the near-term, the long term fulfillment no doubt is yet to come at the day of the Lord. [SORENSEN, Vol. 38, p. 446]

Again in answer to the prophet's request for interpretation, the angel repeated that the horns represented the powers that had scattered the Israelites. Then he added that the four artisans had come to terrify these horns and to overthrow them for attacking Israel and scattering the Israelites. These ["carpenters"] smiths evidently carried hammers with which they threatened to smash the horns. Probably the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Messiah are in view. Each of these kingdoms destroyed the preceding one, Medo-Persia having defeated Babylonia (cf. Daniel 2:34-35; Daniel 2:44-45).

The four smiths		The four horns
Medo-Persia	destroyed	Babylonia
Greece	destroyed	Medo-Persia
Rome	destroyed	Greece
God's kingdom	will destroy	Rome

Another less likely view is that they describe kingdoms that had already destroyed Israel's enemies. A third possibility is that they will all appear in the future to take vengeance on Israel's end-times enemies. A fourth less probable view, I think, is that the horns represent "the full extent of human cruelty, military might, political machinations, and lust for power ... which destroyed pre-exilic Judah." [Note: McComiskey, p. 1048.] A fifth view is that they represent the four judgments of Ezekiel 14:21 : sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague (cf. Revelation 6:1-8). [Note: The New Scofield ..., p. 965.] The Ezekiel prophecy describes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., but similar judgments are predicted for the Tribulation in Revelation 6-19.

"Several features are noteworthy in this vision: (1) God takes account of every one that lifts his hand against Israel; (2) He has complete knowledge of the dejected condition of His people and the extent of their injury; and (3) He has already provided the punishment for every foe of His chosen ones." [Note: Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 42-43.]