

THE BIBLE

in a nutshell

Zechariah

—by Dr Peter Hammond



“...Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Hosts.” Zechariah 4:6

Judah had been conquered. Jerusalem burned. The Temple demolished. The people led away into captivity to Babylon (2 Kings 24-25). In 538BC, Cyrus, the king of Persia, freed the captives from Judah to return to their land and resettle in the land surrounding Jerusalem, to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4 and 3:1-4:5). Opposition, indifference and apathy caused the work of rebuilding the Temple to be abandoned (Ezra 4:24). Sixteen years later (Ezra 5:1-2), Haggai, and later Zechariah, were commissioned by the Lord to command

centuries in its vision of the future. Much of Zechariah is presented in the form of poetry and apocalyptic visual images, symbols and word pictures. Much of the book of Zechariah resembles the second half of Daniel and some parts of Ezekiel. Much of Zechariah is quoted and alluded to in the book of Revelation.

The rulers of Israel

During the 2000 years from Abraham to Jesus, for their first 500 years (from 2000 to 1500BC), the children of Israel were led by patriarchs

than the prophets before the Exile. After the Exile the people actually listened to the prophets and did what they had told them! Zechariah reminds us of the test of a true prophet: If what he has told you is going to happen does not happen, then you know that he is a false prophet. Prophets should be tested. If their predictions do not come true, then they must be rebuked for misleading God's people and misusing God's Name.

Satan Is the accuser of the Brethren

When God works, we can expect the devil to try to undermine it. Satan (in Hebrew), or diabolos in Greek, means accuser. Zechariah speaks of satan standing at the right hand of the high priest Joshua to oppose him (Zechariah 3:1). However, although Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, the Lord rebuked satan and ordered Joshua's filthy garments to be removed from him. By God's grace, Joshua, in spite of his sin, and the sins of his people, was made clean in God's sight. God promised that what He had done for this one man, He would one day do for the entire nation. *“For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the Branch. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua... Behold, I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.”* Zechariah 3:8-9.

High Priest crowned

The two olive trees described by Zechariah stand for Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest. There was to be a dual leadership over the land. For the first time a high

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the people to rebuild the Temple. As a result the Temple was completed four years later, in 516BC (Ezra 6:15).

Comparing Haggai and Zechariah

Haggai is one of the easiest of the minor prophets to understand, Zechariah one of the hardest. Zechariah is longer than the book of Haggai. While Haggai dealt primarily with the present and immediate problems, Zechariah looked far into the future. While the book of Haggai covers only a period of a few months, Zechariah was written over a number of years and spans

(Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph). During the next 500 years (1500 to 1000BC) they were led by prophets (Moses to Samuel). From 1000 to 500BC they were led by princes (or kings, such as Saul, David, Solomon). From 500BC to the time of Christ, priests (like Ezra) led the people of Israel. However, every kind of leadership failed. Our Lord Jesus Christ combined all these offices in His one Person. He is our Patriarch, Prophet, Priest and King.

Rebuke and Rebellion

The prophets who served after the Exile had far greater success

Who was Zechariah?

Zechariah was a young priest and prophet. He was the son of Berachiah, and the grandson of Iddo, who had returned to Jerusalem sixteen years previously (Nehemiah 12:4-16). Zechariah was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai.

The Message of Zechariah

Zechariah is a messianic, apocalyptic message of restoration and glory. Zechariah means 'the Lord remembers'. Written primarily to the remnant who had returned from Exile in Babylon, Zechariah gives hope to God's people during a time of great difficulty, inspiring spiritual revival by turning people's hearts, in repentance from their sin, to seeking the Lord. *“...Thus says the Lord of Hosts: 'Return to Me,... and I will return to you'”* Zechariah 1:3. *“Do not be like your fathers... they did not hear nor heed Me,”* says the Lord.” Zechariah 1:4. Zechariah uses visions, prophecies, signs, descriptions of angels and direct words from God to deal with repentance, salvation and holy living, giving practical guidelines for daily living.



priest is crowned. Never before in the history of Israel had a king and a priest been united in one person. This symbolised the coming of the Messiah who would not be from the line of Aaron or Eli, but from the line of Melchizedek, both priest and king.

Persecutors punished

Those who attack God's people will have to face the consequences from God. *“For I,”* says the Lord, *“will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the Glory in her midst.”* Zechariah 2:5. *“... for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.”* Zechariah 2:8.

The Anointed Messiah

Zechariah proclaims a vision of a seven-branched golden Lampstand in the Temple and a golden bowl filled with oil, replenishing the oil in the lamp. *“This is the Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'* says the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6. Messiah means God's Anointed One (Christ in Greek). The inexhaustible reservoir of God's Holy Spirit will pour through Christ, blessing the nations.

Let the earth hear His voice

“Many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the Lord of Hosts has sent Me to you.” Zechariah 2:11.

And the Messiah will *“bring forth the capstone with shouts of 'Grace! Grace to it!'”* Zechariah 4:7. *“Behold, the Man whose Name is the Branch!... He shall branch out, and He shall build the Temple of the Lord; Yes, He shall build the Temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His Throne; So He shall be a priest on His Throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both... Even those from afar shall... And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”* Zechariah 6:12-15. Great things can begin very

small. Be faithful in small matters. God sees, God cares. Do all things unto the glory of God.

The flying scroll

“Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll... This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: 'Every thief shall be expelled... Every perjurer shall be expelled... I will send out the curse,' says the Lord of Hosts; *I shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My Name... and consume it.”* Zechariah 5:1-4.

or the fatherless, the alien, or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.” Zechariah 7:5-10.

True fasting is abstaining from sin

Here Zechariah speaks in similar words to Isaiah 58. Their fasting was actually a self-centred empty religious ritual. What God wants us to do is fast from dishonesty and cruelty. God wants us to be generous and kind, to help the helpless and to care for the needy. To execute true justice, showing mercy and compassion.

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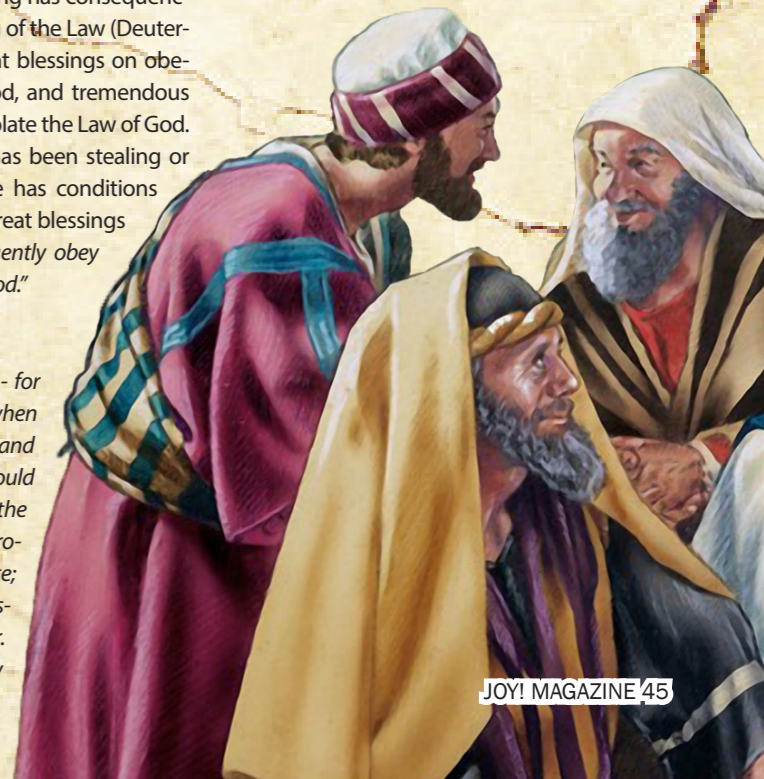
The Blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience

There are blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. Everything has consequences. As laid out in the giving of the Law (Deuteronomy 28), there are great blessings on obedience to the Word of God, and tremendous curses upon those who violate the Law of God. God will curse whoever has been stealing or telling lies. Every promise has conditions and comes in a context. Great blessings are promised, *“if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”*

Fasting and feasting

“Did you really fast for Me - for Me? When you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink for yourselves? Should you not have obeyed the Words that the Lord proclaimed? 'Execute true justice; show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow

The fast that God wants, does not involve “going” without food as much as “going” without sin. However, most people would prefer to do »



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"So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong."
- Zechariah 8:13

without food rather than to forsake their sin! It was precisely for these reasons that Jerusalem had been destroyed, the Temple had been demolished and the people had been exiled to Babylon for seventy years. Their selfishness and greed had condemned them. *"Then the Word of the Lord of Hosts came to me, saying, Thus says the Lord of Hosts: 'The fast... shall be joy and gladness and cheerful... Therefore love truth and peace."* Zechariah 8:18-19.

Holy days must focus on God

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Zechariah rebukes the people that their feasts are actually self-centred. Just concerned with food, fellowship and fun. Their focus was not on God, His Word, His Will, His worship or His work. Zechariah makes clear that it was because the people of Judah had refused to listen to the Word of God, and made their hearts like flint,

that the wrath of God had fallen upon them and that they had been scattered amongst the nations and their land made desolate (Zechariah 7:11-14).

Truth and justice

The prophet commands *"... Speak each man the truth to his neighbour; Give judgement in your gates for truth, justice, and peace. Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbour; and do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,"* Says the Lord." Zechariah 8:16-17.

of the betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver to Judas Iscariot.

The Messiah's hands would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). The Messiah would be wounded in the house of my friends (Zechariah 13:6).

The Messiah would enter Jerusalem, riding on a donkey. *"Rejoice greatly... Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey..."* Zechariah 9:9.

The Messiah shall *"speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."* Zechariah 9:10.

The Messiah shall be *"a fountain... opened... for sin and for uncleanness. It shall be in that day, says the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to depart from the land."* Zechariah 13:1-2.

The Cross and the Crown

In order to understand the visions of Zechariah, one needs to read them in the light of both the Cross and the Crown. Zechariah speaks of the good and suffering Shepherd. *"Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered..."* Zechariah 13:7

"And the Lord shall be King over all the earth.

Jesus in Zechariah

Jesus is God's Servant, The Branch (3:8); The Good Shepherd (9:16; 11:11); the smitten Shepherd (13:7).

Christ would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. *"So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver... and threw them into the House of the Lord for the potter."* Zechariah 11:11-13.

Matthew 27:9-10 quotes from Zechariah 11:13 to apply the prophesy

Visions in Zechariah

- The horns represent military power and the blacksmiths and craftsmen are those who will disarm the enemies of God.
- The measuring line speaks of the coming expansion, prosperity, and abundance that God will bless His people with.
- The filthy garments of the high priest symbolise the total depravity of man. The removal of these filthy garments, and the replacement with clean garments, represents God's grace in removing our sins and cleansing us.
- The golden candlesticks symbolise the Messiah, the Light of the world.
- The golden bowl is the reservoir of the oil of the Holy Spirit.
- The flying scroll represents the Word of God, which brings curses upon the disobedient.
- The ephah born on divine wings removes wickedness from the land.
- The four chariots represent God's angels, administering righteousness throughout the earth and restraining evil.



In that day it shall be – the Lord is One, and His Name One." Zechariah 14:9.

"And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem..." Zechariah 14:8.

"In that day 'Holiness To the Lord' shall be engraved on the bells of the horses..." Zechariah 14:20.

Reject false prophets and worthless shepherds

The prophet Zechariah speaks of a time of *"confusion... madness... blindness"* (Zechariah 12:4).

"Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, who was struck and wounded for the sins of His people. He has become the Fountain to bring cleansing from sin.

the flock..." Zechariah 11:17.

False prophets are condemned: *"It shall come to pass that if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, 'You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the Name of the Lord..."* Zechariah 13:3-4.

The delusion of idols

The vanity of idols is condemned: *"For the idols speak delusion; the diviners envision lies, and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore the people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd. My anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish the goatherds. For the Lord of Hosts will visit His flock..."* Zechariah 10:2-3.

Nations shall be judged

Zechariah prophesies judgement upon the nations. *"Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart."* Zechariah 10:11. Zechariah speaks of *"the burden of the Word of the Lord against the nations,"* against Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Akron, *"a mixed race shall settle in Ashdod and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take away the blood from his mouth and the abominations from between his teeth."* Zechariah 9:6-7.

"Yes, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts... and to pray before the Lord." Zechariah 8:22.

Dismissing the three worthless shepherds

In Zechariah 11:8 the Good Shepherd is described as dismissing the three worthless shepherds. *"I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred Me... And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the Covenant I had made with all the people. So it was broken on that*

day..." Zechariah 11:8-11.

Jesus, the Messiah, is the Good Shepherd who, in His earthly ministry, confronted the hypocrisy of the religious leaders: the priests, elders, and scribes of Judea, disowning them with scathing denunciations. The destruction of the nation in AD70 heralded the end of the rule of the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel. Henceforth, Christ alone is our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Christ will rule the nations

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd, who was struck and wounded for the sins of His people. He has become the Fountain to bring cleansing from sin. The Lord will be King over the whole earth. In that day, the Lord will be the only Name and all nations shall come to Christ.

Saved to serve

"So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hands be strong." Zechariah 8:13. We are saved to serve. We are blessed in order to be a blessing. ■