

I. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel According to Zechariah
“The Man, the Message and the Ministry”
Zechariah 1:1-6
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This is the first study in our series on Zechariah and I would venture to say that not many of you have heard a series on Zechariah, let alone a sermon on it. In the first five years I was pastor at Briarwood I did do a sermon on Zechariah, but I’m hoping this is going to be a blessing for you. I know it's been a blessing for me in preparation for it and anticipating it. I do believe that there's a place in the discipleship ministry of a pastor to spend time in preaching topical expository messages that is, having themes and topics and then going to text of Scripture that are foundational to that theme or topic. I do believe that overall, the balance and the penetration of God's Word is best served by the overall steady diet of just expositional preaching, whereby you consecutively work through texts of Scripture. I think you're going to see that very fact in the Book of Zachariah itself. I think you will be somewhat amazed at the themes that it uncovers for us.

I would say other than the book of Daniel, and I'm not sure if it doesn't outright outrank Daniel, the anticipation of the Gospel of Christ and it’s prophetic, apocalyptic statements that it makes concerning Christ His first and second advent, I don't think any other book in the Old Testament comes close to it unless you embrace the Psalms and understand that actually Christ is the singer of those Psalms. Otherwise, in terms of books, I don't know of another book that is so jammed with implications concerning who Christ is and what Christ does in His first and second advent.

So much of the apocalyptic literature in Revelation is drawn from the Book of Zachariah. In the opening chapter of Revelation the churches are called Lampstands and that comes right out of Zachariah. The lampstand with the two olive trees. There is so much that is built into this. There will be large chunks of Scripture that we work through. It is apocalyptic. There are eight visions that we're going to deal with now. Calvin, Spurgeon, Luther, Archibald Alexander, Samuel Miller, John Blanchard, James Boice, and R.C. Sproul all say this is the hardest book to expositionally preach in the Old Testament. Much of the reason why are because of the visions themselves and what they're saying. I actually think it gets a whole lot easier when you understand the Christo centric nature of the text and you begin to see how it is coming from and pointing to Christ and that's what I'm hoping to be able to do for you as we work our way through the text in this study.

In this study, I will give you the framework of the book. The author is Zechariah. We will look at the message he is giving, his ministry and what he is calling as he writes this particular prophetic word, the word of Zechariah. Some of this is Bible facts, but I think they're interesting, needed and will be helpful for you. The foundational and introductory material I will be sharing with you in this study will be helpful as we look at some difficult passages in this book. So let's get started into it.

Zechariah 1:1-6 says [1] *In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, [2] “The LORD was very angry with your fathers. [3] Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of*

hosts. [4] Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. [5] Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? [6] But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, 'As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.'"

These verses give us some things whereby we can identify the author and some foundational and introductory materials that we need to know and to have in order to understand not only these opening six verses, but also the visions that are going to come, the overall message and the overall burden of this book which is the calling that Zechariah has.

Now, who is this man identified as Zechariah? His message is difficult and Jesus, by His reference to Zachariah, actually makes it a little bit more difficult for us. Now, how did Jesus do that? I'll get to that in a few moments, but immediately we know his father is Berechiah and his grandfather is Iddo. We are going to be looking at other passages of Scripture that give us a little more insight into these six verses. Let's first look at Ezra for here we will see the affirmation of the Prophet Zechariah in a co-laborer, one who overlaps with him in ministry and that is Ezra, the great teacher in Israel who returned with the people from the Babylonian captivity.

Ezra 5:1-2 says [1] Now the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. [2] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

Now we're starting to get some clarity about who and when all of this is taking place. It's interesting to note that when Ezra records the ministry of Zechariah he goes to the name of his grandfather, Iddo, he doesn't even mention his father, Berechiah. So put that in the back of your mind. Yet Zechariah mentions both of them and we're told that his ministry from Ezra is right alongside of Haggai. We are also told Zechariah is ministering in the context of the appointed governor of Israel when they were sent back from the Babylonian captivity by the Medo-Persian King Cyrus. We know when all of this happens and I'll get to that in a minute but one of the things that we see here are other individuals that you need to know were at work and in ministry in the restoration of the remnant of Israel that came back from the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Who are some of these people? There are three key leaders in the post-exilic, which is after the exile leadership to oversee the remnant that returned from the Babylonian captivity back to Israel, specifically in the land of Judah and around Jerusalem. The three leaders are Zerubbabel, Joshua or Jeshua and Ezra. You can almost see the three branches of our government here, but not quite. There is the administrative executive leadership, the governor and that's Zerubbabel. Then there is the worship leadership, a teacher/preacher and that's Ezra. Ezra is the man who gave himself to know the Word of God and teach it with all of his heart which we are told in the book of Ezra. Then there is a high priest named Joshua so if the temple is to be rebuilt and sacrifices reestablished you have to have a high priest that comes from the line of Aaron and we will meet him again in the book of Zechariah.

There will be someone who will replace Zerubbabel when his tenure as governor comes to an end and the Lord brings him to Himself. He will be replaced by a very high ranking Jewish exile who is in the upper courts of the Medo-Persian Empire. In fact, he serves under a king by the name of Artaxerxes. He is head of he is head of security. He is an advisor. He is a counselor

and strategist. He's called a cup bearer. His name is Nehemiah and he will become the new governor. His ministry is going to finish the temple, get the sacrifices started, rebuild the walls and the gate of Jerusalem. But what do we know right now? At the moment of Zechariah's prophecy, the walls have not been rebuilt. The gates have not been hung. Israel, the city of Jerusalem is a place that is dominated by overlords, renegades, partisans, zealots, and whatever nation wants to come through.

Remember, Jerusalem is the Via Maris – the road of the sea. All of the marketing and economy of the world at this time goes through here. It's the cross roads. It's a land bridge. Everything comes through there. Egypt will come up and take over and set up tax booths. The Medo-Persians will come back down, take over and set up tax booths. Interestingly, Cyrus by this time has been replaced by the next king. His name is Darius. Now, Cyrus, was a powerful king, prophesied in the major prophets as the one who will set the people free at the end of the 70 years and all of this has historically verified in the British Museum today where you can see the Cyrus Cylinder, that records his order that is actually a fulfillment of a prophetic word that is given to us. But Cyrus at the time Zechariah is writing, is no longer in power.

Cyrus, as opposed to the Babylonian king that brought Israel into captivity, did not like to capture the nations that he conquered. He preferred to leave them where they were. There were middle class businessmen and women. There were farmers. There were tenants. So he would let them keep their religion and stay where they are. That was not Nebuchadnezzar. He brought the hand of oppression down. He took the key leaders out and brought them, then he'd go back and take the next level and he went back a third time and took another level. Then he indoctrinated them in their schools and to make the point that he was in charge, he went in and would level the center of their existence, the religious centers, as he destroyed the temple and then would begin to take out all of the utensils of the temple and put them in his place. Cyrus didn't operate that way. Cyrus is going to build some goodwill as he opens the door for the remnant to return. How many returned? Somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000. How many left? Up to 2 million were put into slavery. It's only a pittance that actually returns, but Cyrus opened it up for them to return.

Cyrus is going to send them back and give them a stimulus package. He will tell them to rebuild their temple and he will give them their utensils, sacred objects and whatever has been left after the Babylonian Empire which we conquered will be returned to them. That happened in 538 B.C. and it was a fulfillment of the prophecy that they would be in slavery for 70 years. It took them a while to make the trip, to settle in and to carve out some existence in the midst of robbers, thieves, renegades, revolutionaries and political intrigue. Nothing had been done on the walls or the gates but they did get the foundation of the temple built within two years so that would be 536 B.C. Now, remember in the Old Testament, you're counting backwards.

How many of you all have ever built a house? When we built a house I remember the plans of the house and how wonderful it looked. I remember when we went over and they had poured the foundation. I remember saying to our builder Mike 'I've seen mice live in something bigger than this.' He said, "Harry, foundations look small so wait till we get the walls and everything starts getting put together. It's going to make sense." This temple would be known as the Second Temple or the Zerubbabel Temple. The first temple which was destroyed was known as the Solomonic Temple. This second temple is built close to the same place as the first but to them the foundations look so small they are sitting down and weeping.

God not only has sent back three leaders, Joshua, the high priest, Ezra, the teacher, and Zerubbabel, the governor but He has also sent three prophets – Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Zechariah is the penultimate prophet, the next to the last, the ultimate prophet from which is going to be 400 years of silence after him, is Malachi. These are the three key post-exilic prophets. The first one to start writing is Haggai and this is how I know that. The temple was started in 536 B.C.

Ezra 6:13-18 says *[13] Then, according to the word sent by Darius the king, Tattenai, the governor of the province Beyond the River, Shethar-bozenai, and their associates did with all diligence what Darius the king had ordered. [14] And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; [15] and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.* (So, from the second year down to the sixth year of the reign of King Darius, it takes them to build the temple. When Darius became king, the foundation had already been laid.)

[16] And the people of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the returned exiles, celebrated the dedication of this house of God with joy. [17] They offered at the dedication of this house of God 100 bulls, 200 rams, 400 lambs, and as a sin offering for all Israel 12 male goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. [18] And they set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their divisions, for the service of God at Jerusalem, as it is written in the Book of Moses.

So, they went back to the Pentateuch. They reinstated the sacrifices. They reinstated the Leviticus priesthood. They reinstated the high priesthood. They reinstated all of the offering systems and how the teachers, priests and Levites were to serve the people. All of that was put into place. It seems as if that our prophet Zechariah is mentioned in this context because he comes from a line of priest. In other words, this isn't definitive but the way he's listed and the way it's listed, it looks as if Zechariah is in fact in the line of the priesthood, and he comes from Berechiah and Iddo. While Zechariah affirmed his father as Berechiah and his grandfather as Iddo, why is it Berechiah is not mentioned here in Ezra? We don't know but I think it's because he died on the return trip or very soon after and so the grandfather becomes the father over Zechariah.

I want to look at Nehemiah 12 which gives us a listing of priests and Levites who have previously been installed once the Temple had been put into place, as we just read in Ezra. Here are the Levites and priest that have been installed by that time. Nehemiah 12:12-16 says *[12] And in the days of Joiakim were priests, heads of fathers' houses: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; [13] of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; [14] of Malluchi, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; [15] of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai; [16] of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam.* Notice in the days of Nehemiah, which is after that time we just read in Ezra 6 Berechiah is not mentioned but the father of Berechiah which is Iddo is mentioned who is actually the grandfather of Zechariah but when Iddo is mentioned Zechariah is put in the position of son to Iddo in the context of the priesthood and the Levites.

So, this prophet Zechariah has a dual calling. This is going to drastically affect the way he writes. He is not only a prophet called of God to bring forth the Divine revelation of God's Word, but he is also a priest who intercedes between God and the people by the appointment from a family of Levitical priests. So that's what we find out about our author, about this man. There are three kings that are carrying out and affecting everything during this time. There is Cyrus who sent them back, Darius who is carrying out Cyrus's order and then there is Artaxerxes the first and later Artaxerxes the second. It is those who will greatly affect Nehemiah.

There is one thing that doesn't come out immediately here that you need to understand and that is during the years of Darius a war had broken out between the Medo-Persian Empire and another empire that had been defeated but was trying to reestablish itself and that was the empire in Egypt. They were moving northward and coming into battle. Where would the Medo-Persian Empire and the Egyptian empire meet? They're going to meet right in Israel. What does Darius do? Darius is carrying out everything that Cyrus said, except for one thing. He is now imposing heavy taxes. I've actually been on an archeological hill where the written decrees were found in that archeological dig of the taxations that were issued forth from Darius upon Israel to pay for the war with Egypt under the guise 'it's your protection money. You pay for our army so that we can protect you.' But actually he says "I'm going to take your money to pay for the army so that I can defeat Egypt" and that's what he is doing.

Let's go back to Zechariah 1:1 which says [1] ***In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying...*** There are two things here I want you to see in this text. Who else is prophesied at the same time as Zechariah? It is Haggai and his book is just to the right of Zechariah. Why is Haggai in front of Zachariah? It is because Haggai writes first. Haggai's ministry starts two months before Zechariah's. Look at the bold above as we look at Haggai. Haggai 1:1 says [1] ***In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.***

What are we seeing here? We are seeing that Haggai takes up his pen first and that Haggai and Zechariah overlap. If you study the book of Haggai you will find out that he only had a four month ministry. How long was Zechariah's ministry? We don't know and though Haggai started the prophetic ministry for the remnant that had returned first, and Zachariah overlaps his four month ministry, it looks like Zechariah has a longer ministry that ended in martyrdom. How do we know that? It is because of Jesus. When Jesus lets us know that Jesus presents us a little bit of a problem. I will get to that problem toward the conclusion of this study but before I do, I want to make one more point from this.

The ministry of Zechariah began in the second year of Darius which would have been 536 B.C. Israel returned in 538 B.C. so they have been there two years and the foundation is complete but the temple is not up yet. The sacrifices haven't started yet. Zechariah writes on that eighth month and in our calendar October 20th 536 B.C. Haggai's calendar would have been August, two months earlier. So, Haggai starts first and then comes Zechariah and they both have the same basic ministry. Both were under the same king, Darius and this is the first time that God's Word is not dated by the kings of Israel. In fact, from here to the New Testament, the dating of God's Word will be by the kings of the world. Christmas is right around the corner and the Gospel of Luke is dated by Caesar Augustus, Quirinius the governor. After the exile, no longer is the kingly line affirmed in Israel in the Word of God to date the books. But there is coming a King in which all of the calendars of the world are going to be dated, and that's Jesus when He comes. He will lead us into this world and the kings of this world as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. It is that King that Zechariah brings our attention to in his epistle that we call the Book of Zechariah.

What is Zechariah's message? We will look closer at his message in the coming studies. He has a very powerful message. The burden of his message, like all the prophets, he is bringing a lawsuit against God's people and calling them to repent. In the next study we'll learn from Zechariah why we need to repent of our sins and what happens if we don't repent of our sins?

You might be thinking “Pastor, I'm already saved. Why do I need to repent?” We repent of our sins to establish our relationship in sanctification of intimacy. Our general repentance is something that causes us to turn from sin to the Savior but in sanctification, according to our catechism, it is the particular repentance of particular sins, particularly so that we have an unhindered intimacy with Christ our Lord. It is that repentance that He is going to call the leadership and the people through the Prophet Zechariah, the Prophet Haggai, and even more pointedly through the Prophet Malachi. They are not going to repent and there's going to be now not 70 years of judgment in captivity but 400 years of silence.

So, Zechariah is calling them to repentance, but it's not simply a negative call. It's a negative call that comes with a challenge. It comes with a challenge that they would be encouraged to be about the building of the temple. When they look at it and say, ‘Oh, how small it is’ then Haggai and Zechariah are both going to say, I paraphrase, “Do not despise the day of small things. This temple's glory shall be greater than the Solomonic temple.” When we study that in Zechariah, it will almost feel like getting saved all over again through the fulfillment of that vision that given to Haggai and Zechariah that this small temple will have greater glory than the Solomonic temple. It will have greater glory than the Solomonic temple, but we have a record in the Solomonic Temple of the Shekinah glory of God filling the Holy of Holies. There is no record of the Shekinah glory of God filling the Second Temple, the Zerubbabel temple. Then how can it possibly have a greater glory than the Solomonic temple? So it's a call to repentance and a call of encouragement. It is a call of exhortation to be about the business of the Lord.

Here is a general outline of the Book of Zechariah. It's a very simple. The introduction is Zechariah 1:1-6. Then comes the main thrust of the prophetic book. The first section are the eight visions given to Zechariah in Zechariah chapters 1:7-6:15. Zechariah chapters 7 and 8 are the two Divine Interrogatives – the two Divine questions that are to be answered. Zechariah chapters 9 through 12 are a collection of the sermons of Zechariah, the prophetic burdens of Zechariah as a preacher. This message will be one of encouragement, exhortation, an expectation of repentance, and an anticipation and expectation of the first and second advent of Christ. This teaching focus comes to a conclusion by pointing out that the ministry of Zechariah is this prophetic call to repentance, this prophetic exhortation, this prophetic expectation of a Christ centered covenant, people of God, and specifically to rebuild the Temple of God. The prophetic call to the Temple of God to rebuild it is the highway to the focus upon the Messiah in His Incarnation and then His second coming.

I want to finish by addressing the comments I made earlier about Jesus Himself. Let's look at Matthew 23. One of the primary challenges to the inerrancy of Scripture has to do with Zechariah, and I will give my perhaps inadequate but hopefully appropriate answer to that challenge. We don't know when Zechariah's ministry ended other than his death and we don't know when he died, but we do know where and how he died. We know that from Jesus himself.

Matthew 23:29-36 says [29] “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, [30] saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ [31] Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. [32] Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. [33] You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? [34] Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, [35] so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth (the first murder in the Bible is Abel), from the blood of

righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. [36] Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Here we know Zechariah was a martyr at the hands of the leadership, we just don't know when. We do know he was murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. A lot of people say Jesus got mixed up here. They say there is an error here when Jesus says he was murdered between the sanctuary and the altar because another place it says Zechariah was murdered in the courtyard of the sanctuary, but he was not the son of Barachiah so this is another Zechariah. If you do a search of Zechariah you will find 29 different Zechariahs in the Old Testament. Here's one that was murdered by the leadership in 800 B.C., almost 300 years before the death of this Zechariah.

I want to show you the record of this from II Chronicles 24:20-22 which says [20] *Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, "Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.'"* [21] *But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD. [22] Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge!"*

This is a different Zechariah. These that think Jesus made an error think Jesus just got carried away in His sermon and got mixed up. So they would say either Jesus got mixed up or the Scripture didn't record it correctly and thus becomes the argument. I have a different solution to this. Number one, I don't think Jesus gets mixed up. Secondly, I don't think that He is mixed up at all here because He is giving a definite timeline. What is Jesus talking about? He is talking about the martyrs of His servants from whom? From Abel to Zechariah the first and last of the Old Testament. He's not talking about some Zechariah at 800 B.C. because His whole purpose is to give the two ends of martyrdom in the Old Testament. So I would suggest to you that the word was out that they're going to kill Zechariah, son of Barachiah and I think everyone knew the records in the Chronicles. There was another Zechariah who was a priest and a prophet. Let me tell you what we did to him. Let's do it again. You'll find repetition like that of the actions of both righteousness and evil throughout the Scripture. In fact, all Jesus said was he was murdered. He doesn't say he was murdered by stoning or something else but just he was murdered and he was killed there outside of the outside of the sanctuary. I think the same thing that happened to the Zechariah in II Chronicles 24 is the same thing that happened to Zechariah, the son of Barachiah. They were both killed, in the same place, and had the same credentials so he was killed as well.

I just want you to see that Jesus is not mixed up but He is giving us the first martyr and the last martyr of righteousness in the Old Testament and brings where the responsibility was laid which was on the leaders who would rather have the traditions of men than the Word of God. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. God, guide us as we study this marvelous prophetic Word from what I'm enjoying calling the Gospel according to Zechariah, as we now understand the man who is writing, the ministry of the man and the message as we do the dive into the message itself. May we see and hear Jesus, in Jesus' Name, to Whom we give praise, Amen.