

The Gospel of Zechariah

Zechariah 7





Redemptive History





Darius: Chronology of the Persian Period¹

Persian King	Dates	Biblical Correlation	Context
Cyrus	539-530	Declaration of Cyrus (539) Return of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 1-3)	Stirred up to rebuild the temple
Cambyses	530-522	Rebuilding at Jerusalem stopped (Ezra 4)	Discouraged and afraid to rebuild
Darius I	522-486	Haggai and Zechariah prophecy (520) Zechariah prophecy (518) Temple completed (516) (Ezra 5-6)	Rebuilding of the Temple begins again
Xerxes	486-464	Story of Esther (Esther 1-9)	
Artaxerxes I	464-423	Return of Ezra (458) (Ezra 7-10) Return of Nehemiah (445) (Nehemiah 1-2) Prophecy of Malachi (433)	

1. Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament, John H. Walton, 1994, p. 70



Gospel of Zechariah (Themes)

Call to repentance

Return of YHWH

Restoration of the temple

The coming of the branch

Coming judgement on the nations

Day of the Lord



Zechariah 7:1-14

7:1 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. 2 Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD, 3 saying to the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, “Should I weep and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?”

4 Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: 5 “Say to all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? 6 And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? 7 Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?’”

8 And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, 9 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, 10 do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” 11 But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. 13 “As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts, 14 “and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”



the word of Yahweh came

In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. (Zechariah 7:1 ESV)

- the word of Yahweh came
 - introduction to the second part of Zechariah
 - a new series of prophecies and not visions
 - but building on the themes of the earlier prophecies and visions
- fourth year
 - Zechariah 2:7 - On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the **second year of Darius**, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying (ESV)
 - Ezra 6:15 - 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.
 - the temple was completed four years after the visions of Zechariah
 - these prophecies take place during the rebuilding of the temple



Summary Title

Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men to entreat the favor of the LORD (Zechariah 7:2 ESV)

- Bethel
 - tough to translate, is it
 - proper name - Bethel-Sharezer
 - where do he and his companions come from (Babylon?)
 - Bethel - resettled after the exile (Ezra 2:28)
 - Bethel - house of God (literal)
 - older translations - sent to the 'house of God' (i.e. the temple)
 - most likely, sent from Bethel
 - from the House of God (Bethel) to the 'house of the Yawheh of hosts' (Zechariah 7:3)
 - contrast?
- entreat the favor of Yahweh
 - offer sacrifice
 - seek answer to a question



weep and abstain

saying to the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, “Should I weep and abstain in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?” (Zechariah 7:3 ESV)

- priest ... and ... prophets
 - no clear answer in the word
 - seeking guidance from the law (priests) and the prophets
 - looking for clarity
- weep and abstain ... for so many years
 - fifth month - the destruction of the temple 70 years before
 - practice of the people while in exile
- questions?
 - what is abstaining?
 - why did they weep?
 - why are they asking this question now?

Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me (Zechariah 7:4 ESV)



Summary Title

- Zechariah 7:1
 - Introduction to this new section of the book
- Zechariah 7:4
 - Yahweh's response to this question goes deep
 - Yahweh calls on his people to reflect on the motivation of their hearts
 - What is the calling of God's covenant people?
 - To restore the temple was an act of repentance, to return to Yahweh
 - What does a life of repentance look like?



was it for me

Say to all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? (Zechariah 7:5 ESV)

- all the people of the land and the priests
 - the answer is directed to all of God's people
 - and the priests
 - everyone needs to hear and understand
- seventh month - another fast regarding the murder of Gedaliah (Jeremiah 7:40 and 41)
- was it for me?
 - a sobering question
 - when you cried out, wept, deprived yourself of food, was it true repentance?
 - did you fast and weep because you are truly broken over your sin or because you are suffering the covenant curses?
- what about us, today?
 - why do we attend worship?
 - why do we pray?
 - we do we read the word?



for yourselves

And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves? (Zechariah 7:6 ESV)

- question of comparison
 - you eat and drink for our own physical needs
 - were you not fasting and mourning for the same reason, yourself
- or, live focused on on ourselves
 - 1 Corinthians 10:31 - So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (ESV)
 - everything you do is focused on yourselves, so why would your weeping and mourning be any different
- in either case, it is not a favorable comment regarding the people's motivation for obedience



former prophets

Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous, with her cities around her, and the South and the lowland were inhabited?”
(Zechariah 7:7 ESV)

- reflect
 - the former prophets warned the people about faithlessness
 - the people were largely exiled for their idolatry
 - but idolatry begins in the heart
- inhabited and prosperous
 - look around
 - see the desolation still remaining
 - see the empty towns and countryside
 - remember the result of empty obedience
 - will you follow the same path?
- will we follow the same path?
 - obedience begins with a repentant heart ... that is one that is turned toward God
- what does a repentant, faithful people look like?



kindness and mercy

- word of Yahweh
 - reminder of Yahweh's commands
- render true judgments
 - legal judgments - fair and true with concern for those involved
 - the heart of these judgments is love for neighbor
- show kindness and mercy to one another
 - our relationship to God is reflected clearly in our treatment of each other
 - how we treat others is a window to motivations of our hearts
 - the relationships of God's covenant people is indicative of the health of our faith
- do not oppress (the weakest members of society)
 - the widow - with little or no means of support
 - the fatherless - no safety or security
 - the sojourner - no property or legal standing
- devise evil
 - how can we devise evil against our own brothers and sisters in the Lord?

And the word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." (Zechariah 7:8-10 ESV)



might not hear

But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. (Zechariah 7:11 ESV)

- they
 - transition from commands of Yahweh to the people
 - reflection on their fathers
 - they were given the same message
- refused to pay attention
 - intentional defiance
 - ignored the covenant curses
- turned a stubborn shoulder
 - like someone turning away from the speaker
 - intentionally refusing the prophets
 - like a young child or an animal
- stopped their ears
 - would not even listen to the message
 - prevented themselves from even hearing
- descriptive language



diamond-hard

- made their hearts
 - intense language
 - intentionally impenetrable to God's word
- law and words sent through the former prophets
 - law and prophets - hardened against all of God's word
 - reflects Zechariah 7:3 - priests and the prophets
- Yahweh of hosts
 - authority and power
- Spirit
 - word of warning from the prophets was clearly from God
- anger
 - reminder of the consequences of hardened hearts

They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 7:12 ESV)

As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says the LORD of hosts, (Zechariah 7:13 ESV)



I would not hear

- as I called, and they would not hear
 - they refused to listen
- so they called, and I would not hear
 - God does not hear their cries for mercy
- a terrifying prospect
 - God refusing to hear the prayers of his people in judgment



with a whirlwind

“and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.” (Zechariah 7:14 ESV)

- scattered them
 - image of leaves and debris being tossed by violent winds
- among all the nations
 - exiled from the promised land as exiles, conquered by a pagan people
- desolate
 - the promised land destroyed and empty
 - the covenant people no longer occupying it
- the pleasant land ... made desolate
 - the tangible promise of God became a monument of the people's faithlessness and God's judgment



What about us?

- Zechariah 8 - The hope of the Gospel
- But, a word of warning to us
 - never forget the faithlessness of our fathers
 - look at our own hearts and continuously repent
 - receive his word in faith, cling to Jesus Christ, and live lives of grateful obedience
 - 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-4 ESV)