

ZECHARIAH

Text: Zechariah 1:1-6

INTRO: We have come to the second to last book in the section of Scripture known as the minor prophets. It is the book of Zechariah. The name 'Zechariah' means, 'Jehovah Remembers.' One writer says that the significance of the meaning of his name is that which the book is all about, 'Jehovah remembers His people.' Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest. A prophet could come out of any tribe, but not so a priest. A priest had to be of the tribe of Levi. Verse 1 gives us some information on this (read).

Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi were prophets that ministered to those Jewish people who came back to Israel after the Babylonian exile. As you will remember a number of the other prophets wrote specifically to the northern and southern kingdoms to depart from sin or they would be punished. They failed, and the northern kingdom suffered exile in 722 BC and the southern kingdom in 586 BC. Zechariah and Haggai both ministered around 518-520 BC. That is just before the end of the 70 year captivity.

As you remember from the book of Haggai, the Jews had returned about 18 years before he wrote and they had begun to rebuild the temple, but great opposition had effectively shut the effort down. Let me say this, if your spiritual life is not in order and you make effort to do so, you will receive great spiritual opposition. Well, both Haggai and Zechariah write to encourage the Jews to complete the construction of the temple. If I understand these books right, God should not have to remind the Jews to rebuild the temple. It is a given that when they are in the land they ought to know it is their number one priority.

Let me take you to the NT for a sad verse on the prophet Zechariah (Matt. 23:34-35). In the end the Jews failed to heed Zechariah's message. He met the same end so many other prophets met, including the last two, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

Now, the book of Zechariah is a book loaded with important prophecies. As I outline the book it has three sections. The first is very brief and goes from 1:1-1:6. Look at 1:1 to see how it begins. The second goes from 1:7-6:15. Look at 1:7 to see how this section begins. The third section goes from 7:1-14:21 and we see how it starts in 7:1 (read).

I. SECTION 1 (1:1-6)

The first section of this book, which is a brief six verses long, begins with its introduction in verse 1 which we have read already. So let us read verses 2-6 (read). What we have here is a call to repentance. God warns them not to be like their forefathers before the exile. He had warned them over and over and they had failed. And God reminds them that their forefathers are gone, but His Word is not gone. It remains and has not changed. If the disobedience of their forefathers met with judgment, they must take note that they must face judgment as well. And the people said, "God has done as He has said." They recognized the truth of the prophet's concern.

From this we need to learn that if God did as He said He would to Israel back then, and He has done as He said He would on many other occasions then He will do as He said He would to all others as well. Eric Hovund reminded us of 2 Peter 3:3-4 which says, "... knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." Will He come? Will many be left behind? Yes. And Eric reminded us that these people are scoffers, not because of science but because of --? Sin!

II. SECTION 2 (1:7-6:15)

That brings us to the second message. Look at verse 7 (read). This message has 8 or 9 visions, depending on how you view them. I give this section as having 8 visions. Verse 7 tells us that these visions came to him on the 24th day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat.

A. The Visions (1:8-6:8)

1. Vision 1 (1:8-17)

Let us begin by reading these verses (read 1:8-17). I will give just a very brief commentary on each of these visions. We are at about the year

520 BC. We have three parties involved in these verses. There is the rider on the red horse, the angel that speaks with Zechariah and Zechariah.

I do not understand the significance of all of the parts of this vision. However, it is generally viewed that the Rider of the red horse is the pre-incarnate Christ. Behind Him are horses, red, speckled and white. Zechariah has the same question we have, "Oh my Lord, what is the significance of these?" And Zechariah is told that these are those sent to walk to and fro in the earth.

It seems then that the angel of the Lord asks, I suppose the riders of these horses, though we are not told that they all had riders; What have you been doing and what have you found? And in verse 11, they answer, "We have walked to and fro in the earth, and behold, all the earth sits still and is at rest." At this point, Israel is nearing the end of the 70 year captivity. Jerusalem has come under the dominion of Gentile powers. Israel has been defeated and the world is at rest.

Could we draw the conclusion that when God's people are in defeat, the war between God and Satan rests? Why, today, is the Church being persecuted? As long as Christians are Christians, there is no rest. When Christians lay down their battle, persecution comes to an end. In 1948 Israel became a nation again. God began to work in that land once more and the world has not been at rest since. Zechariah will tell us more about this later in his book.

Well, Jerusalem and Judah have been defeated and they have lain in waste for a long time. Then the angel of the Lord spoke to the rider of the Red horse and asked, "How long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and Judah, against whom You have been angry these 70 years." And verse 13 says the Lord spoke good and comfortable words to him. No doubt He assured him that the indignation for now was almost to an end.

When the rider of the red horse was done talking to the angel, the angel said to Zechariah, "Cry and say, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction.'" God had used the heathen to deal with Israel, but the heathen in turn had abused Israel and God's anger against them was far greater now than against Israel.

In verse 16, the Lord says He has returned to Jerusalem with mercies. And He says, "My house shall be built in Jerusalem again. The tape measure will come out and the building will begin again." The Lord also says that Judah would prosper again, and the Lord would comfort Zion and yet choose Jerusalem." I think again we probably have both a far and near fulfillment to this prophecy. Jerusalem prospered again after this, but it was from this point forward always dominated by Gentiles. Even today, with Israel in their land once more, the Gentiles dominate. That will not change until the end of the tribulation, when the Lord returns to set up His kingdom and the whole world will be dominated from Jerusalem.

2. Vision 2 (1:18-21)

a. Part 1 (18-19)

I view verses 18-21 as one vision with two parts. Some may see them as two separate visions. If that is correct, then there would be nine. In part one we have four horns (read 18-19). Horns in many Scriptures speak of power. Zechariah asks what these four horns are and is told that they are those powers that have scattered Judah and Israel and Jerusalem. The four powers that scattered Israel were Babylon, Media and Persia, Greece and Rome. That is history.

b. Part 2 (20-21)

In the second part of this vision we have four carpenters. We find this in verses 20-21 (read). Gill says the word translated carpenters could refer to workers in wood or in metal. However one takes it, they are skilled workers who use their tools to dismantle, piece by piece the four world powers. That is what happened to these four powers. While one was ascending world dominion, another was already being formed to dismantle it. It was glory one day and demise the next. What is amazing that today Israel is once more a nation. This can never be said of the four world powers that once existed.

The first world power, described for us in the book of Daniel was Babylonia. Babylon achieved world supremacy 626 years before Christ. The end of this empire is also described for us in the book of Daniel when the handwriting appeared on the wall and the Medes and Persians ascended to world dominion in 539 BC. The first carpenters had achieved their work in a mere 87 years. While the Medes and Persians ruled, another carpenter went to work and they had whittled away at this kingdom and it fell in 109 years. We are now at 63 BC and this is where Rome conquered Greece, the previous world ruler. Rome ruled about 540 years. We know from the NT that Rome was in power in Jesus day. But all four powers fell and there has never been another world power, and there won't be until the antichrist comes and that is not far away.

3. Vision 3 (2:1-13)

That brings us to Zechariah's third vision. We find the content of this vision in 2:1. Let us begin by reading 2:1-5 (read). Here is another vision with regard to Jerusalem. The tape measure is out. Jerusalem is about to be rebuilt.

Now look at verses 6-9 (read). Here we have the promise of the regathering of Israel. There has never been a regathering of the Jews like there has been in the last 100 years! Even today, Jews

are being regathered from various parts of the world. I have told you about the Ethiopian Jews. This year Israel plans the completion of the return of these black Jews. There is a tribe of Jews returning from India today. And Jews are returning individually from all over the world. This is a living miracle today.

This vision closes with an incredible message. Israel is called to rejoice (read 10-13). God promises to come and dwell in their midst. Not only that, many nations would join them and they would all know that the Lord of hosts had sent Him. The Lord will inherit Judah, His portion in the holy land and He will choose Jerusalem again. It is so awesome that all flesh is called on to be silent before the Lord. As I see it, this is speaking of the millennium.

4. Vision 4 (3:1-10)

Our next vision is found in 3:1-10 (read). Joshua the High Priest stands representing Israel. It is worthy of note that the Hebrew name 'Joshua' and the Greek name, Iesus, or our English Jesus are all the same name. Joshua is Jesus (See Heb. 4:8).

In our text Joshua stands there in filthy garb. I think the indication is the temple has been defiled and has not yet been cleansed. And Satan stands there at his right hand to accuse him. There is a whole doctrine here that needs expounding. Not only was Satan an accuser of Joshua. He ever stands there to accuse the believer as well. If Joshua is accepted by God in this vision after the accusations of Satan are done, all will be well for Israel. Well, we find that the Lord Himself takes care of the dirty clothes. We must note here that the Lord still does the same for those who repent of their sins and receive Christ as their Savior.

And so here, if Joshua is accepted, Satan's accusations have been rejected. When Joshua is cleansed, Satan is rejected. We need to remember here that as long as we are dirtied by some sin,

Satan has some hold in us too. So look at 3:4 (read). We must note here that in order for Joshua to be cleansed the temple had to be back in order, and that is what will take place and there Satan loses. May I mention here for us, that for us, who are in the Church age, we need to have our church life in order.

Consider now verses 8 (read). The Lord says the people sitting before Joshua are for a sign. These people are the Jews. The fact that they are still in existence as a people is a sign. If they had ceased to exist, it would have been a sign that the Branch, the Messiah would not come. But as long as the Jews are in existence, He will come, because He comes from them. So Jesus said to the woman at the well in John 4, "Salvation is of the Jews."

We go now to verses 9-10 (read). What we have in view is that a day is coming when God will remove the iniquity of Israel in one day. No doubt this refers to the day when Israel comes to Him at the end of the tribulation, of which Zechariah will tell us more later.

God gave Israel seven feasts. Four of those have been fulfilled; Passover, Unleavened Bread, First-fruits and Pentecost. Three are yet to be fulfilled; trumpets, the day of atonement and booths or tabernacles. The feast of trumpets will be fulfilled when Jesus comes back to earth. When Israel sees Him return and the prints in His hands they will mourn and they will repent and be saved. That will fulfill the day of atonement. It happens in one day. Following that event, the millennium begins and this will fulfill the feast of booths or tabernacles.

5. Vision 5 (4:1-14)

That brings us to chapter 4 and vision 5. Let us read verses 1-4 (read). In this vision Zechariah sees a seven branched lamp-stand made of gold. The description here is of the lamp-stand which was made for the temple. On either side of the

lamp-stand was an olive tree. The olive tree supplied the oil for the lamp-stand.

Well, Zechariah wanted to know what this vision is all about. The angel is surprised that he does not know and he explains first the lamp stands. Maybe this should have been obvious to him but he does not understand. So let us read 5-10 (read). Israel's temple will be rebuilt, but it will not be by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Before Zerubbabel, all difficulties would become easy. Zerubbabel would bring forth the capstone, the final stone in the temple. It would be finished. This would happen literally in the days of Zerubbabel but, it may speak prophetically of yet another day in the future. And the establishment of it will all be of grace, as all of salvation is.

Zechariah now questions the meaning of the two olive trees. So look at verses 11-14 (read). I believe these trees speak of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation. Let me just quickly and briefly tell you what the book of Revelation teaches about this as I interpret it. For this we go to Revelation 11 (read 3-4). There has been much speculation about who these two witnesses are but it usually comes down to either Moses and Elijah or Enoch and Elijah. Either way, these two witnesses draw millions of people to Jerusalem and hundreds of thousands of people repent and turn from their wicked ways. Revelation 7 says that the number saved through these two witnesses and the 144,000 Jewish elite is innumerable. Now consider what happens to these two witnesses in verses 5-11 (read).

CONCL: Well, we have looked at section I which took us from 1:1-6. It is a call for Israel to repent. Then we began section II. This begins in 1:7 and here we are given first, seven visions. The first vision is of the rider on the red horse and three other horses; red, speckled and white. Israel has been defeated and the world is at rest. But this vision closes with a promise that Jerusalem will be rebuilt. The second vision I gave in two parts. The first part had four horns, representing the four world powers which scattered Israel. Then came four carpenters who

dismantled these four world powers. Vision 3 speaks of the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the regathering of Israel. Vision 4 shows us Joshua the High Priest and his dirty clothes which are replaced, speaking of the restoration of the temple. It also speaks of Israel being saved in one day. This is yet future and will happen at the end of the tribulation. Vision 5 gave us the picture of the lamp stand and the two olive trees. We saw the fulfillment of this in the book of Revelation. These two olive trees will provide spiritual light during the first 3 and 1/2 years of the tribulation, where millions of people will get saved according to Revelation 7.

So, we will continue with these visions next message.