

The Book of Zechariah

Lesson 1

Zechariah is the longest, and usually considered the most difficult of all the Minor Prophets. Jewish scholar Solomon ben Isaac, better known as Rashi (1040-1105) wrote:

“The prophecy is very abstruse for it contains visions resembling dreams which want interpreting; and we shall never be able to discover the true interpretations until the teacher of righteousness arrives.”

The book is closely related to the New Testament. Zechariah 9-14 is the most quoted section of the prophets in the passion narratives of the Gospels.

The Prophet himself:

Zechariah means “Jehovah Remembers”.

Haggai was “the old man” and Zechariah was probably a young man from a priestly family.

Recommended Commentaries on Zechariah

John Calvin’s commentary on the Minor Prophets

A good contemporary commentary is by Thomas McComiskey (Baker Academic).

LITERATURE

Zechariah is what most scholars consider of the Apocalyptic genre

DATE

Interestingly, there are exact dates given right in the book. He began to prophesy 2 months after Haggai (compare Hag. 1:15 with Zech. 1:1). Ezra mentions them as the two Prophets who encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 5:1, 6:14).

HISTORY

We need to understand the historical context to unravel the meaning of this book. The Jews had gone into the 70 year Babylonian captivity but now were beginning to return to their own land. **Ezra 1:1-4**

A basic understanding of the first part of Book of Ezra helps in unfolding Zechariah.

A Basic Outline of Ezra’s first 6 chapters

1-2 – The exiles return to rebuild the Temple.

3 – Rebuilding begins (**Ezra 3:10-13**) **important – remember this**

4 – Rebuilding is hindered and opposed

5 – Rebuilding resumes (**see 5:1-2** -- ministries of Haggai and Zechariah)

6 – Rebuilding completed

HAGGAI

2 Months before Zechariah, with the Temple work having stopped, Haggai begins to minister.

Haggai 1:1-2 – This sets the exact date at 520 B.C.

History:

King Cyrus conquered Babylon (Judah's captors) in 538 B.C. and in that same year issued the decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. He ruled the empire from 538-530. Jerusalem was in shambles. Rebuilding the Temple was a long, difficult and dangerous project. Only a handful of Jews had returned – many remained in their new home. The foundation of the Temple was completed (Ezra 3:10) 2 years after Cyrus gave his decree – but nothing more would be done on the Temple for the next 15 years.

The death of Cyrus in 530 brought a lot of turmoil, war and upheaval to the world for the next 9 years.

Finally, in 521, Darius, an officer in the Persian Army laid claim to the throne. It took a full two years, battling and putting down major insurrections, but he finally brought peace and great stability to the known world. He ruled the Persian Empire from 521-486 (35 years!) Darius not only encouraged the Temple to be rebuilt, but actually helped to fund the project which was completed in 516 BC .

Haggai 1:3-11 – The people were not prospering in the land.

Haggai 1:12-2:5 -- This Temple would prove to be a glorious place after all. Before the time of Christ, Herod would give it a complete makeover. About 545 years after the time of Zechariah – the Lord finally came to His Temple -- **John 2:13-22**

REPENT OF YOUR WICKED WAYS -- Zechariah 1:1-6

I. The Exact Timing of the “Word of the Lord” 1:1

II. The Anger of the Lord 1:2-6

1. God's anger with their fathers – the reason for the captivity v. 2
2. Return to Me and I will return to you. v. 3
3. The failure of their fathers re-emphasized v. 4
4. The stark reality of the fathers and the prophets v. 5-6a
5. The sure word of prophecy v. 6b