

ZECHARIAH ARGUMENT

Introductory Matters

Title¹

The title of the book is derived from the work's principal prophetic spokesperson. The Hebrew title of the book is *Zekar-yah*, which means "God remembers" or "Yahweh has remembered."² This meaning is consistent with the book's contents that focus upon God's future program for national Israel on account of His covenanted promises to the nation's forefathers. Both the LXX and the Vulgate entitle the book *Zacharias*.

Authorship³

Both the book itself (1:1) as well as universal Jewish and Christian tradition indicates that Zechariah was the writer of the entire work. However, some who challenge the book's unity contend that chapters 9–14 should be assigned a pre-exilic date on account of Matthew's attribution of this material to Jeremiah (Zech 11:12-13; Matt 27:9-10). In actuality, Matthew is merging material from both Jeremiah (18:2; 19:2, 11; 32:6-9) and Zechariah and attributing it to the older and better-known prophet Jeremiah.⁴ Others questioning the book's unity contend that chapters 9–14 were written as late as the Hellenistic (331–167 B.C.) or Maccabean period (167–73 B.C.). At least four arguments are used to advance this position. However, most of these arguments seem answerable.

¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1983), 289.

² Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 416.

³ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 289.

⁴ Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody, 1964; reprint, Chicago: Moody, 1994), 472-73.

First, chapters 9–14 exhibit different linguistic and stylistic characteristics in comparison to the rest of the book. However, these differences can be explained in terms of a change in subject matter and a later composition by the same writer.⁵ Second, this latter section fails to mention the reconstruction of the temple. However, this section is not obligated to mention items associated with the struggles of the original audience since it represents futuristic prophecy.

Third, the existence of the word “Greece” (9:13) argues for a later date when the Greek empire had come into existence. However, this argument collapses upon the realization that this same word also appears in several pre-exilic and exilic prophetic writings (Isa 66:19; Ezek 27:13, 19; Dan 8:21; 10:20). Interestingly, Persian troops consisted largely of Greek mercenaries. Also, this objection betrays an anti-supernatural bias against predictive prophecy since 9:13 could be predicting the future activity of Greece. Fourth, it is contended that the Book of Zechariah represents an “apocalyptic genre” that did not flourish until the second century. However, the book’s apocalyptic features do not demand a second century date since these same characteristics are also found in the exilic prophets Daniel and Ezekiel. Further arguments favoring the unity of the book include the commonality of phrases in both sections of Zechariah (2:10, 9:15; 8:6, 12:4; 1:7, 9:1; 1:17, 12:1), a similar evangelistic fervor found throughout the entire book, and the similarity of the book’s entire message to that of the post-exilic prophet Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14).⁶

As far as Zechariah’s biography is concerned, his name was a common one since at least 29 other Old Testament figures bear this same name. He was the son of Berechiah (1:1). Because he was called into the ministry as a mere youth (2:4; Jer 1:6-7), he was likely born during the

⁵ Charles H. Dyer and Eugene H. Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, Swindoll Leadership Library, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2001), 820.

⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), 294.

Babylonian captivity and taken to the land of Israel with his grandfather Iddo (1:1, 7) during the first return (Neh 12:4, 16; Ezra 5:1, 6:14). Because Iddo was a priest (Neh 12:1, 4, 16), Zechariah, like Jeremiah (1:1) and Ezekiel (1:3), was from the tribe of Levi and occupied the roles of both prophet and priest. This priestly background would explain Zechariah’s natural interest in the temple. According to tradition, Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue. This august body governed the Jews prior to the advent of the Sanhedrin and collected and preserved the Old Testament canon.

Scope

The book’s key chronological markers are delineated on the following chart.

Scripture	Scriptural Date	Date
1:1	8 th month, 2 nd year of Darius	10 or 11/520 B.C.
1:7	24 th day, 11 th month, 2 nd year of Darius	2/15/519 B.C.
7:1	4 th day, 9 th month, 4 th year of Darius	12/17/518 B.C.

The first date took place two months after Haggai’s first message (Hag 1:1). The second date took place two months after Haggai had completed his ministry (Hag 2:10, 20). The chronological relationship between the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah is captured on the following chart.⁷

Date	Scriptural Date	Haggai	Zechariah
8/29/520	1 st day day, 6 th month, 2 nd year of Darius	1 st sermon (1:1-11; Ezra 5:1)	
9/21/520		Temple building resumed (1:12-15; Ezra 5:2)	
10/17/520	21 st day, 7 th month, 2 nd year of Darius	2 nd sermon (2:1-9)	

⁷ F. Duane Lindsey, “Zechariah,” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983), 1546.

10–11/520	8 th month, 2 nd year of Darius		Beginning of ministry (1:1-6)
12/18/520	24 th day, 9 th month, 2 nd year of Darius	3 rd and 4 th sermon (2:10-23)	
2/15/519	24 th day, 11 th month, 2 nd year of Darius		8 visions (1:7–6:8)
12/7/518	4 th day, 9 th month, 4 th year of Darius		Delegation from Bethel (7:1)
3/12/515: Temple dedicated (Ezra 6:15-18)			

Thus, the Book of Zechariah at least covers the two-year period of time in between October or November 520 B.C. and December 17, 518 B.C. However, many contend that Zechariah must have written these chapters at a later time after the temple was completed (480–470 B.C.). The basis of this view is the linguistic and subject matter distinctions found in chapters 9–14 in comparison to the rest of the book, the Greek influence found in these chapters, and the fact that they are undated. According to this theory, a four-decade period of time exists in between chapters eight and nine. If this theory holds, then the scope of the Book of Zechariah covers the time period in between (520–470 B.C.). Given this time period during which he ministered, Zechariah was a contemporary of the prophet Haggai (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), the high priest Joshua, and the governor Zerubbabel.

Date

It is likely that the book was written shortly after Zechariah experienced his visions. If chapters 9–14 were written shortly after the vision recorded in chapters 7–8, then 519–518 B.C. is the probable date for the writing of the book. If chapters 9–14 were written four decades after the vision recorded in chapters 7–8, then 470–469 B.C. is the probable date for the book’s final form.

Recipients and Place of Writing

While some of the book could have been written for the benefit of Zerubbabel (4:6-9) and Joshua (3:1; 6:9-15), the book as a whole was composed for the benefit of the 50,000 Jews who participated in the first return under Zerubbabel (7:4-7; Ezra 5:1; 6:14). The book's repeated references to the temple (1:16; 3:1-4:9; 6:9-15; 8:9, 20-23; 14:16-21) demonstrate that Jerusalem was the likely place of the book's composition.

Structure

The Book of Zechariah contains four basic sections. First, there is an introductory call to repentance (1:1-6). Second, the book records Zechariah's eight night visions that concludes with the crowning of Joshua. Each of these night visions can be enumerated by observing the repetition of an introductory verb of perception (1:8, 18; 2:1; 3:1; 4:2; 5:1, 5; 6:1). These visions can be chiastically organized.⁸

- A. The riders and horses among the myrtle trees (1:7-17)
- B. The four horns and the four craftsmen (1:18-21)
- C. The man with the measuring line (2:1-13)
- D. The cleansing of Joshua the high priest (chapter 3)
- D.' The lampstand and the olive tree (chapter 4)
- C.' The flying scroll (5:1-4)
- B.' The woman in the basket (5:5-11)
- A.' The four chariots (6:1-8)

“The heart of the structure focuses on God's restoration of His people, symbolized by the cleansing of the high priest (chapter 3) and the promise to restore the temple by His Holy Spirit (chapter 4).”⁹ The outer boundaries of the chiasm refer to God's judgment upon Israel's oppressors. Third, the book records Zechariah's inquiry to God regarding fasting (7-8). After the

⁸ Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 822.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 821.

initial inquiry (7:1-3), God's four responses to Zechariah are discernible through the repetition of the phrase "the word of the Lord came to me" (7:4, 8; 8:1, 18).

Fourth, the book records two burdens focusing upon the future of the nations and Israel (9–14). The beginning of each burden is discernible through the repetition of the phrase "the burden of the word of the Lord" (9:1; 12:1). While the first burden focuses upon the interruption of Israel's deliverance due to the nation's rejection of her Messiah (9–11), the second burden focuses upon the completion of Israel's final deliverance after she has accepted her Messiah (12–14). This final section is also chiastically structured.¹⁰

- A. God comes to protect and bless (9–10)
- B. The people reject God's shepherd (11:1-14)
- C. The worthless shepherd hurts the flock (11:15-17)
- C.' The nations come to destroy Jerusalem (12:1-9)
- B.' The people accept God's shepherd (12:10–13:6)
- A.' God comes to protect and bless (13:7–14:21)

Occasion for Writing

Zerubbabel led the first return of the Jews from Persia back to the land in 538 B.C. In 536 B.C., the returnees laid the foundation for the temple. However, in 534 B.C. the people of the land interrupted this Jewish construction of the temple (Ezra 4). Consequently, the building of the temple was stalled for nearly 15 years. During this time, not only did the wall surrounding Jerusalem lay in ruin (Neh 2:17) but the temple also lay in ruins as the returnees lived in paneled houses (Hag 1:4). During this time the people suffered from a crisis of faith due to the postponement of promised prosperity (Hag 1:6, 9-11) and the lack of divine retribution upon Israel's oppressors. In fact, because Darius of Persia asserted control over not only Persia but

¹⁰ Adapted from *Ibid.*, 827.

also Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, and the land of Israel, the ancient Near East was resting quietly under the Persian king's authority (1:11).

However, Israel's indifference over her uncompleted temple was remedied through the prophetic ministries of both Haggai (520 B.C.) and Zechariah (520–518 B.C.) who encouraged the people to finish the temple structure (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14). While Haggai exhorted the people through open rebuke, Zechariah encouraged the people by providing visions of the temple's future kingdom and messianic significance. These prophetic efforts, coupled with Darius' confirmation (519 B.C.) of Cyrus' original decree (538 B.C.) giving the Jews permission to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:3–6:12), led to the resumption of temple construction (Hag 1:14). Consequently, the temple was completed in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:13-22).

Message

Zechariah predicts the Messiah's restoration of the Jewish remnant as well as the Messiah's millennial reign from the Jerusalem temple as both priest and king in order to give the returnees hope in the challenging post-exilic world and to induce them toward covenant obedience in general and temple reconstruction in particular.

Purposes

Zechariah likely had several purposes in mind when he penned his book. First, he wrote to encourage the returnees to rebuild the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14). While Haggai and Zechariah both wrote in order to accomplish this purpose, both prophets used differing approaches in order to stimulate the remnant. While Haggai focused upon rebuke regarding the nation's covenant violations, Zechariah instead focused upon encouraging them with vision of the temple's future

kingdom and messianic purposes. Other different emphases between the two prophets are captured on the following chart.¹¹

Haggai	Zechariah
Exhortation	Encouragement
More concrete	More abstract
Concise	Expanded
Present concern	Future concern
Take part!	Take heart!
Older activist	Younger missionary

Second, Zechariah wanted to give the returnees a message of hope in the challenging postexilic world by providing a description of God’s glorious eschatological purposes for his covenanted nation. Thus, his purpose was broader than mere temple reconstruction. This point is strengthened if it is acknowledged that chapters 9–14 were written several decades after the temple had been rebuilt. Third, he wrote in order to prepare the returnees for proper temple worship after the temple was rebuilt by furnishing them with information about millennial temple worship. Fourth, he wrote in order to exhort the returnees toward general covenant obedience (1:3; 7:4-14; 8:16-17).

Theological Themes

Numerous theological themes recur throughout the Book of Zechariah. First, the book features both the First and Second Advents of the coming Messiah. Second, the book emphasizes the temple. This theme is seen not only through temple worship as the defining characteristic of covenant obedience but also through the structure’s representation as the tangible manifestation of God’s presence among His people. Third, the book focuses upon Israel’s eschatology through the prophesied restoration of the remnant, the eventual revival of the priesthood and Davidic line,

¹¹ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 291.

Zion as the future place of God's dwelling (2:10, 11; 8:3, 23), and the millennial prominence of the city of Jerusalem. Fourth, the book emphasizes Israel's position as God's elect nation (1:17; 2:12; 3:2). Fifth, the book repeatedly focuses upon the necessity of covenant obedience and renewal (1:3; 7:4-14; 8:16-17).

Unique Characteristics

The Book of Zechariah boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, the book features the continual presence of an interpreting angel in order to explain the book's influence (1:9, 13, 14, 19, 21; 4:1, 4-5; 5:5, 10; 6:4). Second, the Book of Zechariah is the lengthiest of all the Minor Prophets. Third, the book features numerous messianic prophecies. In fact, the book is second only to Isaiah in terms of its emphasis upon messianic prophecy.

Fourth, the book features a multiplicity of literary styles. Such styles include messages, burdens, oracles, and visions. Fifth, the book picks up where Daniel left off by giving even more details about the history of Israel during the "times of the Gentiles."¹² Sixth, the book furnishes voluminous details about Israel's eschatology. These details include Christ's first coming, Israel's rejection of Christ, the tribulation, Israel's future acceptance of Christ, Christ's Second Advent, and Christ's messianic kingdom. Seventh, in comparison to all the other Minor Prophets, Zechariah is the most "apocalyptic."

Eighth, the section featuring Zechariah's two burdens (9-14) is quoted more times in Christ's passion narratives than any other section of the prophets. Ninth, the Book of Zechariah is one of the most alluded to Old Testament book in John's Apocalypse. The only other two books that rival Zechariah in this regard are Daniel and Ezekiel. Tenth, the book provides a clear

¹² The previous four points were taken from *Ibid.*, 290.

example of the New Testament concept of the imputation of righteousness (3:1-5). Eleventh, the book summarizes many themes developed by previous prophets.¹³

Genre

The Book of Zechariah consists of largely apocalyptic literature. It is best to call this material canonical, prophetic, or biblical apocalyptic.¹⁴ Pentecost offers the following characteristics of biblical apocalyptic material.

Apocalyptic literature in the Bible has several characteristics: (1) In apocalyptic literature a person who received God's truths in visions recorded what he saw. (2) Apocalyptic literature makes extensive use of symbols or signs. (3) Such literature normally gives revelation concerning God's program for the future of His people Israel. (4) Prose was usually employed in apocalyptic literature, rather than poetic style which was normal in most prophetic literature.

In addition to Daniel and Revelation, apocalyptic literature is found in Ezekiel 37-48 and Zechariah 1:7-7:8. In interpreting visions, symbols, and signs in apocalyptic literature, one is seldom left to his own ingenuity to discover the truth. In most instances an examination of the context or comparison with the parallel biblical passages provides the Scriptures' own interpretation of the visions or the symbols employed. Apocalyptic literature then demands a careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture to arrive at a correct understanding of the revelation being given.¹⁵

Christ in Zechariah¹⁶

Christological references as well as predictions of both Christ's first and second advents predominate the Book of Zechariah. General Christological references include the following: the angel of the Lord (3:1-2), the righteous branch (3:8; 6:12-13), the servant (3:8), the stone with

¹³ Lindsey, "Zechariah," 1546.

¹⁴ The term "biblical apocalyptic" refers to developing elements of the apocalyptic genre from within the canon. Ralph H. Alexander, "Hermeneutics of Old Testament Apocalyptic Literature" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968). This approach is to be distinguished from attempting to develop the characteristics of apocalyptic literature from outside the canon. This later approach is flawed since any similarities between the biblical and extra biblical material seem outweighed by vast differences between the two. Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 323-48.

¹⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," in *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor, 1983), 1323.

¹⁶ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 290; J. Carl Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible* (Kregel: Grand Rapids, 1997), 176.

seven eyes (3:9), the King-Priest (6:13), and the cornerstone, tent peg, and the bow of battle (10:4). References to Christ's First Coming include the humble king riding on a donkey (9:9-10; Matt 21:1-8; John 12:14-16), the rejected good shepherd sold for thirty pieces of silver (11:4-13; Matt 26:14-16; 27:9-10), the one the Jews pierced (12:10; John 19:37; 20:24-27), and the smitten good shepherd (13:7). References to Christ's Second Advent include the one who will be accepted by Israel (12:10–13:1; Rom 11:26), the one who cleanses Israel (13:1), the coming judge (14), the destroyer of Israel's enemies (14:3, 12-15; Rev 19:11-16), the one who will split the Mount of Olives (14:4), and the one who will reign from Jerusalem (14:9, 16; Rev 20:4-6).

Outline¹⁷

- I. Introductory call to repentance (1:1-6)
 - A. Date of prophecy (1:1a)
 - B. Author (1:1b)
 - C. Initial call to repentance (1:2-6)
- II. Zechariah's eight night visions (1:7-6:15)
 - A. Rider on a red horse among the myrtle trees (1:7-17)
 1. Date: 2/15/519 B.C. (1:7)
 2. Description (1:8)
 3. Explanation (1:9-11)
 - a) Zechariah's inquiry (1:9a)
 - b) Interpreting angel's answer (1:9b)
 - c) Angel of the Lord's answer (1:10)
 - d) Riders' report (1:11)
 4. Interpretation (1:12-17)
 - a) God remains jealous for Jerusalem (1:12-14)
 - b) God will judge those nations at ease who persecute Jerusalem (1:15)
 - c) God will restore Jerusalem (1:16a)
 - d) God will restore the Temple (1:16b)
 - e) God will return prosperity to Jerusalem (1:17)
 - B. Four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21)
 1. Four horns (1:18-19)
 - a) Description (1:18)
 - b) Explanation (1:19)
 2. Four craftsmen (1:20-21)

¹⁷ Some parts of this outline have been influenced by Charles H. Dyer, "Introduction to Zechariah," (unpublished class notes in 304C Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, Spring 2000), 2-16.

- a) Description (1:20)
- b) Explanation (1:21)
- C. Surveyor and his measuring line (2:1-13)
 - 1. Vision described (2:1-3)
 - 2. Vision interpreted (2:4-5)
 - a) Jerusalem's repopulation (2:4)
 - b) Jerusalem's protection (2:5)
 - 3. Exiles called to return to Jerusalem (2:6-9)
 - 4. Jerusalem to be God's habitation (2:10-13)
- D. Cleansing of Joshua the high priest (3:1-10)
 - 1. The three stages of Joshua's cleansing (3:1-5)
 - a) Satan condemns Joshua (3:1)
 - b) God rebukes Satan (3:2)
 - c) God cleanses Joshua (3:3-5)
 - 2. Joshua's cleansing symbolizes Jerusalem's future cleansing (3:6-10)
 - a) Future king/priest (3:6-7)
 - b) Future branch (3:8)
 - c) Future cleansing (3:9)
 - d) Future peace (3:10)
- E. Lampstand and two olive trees (4)
 - 1. Vision described (4:1-3)
 - a) Lampstand with seven lamps (4:1-2)
 - b) Two olive trees (4:3)
 - 2. Interpretation (4:4-14)
 - a) God's strength (4:4-7)
 - b) Zerubbabel to reconstruct the Temple (4:8-10)
 - c) God's anointed servants: Zerubbabel and Joshua (4:11-14)
- F. Flying scroll (5:1-4)
 - 1. Vision (5:1-2)
 - 2. Interpretation (5:3-4)
 - a) Covenant judgment coming (5:3a)
 - b) Covenant sin to be judged (5:3b-4)
 - i) Stealing (5:3b)
 - ii) Swearing falsely (5:4)
- G. Woman in the ephah (5:5-11)
 - 1. Women's identity: wickedness (5:5-8)
 - 2. Woman's destination: Shinar/Babylon (5:9-11)
- H. Four chariots (6:1-8)
 - 1. Vision (6:1-3)
 - a) Four chariots (6:1)
 - b) Four different colored horses for each chariot (6:2-3)
 - 2. Interpretation (6:4-8)
 - a) Four spirits patrolling the earth (6:4-7)
 - b) Destruction of the land of the North: Babylon (6:8)
- I. Conclusion: crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)
 - 1. Zechariah's action (6:9-11)

- a) Accompany the exiles to visit Joshua (6:9-10)
 - b) Crown Joshua (6:11)
 - 2. Interpretation (6:12-15)
 - a) Branch to build the Temple (6:12)
 - b) Branch to preside as King/priest (6:13)
 - c) Exiles to return and reconstruct the Temple (6:14-15)
- III. Question and answers concerning fasting (7-8)
- A. Inquiry of the men of Bethel (7:1-3)
 - 1. Date of the inquiry: 12/7/518 B.C. (7:1)
 - 2. Bethelites making the inquiry (7:2)
 - 3. Question: should we continue to observe the fast in the fifth month signifying the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar? (7:3)
 - B. God's answer (7:4-8:23)
 - 1. God rebukes the people for empty ritualism (7:4-7)
 - a) Their insincerity (7:4-5)
 - b) Their selfishness (7:6-7)
 - 2. Israel's past covenant failure (7:8-14)
 - a) God's covenant requirements (7:8-10)
 - b) Israel's covenant rebellion (7:11-12)
 - c) God's covenant judgment (7:13-14)
 - 3. Jerusalem's future restoration (8:1-17)
 - a) Prediction of Jerusalem's future restoration (8:1-8)
 - i) God's return to Zion (8:1-3)
 - ii) Peace in Jerusalem (8:4)
 - iii) Joy in Jerusalem (8:5)
 - iv) Promise of restoration from exile (8:6-8)
 - b) Present application (8:9-17)
 - i) Courageously rebuild the Temple (8:9-11)
 - ii) Trust in God's promise to restore Jerusalem (8:12-15)
 - iii) Obey the covenant (8:16-17)
 - 4. Prediction of future blessings (8:18-23)
 - a) Fasts to become feasts (8:18-19)
 - b) Jerusalem's preeminence (8:20-23)
- IV. Zechariah's two burdens (9-14)
- A. The first burden concerning Israel's victory over the oppressive nations postponed due to her rejection of her Messiah (9-11)
 - 1. Divine warrior hymn (9)
 - a) Judgment upon the nations that oppress Israel (9:1-8)
 - i) Hadrach (9:1a)
 - ii) Damascus (9:1b)
 - iii) Hamath (9:2a)
 - iv) Tyre and Sidon (9:2b-4)
 - v) Philistines (9:5-7)
 - vi) Israel never to be oppressed again (9:8)
 - b) Messiah (9:9-10)
 - i) First coming: gentleness and righteousness (9:9)

- ii) Second coming: universal peace (9:10)
- c) God's covenant protection (9:11-17)
 - i) Prisoners liberated (9:11-12)
 - ii) Jerusalem attacked, defended and prospered (9:13-17)
- 2. Contrast between the good and foolish shepherd (10-11)
 - a) Good Shepherd (10)
 - i) Unlike idols, God brings prosperity (10:1-2)
 - ii) God will judge false shepherds and instead shepherd His own people (10:3)
 - iii) God will restore both the northern and southern kingdoms (10:4-7)
 - iv) God will regather His scattered people (10:8-12)
 - b) False shepherd (11)
 - i) The land will wail (11:1-3)
 - (a) Wailing pines (11:1-2a)
 - (b) Wailing oaks of Bashan (11:2b)
 - (c) Wailing shepherds (11:3a)
 - (d) Wailing lions (11:3b)
 - ii) Reason for the land's wailing: Israel's rejection of her shepherd (11:4-14)
 - (a) Zechariah pastors the doomed flock (11:4-8a)
 - (b) God no longer favors the flock (11:8b-11)
 - (c) Nation rejects her Messiah (11:12-13)
 - (d) Cessation of the nation's unity (11:14)
 - iii) God to raise up and then destroy the false shepherd who devours the flock (11:15-17)
 - (a) False shepherd raised up (11:15-16)
 - (b) False shepherd destroyed (11:17)
- B. The second burden concerning the Messiah's coming kingdom due to Israel's acceptance of her Messiah (12-14)
 - 1. Deliverance of Jerusalem (12-13)
 - a) Physically (12:1-9)
 - i) The nations will come against Jerusalem (12:1-3)
 - ii) God will protect Jerusalem and destroy her attackers (12:4-9)
 - b) Spiritually (12:10-13:5)
 - i) Outpouring of the Spirit (12:10a)
 - ii) Israel to mourn over rejecting her Messiah (12:10b-14)
 - iii) Spiritual cleansing described (13:1-5)
 - (a) Fountain (13:1)
 - (b) Idolatry removed (13:2a)
 - (c) False prophets removed (13:2b-5)
 - c) Deliverance of remnant after the period of trial beginning with Israel's rejection of her Messiah (13:6-9)
 - i) Shepherd struck (13:6-7a)
 - ii) Sheep scattered (13:7b)
 - iii) Two thirds of the nation to perish (13:8a)
 - iv) One third of the nation refined and rescued (13:8b-9)
 - 2. Establishment of the kingdom (14)
 - a) Second Advent at the battle Armageddon to rescue Jerusalem (14:1-7)

- b) Messiah's kingdom to be administered from Jerusalem (14:8-11)
- c) Divine judgment to be imposed upon Jerusalem's enemies (14:12-15)
- d) Worship to be bestowed upon the Messiah in Jerusalem (14:16-21)

Argument

In his book, Zechariah predicts the Messiah's restoration of the Jewish remnant as well as the Messiah's millennial reign from the Jerusalem temple as both priest and king in order to give the returnees hope in the challenging post-exilic world and to induce them toward covenant obedience in general and temple reconstruction in particular. The writer seeks to accomplish these purposes in the book's four major sections. The writer's ambition to induce general covenant renewal is apparent in the book's first major section (1:1-6). After providing some introductory information regarding date (1:1a) and authorship (1:1b), the writer issues a general call for his readers to return to God's covenant (1:2-6). Unlike the audience's forefathers who rejected the prophets' messages and the Mosaic Covenant, Zechariah hopes his audience will heed his prophecies and consequently obey God's covenant.¹⁸ Part of this covenant renewal must also take the form of rebuilding the temple, which was being ignored by the nation. In subsequent chapters, Zechariah will seek to create an incentive for this rebuilding project by furnishing visions of the temple's glorious messianic and kingdom purposes.

In the book's second major section (1:7-6:15), Zechariah records his eight night visions for the purpose of inducing in his postexilic audience hope, covenant obedience, and the ambition to rebuild the temple.¹⁹ The first vision of the red horse among the myrtle trees (1:7-17) involved the riders' report that the entire world was at rest except Jerusalem (1:7-11). However,

¹⁸ "The idea here is this: Pay attention to the Word of God because though the prophets die, it endures, and the proof that it endures is that its warnings come true (overtake)." Charles C. Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 1461.

¹⁹ For a helpful chart providing a concise interpretation of each of these visions, see Lindsey, "Zechariah," 1549.

the vision's interpretation (1:12-17) was that God would execute judgment on the nations that were oppressing Israel and consequently vindicate Jerusalem. This vision would give hope to the postexilic community that was in the midst of a crisis of faith due to God's postponed judgment upon their adversaries. The vision also showed them God's future intention of dwelling in His house in Jerusalem (1:16) thereby giving the returnees an incentive to reconstruct their temple.

The second vision of the four horns and craftsmen (1:18-21) explains that God will judge the nations that oppressed Israel (four horns) with other nations (four craftsmen).²⁰ This disclosure of God's intent to judge Israel's oppressors would offer hope to the beleaguered postexilic community. The third vision of the surveyor and his measuring line (2:1-13) reveals God's intent to prosper and protect Jerusalem. This vision would encourage the returnees through its message of God's restorative purposes for Jerusalem. It would also give them hope by reminding them of their special role as the very apple of God's eye (2:8). It also would give the returnees further incentive to rebuild the temple through the vision's depiction of God's future habitation in the ancient city of Jerusalem.

The fourth vision of the cleansing of the high priest Joshua (3:1-10) would encourage the returnees through its reminder that God will restore the nation spiritually as well as physically. Here, Joshua's cleansing typifies the future cleansing of the priesthood to be administered by the coming Messiah. This information would exhort the returnees to rebuild the temple since it would convey to the audience God's future purposes for the temple priesthood. The fifth vision of the golden lampstand and the two olive trees (4) pictures a lamp that continually burns fuel. This arrangement signifies the ongoing empowerment of the Holy Spirit in order to strengthen God's servants Joshua and Zerubbabel in the task of temple construction. This vision would

²⁰ For a graphic depiction of what nations will be judged and by whom see Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 822.

encourage the returnees in their task of temple construction by reminding them that this feat would be accomplished by divine rather than human strength (4:6).

The sixth vision of the flying scroll (5:1-4) communicates that God will enforce covenant judgment against Israel's covenant infractions. An awareness of such repercussions as conveyed in the vision would give the nation further incentive to adhere to the Mosaic Covenant. The seventh vision of the woman in the Ephah (5:5-11) predicts idolatrous worship will be taken from Israel. Instead such worship would be taken back to the plains of Shinar where it originated (Gen 10:10; 11:2; Dan 1:2; Isa 11:11; Zech 5:11).²¹ This vision would encourage the beleaguered returnees by reminding them of God's future purpose to spiritually cleanse the nation. By speaking of the transference of Israel's idolatry to a house or temple in Babylon (5:11; 2 Sam 7:13), the vision conveys the future purification of the Jerusalem temple. An awareness of God's glorious, future plans for the Jerusalem temple would give the exiles further incentive to build the temple in the present.

The eighth vision of the four chariots (6:1-8) speaks of the coming destruction upon Israel's oppressors in general and upon her immediate Babylonian oppressor in particular.²² Reminder of this future judgment upon Israel's oppressors would again help to overcome discouragement in the postexilic community due to the absence of such judgment on the nation's immediate oppressors. This section concludes with the crowning of Joshua the high priest (6:9-15). This action typifies the future universal reign of the coming branch (Isa 4:2; 11:1, 10; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12) or priest and king from the Jerusalem temple. Knowledge of God's future messianic and kingdom purposes for the temple would give the returnees additional

²¹ Mark Hitchcock, *The Second Coming of Babylon* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2003), 109.

²² Here, the land of the north is understood as Babylon. Dyer and Merrill, *Old Testament Explorer*, 826.

incentive to rebuild it in the present. In sum, all of these night visions are included to engender in Zechariah's postexilic audience hope, covenant obedience, and the desire to rebuild the temple.

The book's third major section records a human question and four divine answers regarding fasting (7-8). This material is also included for the purpose of fostering hope, covenant obedience, and an ambition to rebuild the temple among the Jerusalem returnees. This section begins with the men of Bethels' question as to whether they should continue to mourn the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. now that the second temple was in the process of being constructed (7:1-3). However, God responds by indicating that the nation was mourning the effect rather than the cause. Rather than mourning the first temple's demise, the nation should have instead been mourning the covenant rebellion that caused the first temple's destruction (7:4-7). This divine response is included to communicate to the exiles the significance of covenant disloyalty so that they will manifest covenant loyalty in the present. So that there is no mistake regarding the severity of covenant disloyalty, God's second response (7:8-14) specifies God's covenant requirements (7:8-10), Israel's prior covenant rebellion (7:11-12), and the resulting covenant judgment that climaxed in 586 B.C. (7:13-14). Zechariah includes this second divine response in the hope that his audience will not imitate the covenant disobedience of their forefathers and instead embrace covenant loyalty.

In God's third response to the men of Bethel (8:1-17), He predicts Jerusalem's complete and future restoration (8:1-8). The application of this prediction is threefold (8:9-17). First, it would give the returnees greater incentive to courageously rebuild the Jerusalem temple since the vision also predicted God's return to Zion (8:9-11). In other words, the temple had to be rebuilt since God would need a place of habitation in Zion. Second, it would give the beleaguered returnees hope as they embraced by faith God's promise to restore Jerusalem (8:12-15). Third,

the vision would give the returnees an incentive for covenant obedience since these ideal conditions can only be realized when the nation ushers them in by honoring God's covenant (8:16-17). Because of these immediate applications to Zechariah's original audience, the prophet incorporates God's third response into his book.

God's fourth response to the men of Bethel involves predictions of future joyous feasts as well as Jerusalem's millennial preeminence (8:18-23). These predictions would give hope to the beleaguered returnees by reminding them of a national future hope. The predictions of Jerusalem's preeminence would induce the returnees to rebuild the temple since this structure will be the seat of the branch's habitation as He governs the world from restored Jerusalem. In sum, the inquiry regarding fasting and God's four responses are included to engender in Zechariah's audience hope, covenant obedience, and the desire to rebuild the temple.

The book's fourth and final major section records Zechariah's two burdens (9-14) also for the purpose of fostering among the Jerusalem returnees hope, covenant obedience, and an ambition to rebuild the temple. These concluding chapters explain how the desired national repentance spoken of in the previous chapters will eventually come to pass. In the first burden (9-11), Zechariah traces God's eschatological program for Israel from the time of Alexander the Great until the nation's rejection of her Messiah. Zechariah begins the first burden with a prediction of the demise of the various nations that had oppressed Israel (9:1-8).²³ This demise came to pass during the reign of Alexander the Great in 333 B.C.²⁴ Zechariah then pinpoints the Messiah who would have maintained these victories and established His kingdom (9:10) had the Jews accepted Him at His first coming (9:9).

²³ For a brief summary of the background of these various nations see *Ibid.*, 828.

²⁴ Wilkinson and Boa, *Talk Thru the Bible*, 292. Others see this prophecy as finding a fulfillment in a futuristic context. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 175.

This Messiah would have liberated the prisoners (9:11-12) as well as defended and prospered the city of Jerusalem (9:13-17). As the good shepherd (10), He would have ushered in prosperity (10:1-2), judged the false shepherds (10:3), unified the nation (10:4-7), and regathered the scattered people of Israel (10:8-12).²⁵ However, this prophesied victory never came to pass because of Israel's rejection of her Messiah (11:12-13). This rejection resulted in the land wailing (11:1-3), the immediate doom of the flock of Israel (11:4-8a), the withdrawal of divine favor from the flock (11:8b-11), the continued cessation of Israel's national unity (11:14), and the nation eventually being given over to the future antichrist (11:15-16).²⁶

Zechariah includes all of this information for two reasons. First, it shows the consequences of covenant rebellion. By manifesting covenant loyalty in the present, the returnees can avoid the covenant rebellion that a future generation of messiah rejecting Jews will experience. Second, despite such horrific covenant rebellion, God still has a future purpose for Israel. This future purpose and victory will be developed in Zechariah's second oracle (12-14) and is even hinted at through the first oracle's description of the antichrist's injury (11:17; Rev 13:3, 12).²⁷ Knowledge of this future purpose for national Israel in spite of covenant rebellion would give the beleaguered returnees hope in God's willingness to ultimately bring to pass His promises to national Israel.

In the second burden (12-14), Zechariah traces Israel's eschatological program from the time of the nation's future acknowledgment of her Messiah until the establishment of the

²⁵ Some see these prophecies as finding their fulfillment during the days of the Maccabean revolt (Dan 8:21-25; 11:29-35).

²⁶ Some see Alcimus (163-159 B.C.) or Herod (64-63 B.C.) as possible fulfillments of this passage. Laney, *Answers to Tough Questions: A Survey of Problem Passages and Issues from Every Book of the Bible*, 176.

²⁷ "As a result, the arm that should have protected the sheep will be withered, and the eye that should have watched over the flock will be blinded." Ibid.

messianic kingdom.²⁸ This burden explains that the manifestation of the kingdom that was thwarted by the nation's rejection of her Messiah as depicted in the first burden (9–11) will be reversed when the nation trusts in this Messiah and experiences the resulting kingdom blessings (12–14). Once Israel accepts her previously rejected Messiah (12:10b-14), Jerusalem will not only experience physical rescue from her attackers at the battle of Armageddon (12:1-9), but she will also experience the Messiah's spiritual deliverance through His regenerating work (12:10a; 13:1-5). Thus, the Messiah will both deliver the remnant (13:6-9) and establish His kingdom through this remnant (14). After the Lord returns to rescue this ancient city (14:1-7, 12-15), both the administration of His future worldwide rule (14:8-11) and the center of global messianic worship (14:16-21) will be headquartered in Jerusalem.

Three reasons cause Zechariah to include all of the information found in his second burden. First, if a future generation's covenant obedience as manifested through the acknowledgement of her Messiah will usher in kingdom conditions, then by way of application the returnees can also experience covenant blessings by manifesting covenant obedience in the present. Second, the restoration agenda that God has in mind for national Israel as unfolded in this second burden should give the beleaguered returnees hope in their present adverse circumstances. Third, if Jerusalem is to be the center of the Lord's future millennial rule, then the returnees should get about the business of rebuilding the temple since it will be the location of the Messiah's future habitation. In conclusion, the Book of Zechariah predicts the Messiah's restoration of the Jewish remnant and the Messiah's millennial reign from the Jerusalem temple as both priest and king. Zechariah includes this information in order to give the returnees hope in

²⁸ The futuristic context of this burden is evident through the repetition of the phrase "on that day" found throughout these chapters (12:3, 4, 6, 11; 13:1-2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20).

the challenging postexilic world and to induce them toward covenant obedience and temple construction.

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