

Zechariah Chapter 1

The prophet Zechariah ministered at the same time as Haggai. They both had been captives in Babylon, and returned to Judah when Cyrus released the prisoners. The building of the temple had been delayed 16 years, after the first people released had built the foundation. There was much opposition to its being built, and the people had been busy building their own homes.

They planted their crops again, also. Zechariah and Haggai preached, that the reason for their poor crops was the fact they had not rebuilt the temple. The same neglect of God's work was still in the land. They had spent 70 years in captivity to cause them to repent of this complacency toward God.

The opening 6 verses provide an introduction to the entire prophecy in which the prophet calls upon the people to repent and never again repeat the past sins of their fathers (1 Cor. 10:11).

Zechariah 1:1 "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,"

The message is dated in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius. This would be (November, 520 B.C.), two months after the prophet Haggai began his ministry. By his lineage "Zechariah" identifies himself as a priest, and by his reception of this prophecy he is established as a prophet.

Most Old Testament prophets who dated their prophecies did so according to the reign of a king in Israel, Judah or both. Haggai and Zechariah date their prophecies according to the reign of the Gentile king, indicating that the times of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24), had begun.

It is very interesting, to me, that this message came to Zechariah the month between the 7th and 9th month that God gave Haggai messages. It seemed, the message was the same from both. Perhaps, this was to confirm the messages. The Scriptures say, by two a thing shall be established. We see that Zechariah was the grandson of the prophet Iddo.

Zechariah 1:2 "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers."

"The Lord hath been sore displeased": This actually means "to break out in long-controlled indignation," reminding the people of the severity of God's wrath and the necessity of His judgment on their past sins in pre-Exilic times.

The fathers this is speaking of, are those who committed spiritual adultery, and caused God to send them into captivity for 70 years. The land was destroyed, and so was the temple.

Zechariah 1:3 "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."

“The Lord of hosts”: This frequently used name for God shows His might as the commander of the hosts, whether they are the armies of Israel (2 Chron. 26:11), the armies of the heathen nations (Judges 4:2), or the heavenly inhabitants (1 Kings 22:19).

“Turn ye unto me”: Though primarily a book of consolation, the prophet begins with a call to repentance, to preclude any false security on the part of Israel: i.e., thinking that God would bless His chosen people regardless of their spiritual condition.

This expresses the ongoing desire of God (Gen. 17:7; Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 37:27; 2 Cor. 6:16; James 4:8; Rev. 21:3), and the constant condition for blessing.

God wanted their love and their faithfulness. The captivity had been to teach them to obey God, and to turn from false gods. When they reach out to God, He is always there to reach out to them. God loves them, and wants to bless them, but He will not force Himself upon them.

Zechariah 1:4 "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and [from] your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD."

“Be ye not as your fathers”: The disobedient, obstinate behavior of their fathers was not so much directed toward the prophets, but at God Himself. The people were well aware of their fathers’ sins (Ezra 9:7), and could look around them and see the results. History should have taught them to repent.

“The former prophets” is a reference primarily to the prophets who ministered prior to the Babylonian captivity. To the pre-Exilic prophets who all preached the same message of repentance before the Exile, e.g., Isaiah and Jeremiah (see My servants in verse 6).

We remember that they chose to believe the false prophets which were prophesying good times. They did not heed the warning that God had sent them by the true prophets. God had to prove to them, that what He warned of, He would do.

Now, they should remember the chastisement that God sent on them before. It should not be so difficult to get them to listen to the warnings from God. Their captivity was still fresh on their minds.

Zechariah 1:5 "Your fathers, where [are] they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"

While both their fathers and the former prophets were dead, the legacy of their fathers’ failure to heed the prophets’ warnings was vividly before them. Exemplified by the city of Jerusalem and the temple lying in ruins, needing to be rebuilt.

We discussed before, that the unfaithful generation died while they were in captivity. The answer is no, they do not live forever. They not only died, but died in a foreign land under terrible circumstances. This should encourage these people to respond more quickly to God's warning.

Zechariah 1:6 "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? And they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us."

God's word accomplishes all which He designs (Isa. 55:10-11), in blessing and in judgment. His warnings, so precisely fulfilled, overtook and destroyed their fathers, who recognized God's hand in the judgment (Lam. 2:17; Ezra 9:6). The Exile was positive proof that God punishes those who sin and reject His warnings. "They repented" (Dan. 9:1-19).

This is proclaiming to them, that the warnings the prophets brought to them came to pass. The chastisement promised, perhaps, was a while in coming, but it did come. The true prophets spoke with inspiration of God. Their Words were actually God's Words in the prophets' mouths.

The fathers and grandfathers had told their children why they were in captivity, so they would not disobey God and wind up in the same predicament.

Verses 1:7 – 6:8: The eight night visions: All eight night visions occurred on one night and constitute a unity of revelation. The first is most important because it provides a key for understanding the other seven. The night visions were not presented to the prophet in the form of a dream, but rather with the prophet in some form of a trance (Acts 10:10; 11:5; Rev. 1:10).

The overall message of these visions for the nation of Zechariah's day was "The Lord is with you; therefore, build the temple." For the Israel of the future, the visions outline the prophetic program for Israel from the time of restoration from the Babylonian captivity to the institution of the millennial kingdom.

Zechariah 1:7 "Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which [is] the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,"

"The four and twentieth day of the eleventh month" (Jan./Feb. 519 B.C.). Approximately 3 months after Zechariah's opening call to repentance.

This message comes 3 months after the first message. Haggai's last message had been spoken about two months prior to this message of Zechariah's. This month is approximately February on our calendar.

Zechariah 1:8 "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that [were] in the bottom; and behind him [were there] red horses, speckled, and white."

"I saw by night": This is the first vision revealing God's plan for Jerusalem, which begins with the sight of "a man ... riding on a red horse." The man is identified as the Angel of the Lord

(verse 11). The other riders report to Him, indicating His authority over them. Because of the strength of horses, they became symbols of war. Red is often the symbol of blood, hence judgment (Isa. 63:1-4; Rev. 6:3).

The “bottom” (Hebrew metsulah, “depth,” “hollow,” “place of shadows,” or “a shady place”), has been suggested to be the valley of Hinnom outside the temple precinct. If so, the prophet could look down from the foundations of the temple and see the Rider and His army coming.

The contribution of this first and all-inclusive night vision, the man among the myrtle trees, is twofold: The Israel of Zechariah’s day was assured that the Lord was with them and that the world was at peace. Therefore, they should continue the task of building the temple until it was completed.

“Red horses, speckled, and white”: Presumably these other horses had riders as well. The colors may speak of the work of the riders: red speaking of bloodshed and judgment (Isa. 63:1-2), white speaking of victory (Rev. 19:11), and speckled or a brownish color is possible a combination of the others.

A similar picture is found (in Rev. 6:1-8). These horses are about to gain a victorious judgment. Since they are messengers of vengeance, they likely represent angels, so frequently employed as God’s instruments of judgment.

Zechariah 1:9 "Then said I, O my lord, what [are] these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these [be]."

“The angel that talked with me” This interpreting angel (1:13-14, 19; 2:3; 3:1; 4:1), is to be distinguished from the Angel of the Lord (verses 11-12).

The key word in this is "what". We know from this, that whatever they are is symbolic. Notice, also, this is not the LORD, but the one he is speaking to is an angel.

Zechariah 1:10 "And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These [are they] whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth."

“Walk to and fro”: A symbolic military description of angelic movement patrolling and reconnoitering on a global scale. The purpose is to ascertain the state of the enemy and to respond to God’s will in engaging that enemy triumphantly.

Zechariah 1:11 "And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."

The “angel of the Lord” is a Christophany. a preincarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God.

“Behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest”: In contrast to the difficulties facing the exiles, without temple or city walls, the heathen nations were superficially at rest, occupied with their own selfish interests (verse 15).

This was generally the condition in the second year of Darius. The contrast makes the plight of Israel all the more distressing and the hope for the fulfillment (of Hag. 2:7; 2:22), more intense.

They have searched the earth, and found a time when there is relative peace upon the earth.

1 Thess. 5:3 "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Zechariah 1:12 "Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"

“The angel of the Lord”: The Angel of the Lord interceded to God the Father on behalf of Israel, pleading for the withdrawal of God’s chastening hand. The “seventy years” refers to God’s words to Jeremiah concerning the length of Judah’s exile (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10).

This one Scripture makes us think this is speaking of the immediate time of Zechariah. The 70 years are for the 70 years in Babylon captivity. Babylon symbolizes the world. This is a cry similar to the saints that cry in heaven.

Rev. 6:10 "And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Even just before the coming of the Lord Jesus as King, this will still be the cry. The Lord is our intercessor. He pleads the believer’s case continually before the Father.

Zechariah 1:13 "And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me [with] good words [and] comfortable words."

“Good words and comfortable words”: The content of these words is given in verses 14-17): God still loved Jerusalem (verse 14), He was angry with the nations who afflicted them (verse 15), and He will bring prosperity to Jerusalem (verses 16-17).

The LORD answers with reassuring Words, that He is concerned about His people. God does care. His time is not the same as our time.

Zechariah 1:14 "So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy."

“I am jealous for Jerusalem”: God first described Himself as jealous when making His covenant with Israel (Exodus 20:5; 34:14). This same jealousy had been experienced by Israel in

punishment (Deut. 29:18-28; Ezek. 5:13). That same jealous love is expressed emphatically in the city's defense.

This is speaking of the holy city, and is also speaking of the church. The jealousy here, is love to the extreme. God loves His people.

Zechariah 1:15 "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."

Moved by His great love for His people, the Lord acted in anger (verse 2), against the nations which mistreated His people. Although they were His instrument of judgment against Israel, they had exceeded God's instructions in meting out punishment. They did not understand that God's intention was to punish for a time and then show compassion (Isa. 54:7-8).

God was displeased with the heathen that lived around Jerusalem. I believe He is also displeased today with the heathen world that has no desire to come to Him and be saved.

Babylon, and the other nations, that attacked God's people in such cruel manner were some that He was displeased with. Even in our society, there are nations who do not accept God. These are heathen nations, as well.

Zechariah 1:16 "Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."

Not only would the temple be rebuilt which at that time had only foundations (Hag. 2:18), but the city itself would again expand due to the prosperity (Isa. 40:9-10). The wall was completed 75 years later.

This is speaking of the temple being rebuilt in Jerusalem. Jesus will set up His kingdom headquartered in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the measure that all will be measured by. We saw in one of the other prophetic books, this same line which measured the city of Jerusalem and the temple area.

Zechariah 1:17 "Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

The walls were completed 75 years later. God would again comfort Jerusalem (Isa. 40:1-2; 51:3, 12), and would again choose it as the place of His earthly throne (Psalm 132:13). This will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom of Messiah (Rev. 20). Given the fact that the returning Jews lost sight of their priorities (Hag. 1:1-12), this message reaffirmed God's plan.

It should be noted that the millennial kingdom will provide the presence of God in Jerusalem (Ezek. 48:35), a glorious temple (Ezek. chapters 40 thru 48), a rebuilt Jerusalem (Jer. 31:38-40),

the nations punished (Matt. 25:31-46), the prosperity of Judah's cities (Isa. 60:4-9), the blessedness of the people (Zech. 9:17), and the comfort of Zion (Isa. 14:1).

This is speaking of Jerusalem as the capital of the world, when Jesus reigns. The church (Zion), will be comforted. The prosperity of Jerusalem has begun. Jews from all over the world are returning to Israel now. They shall prosper greatly, because the blessing of God is upon them.

Verses 18-21: The second of 8 night visions adds details to the judgment of the nations who persecuted His Israel, building upon God's promise to comfort His people (1:13, 17).

Zechariah 1:18 "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns."

The "four horns" (the second vision, verses 18-21), are representative of the four Gentile world powers, earlier introduced by Daniel (Dan. 2, 7 and 8). Metaphorically, the "horn" was applied to the strength of governments, and was used representatively of nations (Dan. 8:3-4; Mica 4:13).

"Horns" symbolize power, and the number "four" symbolizes universal. This then, is speaking of universal power.

Zechariah 1:19 "And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What [be] these? And he answered me, These [are] the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

"The four horns which scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem, are four nations, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Romans; as the Lord, on the prophet's enquiry, explains here. And Daniel unfolds most fully (in Daniel 2); who in the vision of the image with golden head, silver breast, belly and thighs of brass, feet of iron and clay, explained it of these four nations.

And again, in another vision of four beasts (in Daniel 7); lion, bear, leopard and another unnamed dreadful beast. He pointed out the same nations under another figure. But that the Medes and Persians, after the victory of Cyrus, were one kingdom, no one will doubt, who reads secular and sacred literature.

When this vision was beheld, the kingdom of the Babylonians had now passed away, that of the Medes and Persians was instant. That of Greeks and Macedonians and of the Romans was yet to come.

Some see here an allusion to the prophecy of Daniel concerning the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Macedonians, and Romans. Against this view it is urged that the prophet is speaking of past events, not of a far distant future.

Others take the four horns to represent Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and Medo-Persia, all of which had scattered Israel. But it is well to lay no special stress on such explanations of symbolical language, which are at best mere conjectures, liable to be overthrown by a new theory.

This could be speaking of the Babylonians, Assyria, Medo- Persians, and the Egyptians. I believe it speaks of the nations of the world against Israel. There are not just 4 nations that have done harm to Israel. There are many.

I believe the number 4 is symbolic of the nations of the world who are Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel's enemies. These are nations opposed to God, and all His people.

Zechariah 1:20 "And the LORD showed me four carpenters."

“Four carpenters”: The word is literally the term for stone workers, metal workers, and wood workers, those who shape material with hammers and chisels. These “Hammers” represent the nations which overthrow the 4 horns (verse 18).

As with the 4 beasts (of verse 7), each empire is overthrown by the subsequent one, the last being replaced by Messiah’s kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:9-14, 21-22). Babylon was hammered in a night attack by the Medo-Persians (539 B.C.). The Roman Empire, revived in the last days, according to Daniel, will be hammered by the returning Messiah (Dan. 2:34-35, 45).

Zechariah 1:21 "Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These [are] the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up [their] horn over the land of Judah to scatter it."

The several instrumentalities employed, or to be employed, in crushing the "Gentile" powers which "scattered" Judah, are hereby referred to. For every one of the four horns there was a cleaving "artificer" to beat it down (four carpenters). For every enemy of God's people, God has provided a counteracting power adequate to destroy it.

The angel is speaking here. The horns are they that scattered Judah, and lay them helpless. They frayed (whipped) them. The enemies of Judah had not only defeated them, but scattered them to the winds.

Luke 21:24 "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Zechariah Chapter 1 Questions

1. Zechariah ministered at the same time as _____.
2. They both had been captives in Babylon, until _____ released them.
3. The building of the temple had been delayed _____ years.
4. What had the people been doing during that time?

5. What was the message of Zechariah?
6. When was the first message Zechariah received?
7. Who was Zechariah's father?
8. What did Iddo and Zechariah have in common?
9. The LORD hath been sore displeased with your _____.
10. What will happen, if they turn to God?
11. Who had their fathers believed?
12. Do prophets live forever?
13. What is verse 6 saying to them?
14. What month on our calendar is Sebat?
15. How does Zechariah receive the second message?
16. The "red horse" is symbolic of _____.
17. Who talked with Zechariah?
18. Who did the angel say they were?
19. How did they find the earth?
20. Which Scripture would cause us to believe this is in Zechariah's time?
21. The LORD is jealous for whom?
22. Who was He sore displeased with?
23. What is verse 16 speaking of?
24. What is verse 17 speaking of Jerusalem as?
25. What do "horns" symbolize?
26. What does "4" symbolize?
27. Who are the 4 horns?
28. Who were the carpenters?