

Zechariah — The Prophet Who Saw the King and the Kingdom

Series: 30 Prophets of the Bible - Dr. Randy White

I. Identity of Zechariah

Name and Known Facts

- “Zechariah” means “the LORD remembers.”
- He is identified as “the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo” (Zech. 1:1).
- Ezra calls him “the son of Iddo” (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), likely using the better-known family or grandfather name.
- Zechariah was both prophet and priestly descendant; Nehemiah 12:16 connects an Iddo family with the priestly courses after the return. He joins Jeremiah and Ezekiel as prophets who were also priests.
- He ministered alongside Haggai during the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Prophetic Role

- Zechariah encouraged the returned remnant to finish the temple, but his book reaches far beyond the immediate building project.
- His ministry joins present obedience, priestly cleansing, Davidic hope, Jerusalem’s future, and the coming King.
- He is one of the most messianic of the prophets, with prophecies used repeatedly in the New Testament concerning Christ.

II. Historical Setting

Returned Judah Under Persia

- Zechariah begins in the second year of Darius (conventional dating: 520 BC, Zech. 1:1), the same general setting as Haggai.
- The Jews had returned from Babylon, but they were still politically weak and under Gentile rule.
- Zerubbabel served as governor in the Davidic line, and Joshua served as high priest.
- The temple work had stalled, and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stirred the people to resume the work (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14).

The Larger Setting

- The return from Babylon was real, but it was not the full kingdom restoration promised by the prophets.
- Jerusalem was inhabited again, but still vulnerable.
- The temple could be rebuilt, but the glory of the kingdom had not arrived.
- Zechariah speaks into that tension: the remnant must obey now, while looking for the future King, cleansing, deliverance, and kingdom glory.

III. Nature of Zechariah’s Ministry

A Call to Return

- Zechariah opens with the Lord’s call: “Turn ye unto me...and I will turn unto you” (1:3).
- The remnant is warned not to be like the fathers who ignored the former prophets (1:4).
- The book begins with repentance before it unfolds visions and kingdom promises.

A Prophet of Visions

- Zechariah receives a series of night visions that explain the Lord’s concern for Jerusalem, His judgment of the nations, and His future plans for Israel.
- These visions are symbolic, but they are not meaningless; each is tied to the Lord’s purpose for Jerusalem, the temple, the priesthood, and the nations.
- Zechariah often needs angelic explanation, reminding the reader not to treat the symbols carelessly.

Encouragement to Build

- Zechariah confirms that Zerubbabel will finish the temple work (4:9).
- The word to Zerubbabel is not by might, nor by power, but by the Lord’s Spirit (4:6).
- The present rebuilding project matters because it stands inside the larger prophetic program for Jerusalem and the kingdom.

IV. Major Themes

The LORD Remembers Jerusalem

- Zechariah’s name fits the book: the Lord remembers His covenant purposes.
- The Lord is “jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy” (1:14).
- Jerusalem’s present weakness does not cancel her future.
- The nations that scattered and afflicted Judah will be judged, and Jerusalem will yet be comforted.

Cleansing and Priestly Restoration

- Joshua the high priest stands in filthy garments, accused by Satan, and is cleansed by the Lord’s command (3:1-5).
- The scene is larger than Joshua personally; it points to Israel’s need for cleansing and priestly restoration.
- The Branch is introduced in this context, connecting cleansing, priesthood, and messianic hope (3:8).

The Branch and the King-Priest Hope

- Zechariah speaks of “my servant the BRANCH” (3:8) and “the man whose name is The BRANCH” (6:12).
- The Branch will build the temple of the Lord, bear glory, sit and rule upon His throne, and be a priest upon His throne (6:12-13).

- This joins royal and priestly themes in a way that reaches beyond Joshua and Zerubbabel to Messiah.

Not by Might, But by My Spirit

- Zerubbabel’s work is not accomplished by human strength alone (4:6).
- The mountain before Zerubbabel will become a plain, and he will bring forth the headstone (4:7).
- The Lord does not despise the day of small things (4:10).

The Coming King

- Zechariah 9:9 presents Zion’s King coming lowly and riding upon an ass.
- The New Testament applies this to Jesus’ triumphal entry (Matt. 21:4-5; John 12:14-15).
- Yet Zechariah also looks to a future day when the King delivers Jerusalem, defeats the nations, and reigns.

Israel’s Pierced Messiah and Future Mourning

- Zechariah 12:10 says Israel will look upon the One whom they pierced and mourn.
- This text is used in John 19:37 and connects the crucifixion with Israel’s future recognition.
- The mourning is followed by a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness (13:1).

The Day of the LORD and the Kingdom

- Zechariah 14 looks to the day when the Lord fights against the nations, stands upon the mount of Olives, and reigns as King over all the earth (14:3-9).
- The book ends with holiness extending through Jerusalem and even ordinary things being marked unto the Lord.
- Zechariah’s prophecy cannot be reduced to the second temple period; it reaches to the Second Coming and kingdom.

V. Structure of the Book

Zechariah 1:1-6 — Return Unto Me

- The book opens with a dated word in the second year of Darius (1:1).
- The Lord calls the remnant to return to Him and warns them not to imitate their fathers (1:2-4).
- The former prophets’ words overtook the fathers, proving the reliability of the Lord’s word (1:5-6).

Zechariah 1:7-6:15 — Night Visions and the Crowning Sign

- The horsemen among the myrtle trees show the Lord’s concern for Jerusalem while the nations sit at ease (1:7-17).
- The horns and craftsmen show judgment on the powers that scattered Judah (1:18-21).
- The measuring line promises Jerusalem’s future expansion and the Lord’s glory in her midst (2:1-13).
- Joshua the high priest is cleansed, and the Branch is promised (3:1-10).
- The golden candlestick and olive trees teach that Zerubbabel’s work is by the Spirit of the Lord (4:1-14).
- The flying roll and ephah visions show the removal of wickedness (5:1-11).
- The four chariots show divine government moving through the earth (6:1-8).
- The crowning of Joshua becomes a sign of the Branch who will build the temple and sit as priest upon His throne (6:9-15).

Zechariah 7:1-8:23 — Fasting, Justice, and Future Joy

- A question about fasting leads to a rebuke of empty ritual without obedience (7:1-7).
- The Lord reminds the people of justice, mercy, and the sins that brought judgment on the fathers (7:8-14).
- The Lord promises to return to Zion, dwell in Jerusalem, and turn former fasts into joy and gladness (8:1-19).
- The nations will yet seek the Lord in Jerusalem, and many will take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew (8:20-23).

Zechariah 9:1-11:17 — The King Presented and the Shepherd Rejected

- Judgment comes on surrounding nations, while Zion is told to rejoice in her coming King (9:1-10).
- The Lord promises deliverance and strength for His people (9:11-10:12).
- The shepherd imagery exposes failed leadership and anticipates the rejected shepherd (11:1-17).
- The thirty pieces of silver and the potter are especially important in light of Judas’s betrayal (11:12-13; Matt. 27:9-10).

Zechariah 12:1-14:21 — Jerusalem, the Pierced One, and the LORD’s Reign

- Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone for all people, and the Lord defends Judah and Jerusalem (12:1-9).
- Israel looks upon the One pierced and mourns deeply (12:10-14).
- A fountain is opened for sin and uncleanness (13:1).
- Idolatry and false prophecy are removed, and the smitten shepherd theme appears (13:2-9).
- The Lord comes in the day of the Lord, stands on the mount of Olives, judges the nations, and becomes King over all the earth (14:1-21).

VI. Why Zechariah Matters

A Prophet of Present Obedience and Future Glory

- Zechariah tells the returned remnant to obey in a small and difficult day, but he refuses to make that small day the final horizon.
- His book connects temple rebuilding, priestly cleansing, Jerusalem’s future, the Branch, the rejected Shepherd, the pierced Messiah, and the coming King.
- It is essential for understanding the prophetic setting of the Gospels, especially the triumphal entry, Judas’s betrayal, the smitten Shepherd, and Israel’s future recognition of Messiah.
- Zechariah keeps the interpreter from treating the return from Babylon as the full restoration; the book still looks ahead to the Lord’s return, Jerusalem’s deliverance, and the kingdom of God on earth.