

Outline of Zechariah

It is our hope that this outline of Zechariah will assist you as you study God's holy Word.

The name Zechariah means "Yahweh remembers." God had not forgotten His people.

Background

In 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:9-10), killed thousands (2 Chronicles 36:17), took 745 people into captivity (Jeremiah 52:30), left some of the poor in the land (2 Kings 25:12), and set up Gedaliah as governor (Jeremiah 40:5). But Gedaliah was murdered and Johanan took all of the remnant who remained in Judea to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:5-7) and there they perished when Nebuchadnezzar came to Egypt.

For 50 years, the land of Judah remained desolate. Had God forgotten His people? Then, in 537 B.C., Cyrus the Mede overthrew Babylon and gave a decree to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:23; Ezra 1:2-4). At that time, 42,360 Jews and 7,337 servants returned to Judah (Ezra 2:64-65) under Zerubbabel and Joshua, enough people to fill a small college football stadium. They began to rebuild the temple and they laid the foundation, but those who remembered the glory of Jerusalem from before its destruction could only weep at the pitiful sight (Ezra 3:12). And immediately they were stopped by their enemies (Ezra 4:24). Where was God? For 15 long years, those in the land struggled to rebuild a land, and they made little progress, "earning wages to put into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). They were at the mercy of their enemies (Zechariah 8:10) and plagued with drought (Haggai 1:10-11).

But God had not forgotten His people. In 520 B.C., the second year of Darius the Great (famous for expanding the Persian Empire to its greatest extent and also for being on the losing end of the battle of Marathon), God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the people to build the temple (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Zechariah was the grandson of Iddo (Zechariah 1:1), one of the heads of the priestly lines (Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Nehemiah 12:16). Though known for encouraging the Jews to build the temple, Zechariah's message looks far beyond the temple.

The book begins with three separate prophecies on three different dates. The first prophecy is approximately two months after the Jews again took up the task of building the post-exilic temple in 520 B.C. (compare Zechariah 1:1 with Haggai 1:15). Three months later (two months to the day after the foundation of the temple was again laid (compare Zechariah 1:7 with Haggai 2:18), Zechariah has a series of eight visions that form the second prophecy (Zechariah 1:7-6:15). Two years later, we have the third prophecy contained in chapters 7 and 8. The book then closes with two prophetic utterances of uncertain dates (chapters 9-11 [see 9:1] and chapters 12-14 [see 12:1]).

Thus, we can outline the book as follows:

I. First Prophecy — The Call to Return 1:1-6

II. Second Prophecy — The Eight Visions and the Rule of the Priest 1:7-6:15

III. Third Prophecy — The Question on Fasting 7-8

IV. The First Burden — Enemies Without will Die; Shepherds Within are Warned 9-11

V. The Second Burden — Messiah's Return 12-14

There is dispute about whether chapters 9-14 were written by a different author(s) than chapters 1-8. Matthew seems to attribute Zechariah 11:12-13 to Jeremiah the prophet (Matthew 27:9). Some scholars see this as proof that this portion of Zechariah is really a compilation of earlier prophecies. Others see these prophecies as postdating the time of Zechariah, especially given the reference to Greece in 9:13. My take is that neither issue provides a convincing reason to see two authors. There are many possible explanations for Matthew's reference and the reference to Greece should be no surprise, given the nature of prophecy and the rise of Greece at this time.

It is no accident that the book begins after the people began work on the temple. Amos, a contemporary of Isaiah, had prophesied that because of disobedience there would be a day of famine of hearing the words of Yahweh (Amos 8:11-12). That famine was broken by Haggai's first message and the people's obedience (Haggai 1:12-15). The stress on God speaking cannot be missed in the book. The book begins with the phrase "the word of Yahweh." This phrase appears 13 times in the book (1:1; 1:7; 4:6; 4:8; 6:9; 7:1; 7:4; 7:8; 8:1; 8:18; 9:1; 11:11; 12:1). Another common Hebrew phrase is "the utterance of Yahweh," translated various ways in the English, occurring 20 times (1:3; 1:4; 1:16; 2:5; 2:6 (2times); 2:10; 3:9; 3:10; 5:4; 8:6; 8:11; 8:17; 10:12; 11:6; 12:1; 12:4; 13:2; 13:7; 13:8). The phrase "says Yahweh" appears 24 times (1:3 (2times); 1:4; 1:14; 1:16; 1:17; 2:8 (2:12); 3:7; 4:6; 6:12; 7:9; 7:13; 8:2; 8:3; 8:4; 8:6; 8:7; 8:9; 8:14 (2times); 8:19; 8:20; 8:23; 11:4). God opens his mouth for His people and, in this longest book of The Twelve, He staggers them with revelations of Himself that are unparalleled.

The covenant name of God, "Yahweh," appears 133 times in the 211 verses of the book, but it is the name "Yahweh of hosts," occurring 53 times, that hits us most. The word "hosts" is the Hebrew word "Sabbaoth," meaning literally "the armies." Israel, at this time, had no armies. The Persian armies ruled the world. God steps in as a commander of another army. The name "Yahweh of hosts" was applied to God first in 1 Samuel 1:3, though the concept has its roots in Joshua 5:14-15. It explodes as a favorite name of God for Isaiah and Amos, and then 150 years later with Jeremiah. It is not used in Ezekiel or Daniel and seldom used by the other earlier prophets, except Amos. But Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi latch onto this name for God, with Zechariah having more mentions of this name than any book outside of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

The book was meant both to encourage and to provide God's response to the building of the second temple. God promises that the temple they began this time will be completed, but He promises far more. He promises a future temple to be built by a future king who will rule the world. And the frequent glimpses of this future king tantalizes us throughout the book. George L. Robinson, a scholar on The Twelve, has stated:

Few books of the Old Testament are as difficult of interpretation as the Book of Zechariah; no other book is as Messianic. Jewish expositors like Abarbanel and Jarchi, and Christian expositors such as Jerome, are forced to concede that they have failed "to find their hands" in the exposition of it, and that in their investigations they passed from one labyrinth to another, and from one cloud into another, until they lost themselves in trying to discover the

prophet's meaning. The scope of Zechariah's vision and the profundity of his thought are almost without a parallel. In the present writer's judgment, his book is the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the Old Testament.

(The original International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

The book is about a future time when God comes to His people (1:3, 16; 2:10; 3:8; 4:9; 6:15; 8:3, 23; 9:9, 14; 10:3; 14:3, 5, 9). The phrase "in that day" occurs 22 times in the book (2:11; 3:10; 6:10; 9:16; 11:11; 12:3; 12:4; 12:6; 12:8(2times); 12:9; 12:11; 13:1; 13:2; 13:4; 14:4; 14:6; 14:8; 14:9; 14:13; 14:20; 14:21). Both the first (3:8-9; 9:9; 11:12-13; 13:7) and the second advent of Christ (2:10-12; 6:12-15; 8:7-8, 14-15, 20-23; 9:10, 14-17; 10:6-12; 12:1-14; 13:1-6, 8-9; 14:1-15) are prophesied in this book. The book strongly supports a plurality within God (1:12; 2:8-11; 3:1-4; 4:6; 4:9; 6:8; 6:15; 7:12; 12:10).

The New Testament quotes or alludes to the book frequently (71 times according to Nestle and Aland).

Structure of the Book: [Note, the common elements serve as points of emphasis in their passages]

First Chiasm:

- 1st and 8th Visions (1:8-11 with 6:1-8) Common Elements: horses, walking to and fro in earth, earth is at resting and at peace
- 2nd and 7th Visions (1:18-21 with 5:5-11) Common Elements: destruction of evil, heads, scattered/gathered, skilled craftsmen: 2nd evil nations and Israel scattered and unable to lift head, craftsman cast them out; 7th wickedness gathered, head thrust down and covered with lead; building place in Shinar
- 3rd and 6th Visions (2:1-5 with 5:1-4) Common Elements: common objects, blessing/curse: 3rd has measuring line and a blessing to Jerusalem; 6th has scroll and a cursing to evil doers
- 4th and 5th Visions (3 and 4) This is the Point of Emphasis: Common Elements: The Messiah as Priest and Ruler

Second Chiasm:

- Chapter 8 with Chapter 14 Common Elements: God's Return to Jerusalem and peace (8:3-6; 14:5b-11) and feasts (8:19; 14:16-19)
- Chapter 9 with Chapter 13 Common Elements: Salvation from Evil, Chapter 9 being the evil without (the nations) (9:1-8) and Chapter 13 being the evil within (13:1); the Passion week of Christ (Chapter 9 being Palm Sunday (9:9) and Chapter 11 being Good Friday (13:6-7)
- Chapter 10 with Chapter 12 Common Elements: strengthening of Judah (10:3-5; 12:6-8); response to the Lord: 10:19-22 (rejoice, pray, and seek) and 12:10-14 (mourn)
- Chapter 11 This is the Point of Emphasis: Messiah as Rejected Shepherd (11:6-13)

Parallelism:

- First Prophecy (1:1-6) with Chapter 7: Common Elements: reference to the former prophets and God's judgment on the fathers (1:1-6a and 7:7, 11-14) (Both sections are introductory to the two halves of the book.)
- First Vision with Chapter 8: Common Elements: God's zeal and return to Jerusalem (1:14-17 with 8:1-3)
- Second Vision with Chapter 9: Common Elements: Destruction of nations that opposed Israel (1:18-21 with 9:1-8, 13, 15-16)
- Third Vision with Chapter 10: Common Elements: Overflowing blessings of multitudes of people (2:1-5 with 10:9-10) Jerusalem inhabited without walls, Israel so numerous there is no room found for them
- Fourth Vision with Chapter 11: Common Elements: Two Emphasis Points from Respective Chiasms; both focusing on Messiah (3:8 with 11:12-13)
- Fifth Vision with Chapter 12: Common Elements: Spirit of God (4:6 with 12:10); house of David (Zerubbabel is in the line of David) (4:6, 7, 9 with 12:7, 8, 12)
- Sixth and Seventh Visions (some scholars argue that these should be viewed as only one vision given the Hebrew language used) with Chapter 13: Common Elements: Removal of evil 5:1-11 with 13:1 (sin and uncleanness) and 13:6-7 (death of Christ) and 13:9 (purification of Israel)
- Eighth Vision with Chapter 14: Common Elements: The Triumph of God (6:1-8 with 14:1-11)

And in between the two sections of the book is 6:9-15, the most detailed Messianic portrait.

The High Points of the Book:

- The middle of the first Chiasm: 3-4 Messianic with the removal of sin and the restoration of true worship
- The middle of the second Chiasm: 11:4-17 The Messiah as a sold shepherd
- The middle of the book and the point of greatest emphasis structurally: 6:9-15 The Messiah will build another temple, sit and rule there as king and serve as priest.
- These Compose three Great Messianic Passages of the Book among 9 strong references to the Messiah (2:8-11; 3:8-10; 4:9, 14; 6:9-15; 9:9-10; 11:13; 12:10; 13:6-7; 14)