

The Prophet Zechariah

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Synopsis:

The Prophetic book of Zechariah is the 11th book in the collection of the ‘minor’ prophets and second last book of the Old Testament. The perspective of the author is post - exile, that is, after the southern kingdom’s (Judah’s) captivity in Babylon and the return of a number of the exiles under Ezra and Nehemiah (538 B.C. ‘Edict of Cyrus’). Zechariah dates his writing for us and that would be about 520 B.C. The book treats themes consistent with the promises of God throughout the Old Testament. The reconstruction of the Temple, encouraging though disappointing, is thus accompanied by this message of God to his people through the prophet in order to remind them of these promises, to assure them of God’s continued concern for the nation, and to call them to faithfulness to God as his people. He must be read in the context also of the pre-exilic and exilic prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Authorship: Zechariah means “he whom God remembers.” Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel is of a the clan of the priests (a son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo [1.1,7]), the head of one of the priestly families that returned from exile along with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Nehemiah 12.4). He followed his grandfather in that office under the high priest Jehoiakim (Nehemiah 12.16). His references to himself as ‘son of Iddo’ (Ezra 5.1; 6.14). Tradition only states about his death that he died in old age and was buried near to Haggai. He is mentioned as having been put to death between the temple and the altar (Mt. 23.35).

Content (outline):

Introduction (1.1-6)

- I. Seven visions (1.7-6.15)
- II. Guidance *vis a vis* an exilic feast day (burning of the Temple) (ch. 7 & 8)
- III. Prophecy *vis a vis* worldly power (chs. 9-11)
- IV. Prophecy *vis a vis* Israel (chs. 12-14)

Introduction (1.1-6)

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, ²The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. ³Therefore 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. ⁴Be 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”. ⁵Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? ⁶But 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.

(520 B.C.) After Exile in (586 B.C.).

2 months after Haggai’s first prophecy and commencement of the temple rebuilding (see Hag. 1.1 & 15); a few weeks after Haggai’s prophecy of the new temple’s future glory (Hag. 2.1-9; [vs. 7!]).

The prophetic call to repentance.

Refers to the former prophets (not so much the exilic prophets) stating God’s willingness to forgive his people in their repentant hearing his law and condemnation; to turn from their sins to live.

Justice not overturned by grace.