

The Prophets

Lesson #54

Zechariah

Outline

I. **Visions And Messages Of Exhortation (1:1-6:15)**

- A. The call to repentance (1:1-6).
- B. The visions of Zechariah (1:7-6:8).
 1. The horses among the myrtle trees (1:7-17).
 2. The four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21).
 3. The man with the measuring line (2:1-13).
 4. The cleansing of Joshua, the high priest (3:1-10).
 5. The golden lampstand and olive trees (4:1-14).
 6. The flying scroll (5:1-4).
 7. The woman in the basket (5:5-11).
 8. The four chariots (6:1-8).
- C. The crowning of Joshua (6:9-15).

II. **The Question Of Fasting (7:1-8:23)**

- A. The fast days of Israel (7:1-7).
- B. What God required of their fathers (7:8-14).
- C. The restoration of Israel (8:1-23).

III. **The Two Burdens Of Zechariah (9:1-14:21)**

- A. The rejection of the Messiah (9:1-11:17).
 1. The judgment on surrounding nations (9:1-8).
 2. The coming of the Messiah (9:9-10:12).
 3. The rejection of the Messiah (11:1-17).
- B. The reign of the Messiah (12:1-14:21).
 1. The deliverance of Israel (12:1-13:9).
 2. The reign of the Messiah (14:1-21).

Notes

Zechariah 1:7-6:15

- The call to repentance (1:1-6).
 - The eighth month of Darius' second year was October-November 520 B.C. (cf. Haggai 1:1). While it is clear that one of Zechariah's (and Haggai's) purposes was to encourage the Israelites to rebuild the temple, it is equally clear that Zechariah was also vitally interested in spiritual renewal.
- The prophet begins his call to repentance by pointing back to the fathers who lived before the exile. The displeasure with them caused God to send them into captivity.

- The experience of history should be one of the greatest teachers people have, but the teacher has dull students. Each new generation must learn for itself.
- The visions of Zechariah (1:7-6:8).
 - The horses among the myrtle trees (1:7-17).
 - Exactly five months after work on the house had begun (Haggai 1:15), and two months after Haggai's last speech (Haggai 2:10, 20), a series of eight visions was shown to Zechariah in one night.
 - The angel of God explains that the riders of the various colored horses are God's servants or messengers who He has sent to keep watch over the earth, especially the nations of the earth.
 - It seems likely that the chief of the riders is the angel of God. The angel asks, "How long" before mercy is shown on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah? The 70 years is the time foretold by Jeremiah (25:11-12; 29:10).
 - The four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21).
 - Horns are symbols of power of strength (Amos 6:13) and four is the complete world number. The four stand for all world powers who have scattered God's people, sifting them among the nations (Amos 9:9).
 - Immediately, in the same context, God showed the prophet four smiths or carpenters. They probably represent what was formerly known in this country as "blacksmiths."
 - As the horns had scattered and humiliated Judah, so now the smiths had come to terrify the powers. God is the judge of all and every nation meets its match in Him.
 - The man with the measuring line (2:1-13).
 - The latter angel seems to possess superior authority over either "the man" or the interpreting angel.
 - The "young man" represents those among the Jews who thought only of physical Jerusalem, who had little concept of the spiritual nature of what God was doing.
 - God further assured the "young man" and the prophet, and through him all the people, that God will be a wall of fire about His new Jerusalem. The vision assured the people that the Jerusalem of God's concern is spiritual.
 - The cleansing of Joshua, the high priest (3:1-10).
 - The vision now shown to the prophet does not involve just one man, Joshua the high priest, but must be thought of as including the entire priesthood, and through them the whole nation.
 - Satan, "the adversary" or accuser of men, wanted to prevent God from accepting Joshua, and through him the nation would be denied favor with God because of sin.

- The filthy garments represent the sins by which the priesthood and the nation had become polluted (cf. Isaiah 64:6). The removal of the filthy garments was symbolic of the taking away of the iniquity which they symbolized.
- What God had just done in assuring the priesthood a place of access to Him would find its full and ultimate realization in the Branch. These would be a sign or assurance of future completeness of access under the full and complete High Priest.
- The golden lampstand and olive trees (4:1-14).
 - The idea expressed by the seven would be that an abundance of oil for the lamps is amply provided by God. Although the prophet had never seen the candlestick of the tabernacle or one of the ten in Solomon's temple, he should have known something of the significance of its symbolism.
 - This vision was a message to the despairing Zerubbabel. No doubt he viewed the task before him of rebuilding the temple and the temper and weakness of the people and had become discouraged. A word of assurance from God would be his greatest need.
 - Zerubbabel is further encouraged by the assurance that all obstacles that stand in his way will be removed. Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the house and "his hands shall also finish it." The completed temple at the hands of Zerubbabel by the power of God would be the assurance that God had sent His angel to them.
 - The significance of the olive trees is that they are a picture of the completeness of God's Spirit by which the light of truth would be shed abroad in His temple. The "anointed ones" are evidently the offices of Joshua, the high priest, and of Zerubbabel, the governor.
- The flying scroll (5:1-4).
 - The roll probably indicates the demand for holiness upon all who draw near to God in His holy sanctuary. The "whole land" indicates not the whole world or earth, but the land of God's people, wherever they may be, whether in the land of Canaan or the uttermost parts of the earth.
 - It appears that the people who had returned from captivity had grown careless in enforcing the law of right relation to both man and God. The curse would enter into and abide in the midst of the house and consume it.
- The woman in the basket (5:5-11).
 - The ephah probably was used to designate a large basket or some such container of sufficient size to enclose a woman. The ephah and its content represent the people of wickedness throughout the land. They, together with their wickedness, would be removed out of the land.

- The two women indicated the instrumentalities of God for the removal of wickedness from the land. Shinar was a symbol of Satan's world government. The vision signifies the complete removal of wickedness from God's land to a kingdom of this world, suited for it; it symbolized a complete separation of the two, and this separation must be maintained throughout time.
- The four chariots (6:1-8).
 - The brass or bronze denotes the enduring nature of the mountains. The mountains seem to serve as pillars that guard the exit of the enclosure between which the chariots must come as they are sent on their mission by God.
 - The similarity between Ezekiel (5:16-17; 14:21) and Zechariah supports the conclusion that these chariots drawn by multiple colored horses and sent forth by God to the heathen nations indicate His judgments of famine, pestilence and sword, which were victorious in their mission.
 - Babylon had gone beyond all bounds of humanitarian conduct in the affliction of nations (Isaiah 14:6; 47:6); and, although the nation had fallen, the whole spirit of heathen cruelty that had characterized Assyria and Babylon and which now lived in the Persian Empire had not yet been judged.
 - The mission of the two messengers sent toward the north country is said by God to have quieted His Spirit. His Spirit is quieted when His righteousness is vindicated through judgment (cf. Ezekiel 5:13; 16:42; 24:13).
- The crowning of Joshua (6:9-15).
 - The three men had recently come from those of the captivity in Babylon. Zechariah was to take the offerings from these men and make a double-tiered crown which would signify the double office of priest and king.
 - Although Zerubbabel was governor, of the royal seed of David and in the genealogy of Christ, he was not king. Joshua was the bona fide high priest. The crown was to be placed only on Joshua's head.
 - The high priest and these men were to be for a sign that God would fulfill their true significance in the Branch (3:8). The Branch would build the spiritual temple of God. This temple is the church of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:21-22; Hebrews 3:6).
 - In the throne of the Branch is combined both the kingly and priestly offices over God's people. This is abundantly confirmed in the New Testament (Acts 2:29-31; Hebrews 1:3, 13; 1 Corinthians 15:25-26; Revelation 20:11-15). The fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy in Christ refutes the claim of millenarians that Christ is to rule on earth for one thousand years at His return from heaven.

Zechariah 7:1-8:23

- The fast days of Israel (7:1-7).
 - It was in the fourth year of Darius' reign, 518 B.C., when Zechariah comes forth with another recorded message, almost two years since he had received the eight night visions. "Chislev" corresponded to our December/January.
 - To judge from the foreign names -- Sharezer and Regemmelech -- the members of the delegation had probably been born in Babylonia. They directed their question to the temple priests and the divinely appointed prophets -- the latter would have included Zechariah -- at Jerusalem.
 - The reply was blunt and was directed to all the people of the land. It was a message that everyone needed; for those of Bethel, as well as others, had kept the fasts out of a selfish motive.
 - The fasts that were now being kept had not been authorized by God, but had grown out of their own self-pity rather than from a consciousness of sin. They needed to learn that men could not win the favor of God either by fasting or by eating and drinking.
- What God required of their fathers (7:8-14).
 - A fuller answer is given by God in this section to their question of fasting. The reply is made in a continued appeal to what had been said by the former prophets.
 - This section explains why the people's fasting meant nothing to God. They were guilty of legalism: an external adherence to the letter of the law while disregarding the internal spirit -- the true divine intent -- of the law.
 - Neither God nor His word has changed; both remain immutable. Those who lived before the captivity had refused to hearken. Their outward acts of rebellion, transgression and rejection had been symptoms and expressions of a perverse heart.
- The restoration of Israel (8:1-23).
 - Zechariah now contrasts Israel's past judgment with her future restoration; she is to repent and live righteously because of the promise of her future restoration. In the midst of whatever discouragement and uncertainty of the future that may have gripped the people, God gave them a strong word of assurance.
 - It was not time to fast over a destroyed city and temple; it was time to listen to the prophets of God, to be strong and to complete the work which had begun. The curse that had rested on them would now be removed.
 - On the ground of God's keeping His word in fulfilling His threat, the people could rest assured that He would keep His promise to do good and bless them.

- The people's mourning (expressed in fasting) will be turned into joy, for their low position among the nations will be changed. They will be a source of blessing to Gentiles, for all the peoples of the earth will join them to worship the Lord.

Zechariah 9:1-14:21

- The rejection of the Messiah (9:1-11:17).
 - The judgment on surrounding nations (9:1-8).
 - The judgment with which the first prophecy begins commences north of Palestine and proceeds south down the west coast of Syro-Palestine (9:1-7). However, Israel will be preserved for the coming of her Messiah (9:8). Thus this first section stands in sharp contrast with 1:11 and prepares the way for 9:9.
 - Tyre had demonstrated her wisdom in building a stronghold on an island about a half mile offshore from the mainland city and in turning to the sea where she established herself as a great commercial power.
 - With the fall of Tyre and Sidon, fear grips the inhabitants of Ashkelon. Gaza is sore pained at what she may expect, for her king will perish from her; no more will one of her own rule in the city. The pride of the Philistines would now be cut off.
- The coming of the Messiah (9:9-10:12).
 - The "daughter of Zion" and the "daughter of Jerusalem" are commanded to exult, for the long expected King is coming to Zion. This must be the Messiah. There is no other individual critics have been able to plausibly substitute.
 - The character of the Messiah's rule and kingdom is described. It would not be established, defended or extended by methods of force. His message would be one of peace.
 - God reveals Himself as a mighty warrior, using as weapons of His warfare Judah as His bow and Ephraim as His arrow. God here speaks of the Grecian invasion under Alexander and the conditions that followed in the days of the Maccabees and even in the time of the Messiah.
 - In contrast to God's disposition and power to provide in chapter 10, the idols can neither promise nor provide anything; they are utterly false. Although the remnant had returned from Babylon, where they were in captivity as a result of idolatry, they were yet subject to the temptation of lies.
 - God would call for His scattered people and they would return to Him from all directions. He would dry up the source of their affliction, and in the strength of their Lord they would be secure.

- The rejection of the Messiah (11:1-17).
 - Lebanon is called upon to open its doors that the fire may devour its cedars. Lebanon had long stood as the northern entrance to the land of God's people and the way through which the destroyers would come. From Lebanon to Bashan to the Jordan, judgment and destruction would come.
 - Those who oppressed the flock, making themselves rich by their oppression, tried to offset their wicked conduct and inhumane treatment of the people by claiming that God had favored them and that, therefore, they were not guilty.
 - Because they rejected the shepherd, which constituted a rejection of what God was doing for them, the prophet announced three scourges by which they would be consumed: pestilence, sword and famine.
 - The prophet is instructed to take the instruments of an evil shepherd, a foolish one who is selfish, seeking honors and glory to himself. Most likely, this evil shepherd would be the kind of leader Israel would receive if they rejected God. They will have no interest in the people to visit those cut off, seek the scattered nor heal those who are wounded. Instead, they will feed themselves at the expense of the sheep, even tearing their hoofs in pieces.
- The reign of the Messiah (12:1-14:21).
 - The deliverance of Israel (12:1-13:9).
 - Jerusalem is pictured as a cup that the nations gather around, eager to partake of its contents, but as they drink from her, they become intoxicated and reel. Jerusalem is compared to a heavy, "burdensome stone" that the nations attempt to move but only hurt themselves in the process.
 - The Lord is the one who does the saving, the shielding or protecting and the destroying of enemies. He will make the feeblest among them like David, who was celebrated as a great warrior. God will be with them, will go before them, and will give them supernatural strength.
 - The strength through which God enables His saints to overcome and defeat their enemies is provided through His grace and their turning to Him in supplication. They had rejected God in the person of the shepherd, and now they "pierce" Him in the person of the Son (cf. John 19:37).
 - In the context of this section, three great events are brought together as of equal importance and so interrelated as to produce and effect salvation mutually. These are the piercing of the Lord (12:10), the opening of the fountain for sin (13:1) and the smiting of the shepherd (13:7).

- In the time under consideration in these two chapters (clearly Messianic), when revelation would be complete and true prophecy would cease, anyone who would be so presumptuous as to claim the power of prophecy would be a false prophet.
- The reign of the Messiah (14:1-21).
 - The "day of the Lord" is a day in which the Lord would manifest Himself to His people in a special way. The spiritual Jerusalem is the capital of His spiritual kingdom (cf. Hebrews 12:22; Galatians 4:26) and the world would assault it (Daniel 7:21; Revelation 13:7).
 - This attack by the world on His spiritual citadel gives God an opportunity to go forth and fight against those nations and in defense of His own city and people.
 - God's rule as King over all the earth would be encapsulated in the Messiah. In the assurance of God's protection there would be no fear of a curse, for Jerusalem would dwell safely.
 - God announced the plague that would fall upon the peoples who war against Jerusalem. They will experience a living death as their flesh rots away while they stand upon their feet; they are dead while they live.
 - Under the Messiah the converted Gentiles will be one with the converted Jews, and both will worship the Lord according to His prescribed service. The use of the feast of tabernacles indicates the rejoicing and thanksgiving of the combined remnants.
 - In that day everything that pertains to the kingdom of God will be holy to Him. All of the wonderful and glorious promises mentioned in this chapter are realized in the church today. Every individual and every principle of worship and service has been cleansed and dedicated by the blood of Christ (Matthew 26:28).