

The Message of the Minor Prophets The Message of Zechariah

*[Please note: sections in blue type are not broadcast on every radio station.
English Standard Version of the Scriptures used unless otherwise stated.]*

Many people find the prophecy of Zechariah rather puzzling. But don't switch off your radio, I'm about to give you a simple structure to the book; some clues as to its symbolism and a swift run through all of the book!

The overall message of Zechariah can be found in the very first verse, 1:1: "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo." The meanings of these three names gives clues as to the overall message of the prophecy. Iddo means 'timely'. Zechariah means 'Jah has remembered.' Berechiah means 'the blessing of Jah.' From these three names we can deduce Zechariah's message to Israel - that at 'the appointed time'¹ Jah, that is, the LORD will bless His people.

History

So, when was Zechariah's prophecy given? Zechariah's family were part of Israel's godly remnant, who returned from Babylon probably around 538 B.C., when Cyrus made his decree (cp. Is. 45:1-13). The remnant's intention was to rebuild the Temple altar and to reconstruct Jerusalem. In 520 B.C., Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to these Jews urging the people to complete the temple rebuild, which they had begun but then stopped (Ezra 5:1-2). In 516 B.C., the Temple rebuild was completed under the civic leadership of Zerubbabel and the high priest, Joshua (Ezra 6:14-19). But Zechariah's prophecy also previews Christ's, that's Messiah's, kingdom of power and great glory:

Behold, your king is coming to you: righteous and having salvation
(9:9).

Only then will true peace and prosperity be enjoyed by the nation.

The Structure of the Book of Zechariah

The Book of Zechariah divides readily into two sections:

1. the Apocalyptic Section, chs. 1-8.
2. the Prophetic Section, chs. 9-14.

The Apocalyptic Section contains three Messages:

- 1:1-6.
- 1:7 - 6:15.
- chs. 7-8.

The Prophetic Section has two Oracles:

- chs. 9-11
- and chs. 12-14.

Please now open your Bible at Zechariah and I'll start my comprehensive review of this prophecy. I'll be reading from the ESV, which uses the Name "The LORD" to translate the Hebrew Name "Jehovah" or "Jah", the covenant Name of the God of Israel.

God's initial message to the Remnant (1:2-6)

God's initial message to the remnant is found in 1:2-6 and describes Israel's long, cyclical history of: blessing; disobedience; warning; disregard of the warning; disciplinary punishment; challenging exhortation; repentance in measure; relief from the discipline; restored communion; and bestowal of new and greater blessings (see also 7:8-14 & 8:14-17). But it was directed at the returned remnant:

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me...and I will return to you. ...Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD 1:3-4).

The Apocalyptic Section

The eight visions, which occurred in one night (1:7 - 6:8)

Zechariah's second message, in 1:7-6:15, consists of a series of eight visions. Have you ever had a bad night's sleep, which was interrupted by vivid dreams? Zechariah had these eight visions all in one night, 1:7 - 6:8!

Vision 1, the man among the myrtle trees (1:8-17)

In his first vision (1:12-17), Zechariah saw a man on a red horse among myrtle trees, who promised blessings for restored Jerusalem. The other horses represent the providentially controlled Gentile powers (the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empires) that God used to discipline Israel when they disobeyed Him. These nations always over-stepped their God-given powers (v. 15). The Angel of the LORD ² mentioned in verse 11 is a pre-Incarnation theophany of Christ, that is, an appearance of the Son of God in human form before He "became flesh" at His birth.

Vision 2, the horns and the craftsmen (1:18-21)

In his second vision (1:18-21), Zechariah saw four horns and four craftsmen. The horns symbolised angelic powers which controlled the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman Empires that had/would scatter Judah and destroy Jerusalem. The craftsmen were the succeeding power which would deal with the previous one as we learn from the prophet Daniel's visions.³ Therefore, the fourth Craftsman is Christ himself, who when He appears in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30) destroys the revived Roman empire and its head, the beast from the sea (Rev. 13:1-8 & 19:11-20).

Vision 3, the man with the measuring line (ch.2)

In ch.2, his third vision, Zechariah saw a man with a measuring line measuring Jerusalem. The vision was to reassure Israel that God has ultimate/overall control.

Jerusalem shall be inhabited as villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and livestock in it. And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst (2:4-5).

The expressions, "after his glory" (v. 8) and "in that day" (v. 11), define when this prophecy will be fulfilled.

Vision 4, the cleansing of Joshua the high priest (ch. 3)

In ch. 3, his fourth vision, Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD and Satan accusing Joshua (v.1). But God intervened and rebuked Satan (v. 2). Then the LORD then had Joshua's filthy garments, i.e., his iniquity taken away (vv. 2-4) and replaced with clean clothes and a turban (vv. 6-8a). Joshua means 'Jehovah saves', which is also what the name Jesus means. Chapter 3 verse 8b is key, "Behold, I will bring my servant the Branch." The Branch is identified in Isaiah 11:1-2 as King David's offspring:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

(See also Jer. 23:5-6 & 33:15; Isa. 4:2 & 11:1, 10). The seven-eyed engraved stone set before Joshua in v. 9 symbolised Christ, who is competent to govern the nation (see Isa. 28:16) once He has removed Israel's iniquity in one day. Christ is the Anointed One, who is replete with the fullness of the Spirit of God.

Zechariah 3 v.10 presents the safety and security of Christ's Kingdom:

In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree.

Vision 5, the golden lampstand flanked by the two olive trees (ch. 4)

Zechariah must have drifted off to sleep because he had to be wakened to see his fifth vision of a golden lampstand flanked by two olive trees. Ch. 4 was God's message to Israel's civic ruler, Zerubbabel. He was informed that he would succeed in rebuilding both the temple and the nation, not by military force, nor by any human authority, but only "by my Spirit" (vv. 6-7). The great mountain symbolised the obstacles Zerubbabel encountered (see Ezra). But every difficulty was removed and the headstone put in place to complete the building in "a day of small things" (v. 10, cp. Haggai 2:3). Everything happened under the seven eyes of the LORD (v. 10, see also 3:9) for the "seven eyes...are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev. 5:6). The two anointed ones of Zechariah 4:11-14 were Joshua and Zerubbabel through whom grace flowed for the remnant's benefit. In full measure, it will flow through Christ when He sits as Priest-King upon His throne (Ps. 110:1, 4). So prophetically, ch. 4 is not about Zerubbabel, it's about Christ who is both the Millennial Temple's Foundation Stone or The Cornerstone and its Capstone.

The Foundation Stone or The Cornerstone

In chapter 4 v. 9, Zerubbabel chose the correct primary cornerstone when he built Israel's second Temple. According to God's plan, Messiah is foundational for the establishment of the nation: "From him comes the cornerstone" (10:4). But when Christ came to His own people, they did not receive Him (John 1:11). He was "the stone that the builders rejected", who "has become the cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22, cp. Isa. 28:16). The Lord Jesus reminded His rejectors of this adding v. 23 of the Psalm, "This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matt. 21:42). At His appearing, Christ himself will build the Millennial Temple for Israel (see Zech. 6:12-13 quoted below).

The Capstone

In Zechariah 4:7, the Lord promised the returned remnant that their leader, "Zerubbabel...shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it.'" At His Appearing, when Israel nationally recognises the Lord Jesus to be their Messiah and Saviour, they'll give Him the most honoured position in the Temple. Metaphorically, they'll place Him as the topmost position in the building, the top stone (YL, ESV, ASV) or capstone (LITV, NKJV), or headstone (KJV, Darby, RV) that which crowns the whole structure. This they will do this in the same manner as Zerubbabel did

when he completed their second Temple. Symbolically, as the top stone, Christ will be the Head of the nation and, by extension, of the entire world throughout His entire Millennial reign.

Vision 6, the flying scroll (5:1-4)

In Zechariah's sixth vision, 5:1-4, he saw a flying scroll, which symbolised the Law with its authority over all Israel. Two of Israel's common sins, stealing (a sin against man) and casual oath making (a sin against God) manifested that their indifference towards His law was the reason for their captivity in Babylon.

Vision 7, the woman sitting in a basket (5:5-11)

In Zechariah's seventh vision, 5:5-11, he saw a woman sitting in a basket. The curse from the flying scroll was removed in an ephah, that is, a measuring basket (v. 6). The woman, Wickedness, symbolised the idolatrous systems of Babylon (see Gen. 11:2, Isa. 21:9 & Rev. 17:5). These had contaminated Israel (Ex. 32 with Acts 7:39-43). This idolatry was taken back to Shinar by two women with stork-like wings - symbolising how God cleansed the nation (cp. ch.13, Israel's future/ final cleansing).

Vision 8, the four chariots (6:1-8)

In Zechariah's eighth vision, 6:1-8, he saw four chariots drawn by horses, which again symbolised the angelic powers (called "the four winds of heaven" in v. 5) controlling the four great world-empires (v. 1, cp. 1:9-11). They were sent out by the LORD and produced conditions of peace in "the north country" (vv. 7-8), which was north of Israel, where the first two empires were located. There these 'horses' influenced the Medo-Persian Empire rulers' attitude to the benefit of the remnant. Overall, God used the four empires to accomplish His will for Israel.

Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)

Zechariah's second Message concludes in a most remarkable way when he is instructed by the LORD to make crowns (v. 11, NKJV margin) from silver and gold to set on the head of Joshua the high priest and to say to him,

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place. ...It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honour [or, the majesty, LITV] and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between [both offices]" (vv. 11-13a).

Thereafter, the crowns were to be placed in the finished temple as a lasting reminder, or memorial, to Israel of their coming Messiah, who will build the Millennial Temple (vv. 14-15). Christ will be Israel's King-Priest, who shall bear double honours for only He is qualified and capable of displaying the excellences of, and fulfilling, these two functions in one Person.

[The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'](#)
[The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! \[...\] The LORD has sworn, and will not relent, 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek' \(Ps. 110:1-4\).](#)

Thus says the LORD of Hosts⁴

Zechariah's third message starts in ch. 7. Some of the remnant had sought guidance from Jehovah in relation to the fasts that they had observed during their seventy years of captivity (vv. 1-3). The people had instituted fasts to bewail their situation, but now that the temple was being rebuilt, should they continue? But God questions their motives in asking (v. 5) for there was no evidence of true repentance nor was their attitude right (vv. 8-11). Instead, they were instructed to

execute true justice, show mercy and compassion to everyone, and not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the alien and the poor (vv. 9-10).

Future Millennial Peace and Prosperity for Zion

Ch. 8 starts another revelation (v. 1) and is divided up by words like, "Thus says the LORD of Hosts"⁴. God was zealous/jealous for Zion (v. 2). In the future, the Lord would return and dwell in Jerusalem (v. 3). Jerusalem would be repopulated and blessed with longevity of life (vv. 4-6). The LORD of Hosts promised to re-gather the scattered remnants of the whole of Israel (vv. 7-8). He encouraged His people to be strong and not to doubt His word (vv. 9-10). He will turn poverty and the barrenness into bounty; and cursing into blessings (vv. 11-13). Jerusalem's administration (i.e., in their gates) will be in righteousness and truth (vv. 14-17). God will turn their fastings into feasts (vv. 18-19). Israel, with Jerusalem its capital, will then be the centre of world government (vv. 20-23).

Behold, your king is coming to you!

The Prophetic Section of Zechariah commences in ch. 9. Chs.9-10 are a 'burden' or an 'oracle.' Although 9:1-8 foretold the destruction of Israel's neighbours by the Grecian Empire, this action will be repeated by the Lord at His Appearing (v. 4), when He'll protect Jerusalem from its oppressors (v. 8). However, 9:9 was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus when he rode into Jerusalem offering Himself as the true Son of David.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you: righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Both Matthew and John quote Zech. 9:9 in their Gospel accounts from the Septuagint (Matt. 21:1-11 & John 12:12-16). However, Jesus was rejected by the Jews as their King (John 19:14-15), but God's plans for His Christ and Israel cannot be thwarted. So, Zechariah 9:10 bypasses their unbelief and immediately prophesies His future worldwide rule:

His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

All this is brought about "because of the blood of my [the LORD's] covenant with [Israel]" (v. 11), which must refer to the new covenant God will make with them (see Jer. 31:31-37). Christ confirmed this in Matthew 26:28:

This is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Blessing Enjoyed by Israel (ch. 10)

In ch.10, the remnant was encouraged to pray for the Spring rain (see Deut. 11:14), whose return is directly linked to the presence of the Lord during the Millennium (see Joel 2:23, 26-29). The Lord will punish the wicked leaders who led the people astray (vv. 2-3a, cp. Ezek. 34:10). In v. 3b He promises to use Judah in battle against their oppressors (cp. 9:16).

Messiah's Shepherd-Credentials

But ch. 10 is about Israel's final restoration by the Lord of His flock. His anger and punishment are measured out on their wicked shepherds/leaders who led the people astray (vv. 2-3a, cp. Ezek. 34:10). Verse 4 describes Messiah's credential as Israel's true Shepherd (Ps. 80:1):

- He is "the cornerstone" (Ps. 118:22, Gen. 49:24, Isa. 28:16 with 1 Pet. 2:6) who is stable, providing lasting blessing for Israel (see Gen. 49:24).

- He is "the tent peg [or, nail]," who will bear the glory and support the nation (see Zech. 6:13, Isa. 22:23-25).
- He is "the battle bow," who will accomplish great victories and protect the nation.
- He is the Exactor [v. 4, Darby] who empowers others (v. 5).
- Finally, He is Israel's Saviour and Gatherer (10:6-12). He'll bring back Judah and Ephraim, that is, reunited Israel to their land (vv. 6-7 & 9-10, cp. Rom. 11:26-27). Verses 8 and 11 state how and why the Lord will do this (cp. Hosea 1:10).

Shepherds of the flock (11:1-17)

Ch. 11 describes Israel when led by their failed shepherds, (vv. 3, 5 & 8, cp. thieves, robbers, and hirelings in John 10:7-21). God pitied the devastated flock (v. 4, cp. Matt. 9:36). In vv. 7-14, Zechariah personifies the words and actions of the faithful shepherd. Verses 15-17 prophesy of the foolish, worthless shepherd, Anti-Christ. Therefore, ch. 11 is relevant to three periods of Israel's history: one, Israel in Zechariah's day; two, Israel at Christ's first advent; three future, apostate Israel deceived by Anti-Christ. Verse 7 refers to the faithful Shepherd's two staffs, which protect, defend, and keep the flock together (cp. Ps. 23:4). Verses 12-13 prophesy Christ's betrayal by Judas Iscariot, who "went to the chief priests and said, 'What will you give me, if I deliver him over to you?' And they paid him thirty pieces of silver" (Matt. 26:14-15).

Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by...the prophet, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel' (Matt. 27:9).

Messiah's rejection caused the two staffs (which speak of God's grace towards, and the brotherhood between, Judah and Israel) to be broken (Zech. 11:14).

They look on Me...whom they...pierced (Ch.12)

Chs. 12-14 form Zechariah's second oracle. It came from the Creator God (12:1, cp. Isa.42:5). In 12:1-9, Messiah's sudden appearance as Israel's Deliverer will destroy all Gentile armies in the final siege of Jerusalem (see also Joel 3:9-12 & Rev. 16:14-16). In vv. 2-3, the cup of drunkenness describes Israel's awful Great Tribulation experience (cp. Is. 51:21-23), when God will use these nations to exact judgment upon the Israel (cp. Vision 1, 1:8-17). But vv. 4-9 state that when all seems lost for Israel, they will be miraculously helped, and Jerusalem will be saved then preserved by Messiah's intervention (Rev. 19:11-21). Verses 10-14 describe how God will effect Israel's repentance (cp. Isa. 44:3-5, Ezek. 36:26-27 & Joel 2:28-32), when they look upon him "whom they have pierced" (v.10, with Isa.53:5).

Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd (ch.13)

In ch. 13:1-2a, Zechariah prophesies that Israel will be cleansed from "sin and uncleanness" and all idolatry (cp. Hosea 14:8). All false prophets will be removed (v. 2b-3), and humble prophet-farmers will emerge (vv. 4-5). In v. 6, the exchange about "wounds in thine hands" (KJV) and Christ' startling reply, "The wounds I received in the house of my friends" will confront repentant and cleansed Israel with the reality of His death for them (cp. Matt. 27:25). [They will then confess:](#)

[Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all \(Isa. 53:4-6\).](#)

In Zechariah 13:7, God described Christ as:

1. "My shepherd", the true shepherd (cp. Isa. 40:10-11 & John. 10:11).

2. "The man who stands next to me", that is, "is My Companion" (v. 7, NKJV)- He who is both Man and God.

In Matthew 26:31, the Lord quoted Zechariah 13:7b-9 to His disciples just before they fled from Him in Gethsemane. However, Zechariah continues his prophecy that the true sheep of Israel indeed were scattered but not forgotten; and that they'll be gathered again through a process of judgment and refining (cp. Ezek.5:12). In v. 8, "cut-off" means that "two thirds" that is, apostate Israel will suffer death and pass into eternal punishment as a direct result of God's judgment. But verse 9 states that the other third (true Israel) will be refined through the fire of testing and suffering, with each one being brought into a personal relationship with God (cp. Hosea 1:9 & 2:23).

His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives (ch.14)

Zechariah 14 is the climax of his prophecy. It's about Christ delivering Israel when "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) come to an end. Verses 1-3 state that in the Day of the LORD,¹ He will fight against the Gentile nations in "a day of battle", Armageddon, to rescue Israel and to destroy all their enemies (see Matt. 24:27-31 & Rev. 16:16). He shall physically, geographically, personally stand upon the Mount of Olives (v. 4, cp. Isa. 52:7), which will split in two to provide an avenue of escape for His people (v.5a, cp. Matt. 28:2). It will be an extraordinary time, and several miraculous events will accompany His coming with power and great glory, when "The LORD...will come [with all His saints]" (v. 5). He, the Warrior-King will be victorious and, as King-Priest, He'll establish His Millennial Reign, as we have already seen.

Verses 6-20 catalogue these Millennial conditions.

- Verse 8: there will be living waters of blessing from His throne in Jerusalem (cp. Ezek. 47:1-12). Verse 11 states there'll be safety and security for Israel, especially in Jerusalem (cp. Micah 4:4), which also means that there will be worldwide peace (see ch. 9:10b).
- Verses 16-19 show that the Temple will become the centre of global worship of the King of kings, with "Holy to the LORD" (vv. 20-21) because "The LORD is there" (Ezek. 48:35).
- According to v. 16, the Feast of Tabernacles will be both celebrated and fulfilled.

Finally, verse 9 proclaims:

And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

Thank you for listening to this Truth for Today talk on 'The Message of Zechariah', talk number T1442. A fuller version of the transcript is available on the Truth for Today website.

Footnotes

1. Called "in [on] that day" [Hebrew 'Yom Hahu', means 'His day'] in: 2:11; 3:10; 9:16; (11:11, Messiah's first advent); 12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; 13:1, 4; 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 20, 22, but called 'the day of the LORD' in 14:1 (KJV).
2. There are six references to Christ as The Angel of the LORD in Zechariah (1:11,12; 3:1,5,6; 12:8), which must not be confused with "the angel who talked with me [Zechariah]"(1:9), who was an 'ordinary' angel.
3. Daniel ch. 2:31-45; ch. 7.
4. The expression "Thus saith the LORD of Hosts" occur 46 times in Zechariah; and nearly half of these are in chs. 7- 8, which look forward to the future time when Jerusalem is again surrounded

and the object of the hatred and attack by Gentile nations. But Messiah Himself will fight for His people and deliver them when He returns in power and great glory.

Prophecies about the Exiles and the Return of the Remnant

758 B.C.	Isaiah 7:3	Shear-jashub [a remnant shall return]
599 B.C.	Jer.25:11-12	70 years' captivity
593-571 B.C.	Ezek.36-48	Rebirth of Israel and the Millennial Temple, "Jehovah Shammah".
603-534 B.C.	Daniel	Gentile rulers & 70 weeks

Post-exilic Timeline

539-515 B.C.	Book of Ezra chs.1-6	Leaders Zerubbabel & Joshua
538-522 B.C.	Cyrus' reign/decreed (cp. Is. 45:1-13)	
521-486 B.C.	Reign of Darius	
520 B.C.	Haggai & Zechariah urge Jewish remnant to complete the temple rebuild.	
516 B.C.	Temple completed by Zerubbabel & Joshua	
520 B.C.	The Book of Haggai	
520-517 B.C.	The Book of Zechariah	
486-465 B.C.	Reign of Ahasuerus	
483 B.C.	Esther & Mordecai in Persia	
468 B.C.	The Book of Ezra chs.7-10	Leaders Ezra & Joshua
465-424 B.C.	Reign of Artaxerxes	
445 B.C.	Nehemiah builds the walls of Jerusalem.	
446-445 B.C.	Nehemiah. Leaders Nehemiah, Eliashib, Ezra	
	Nehemiah 2:8, Artaxerxes commands: 'rebuild the wall'	
397 B.C.	The Book of Malachi	

Please Note:

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1.