

Place: Lurgan Baptist 13:10:2015

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Zechariah 1:1-6

39. THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Some years ago the city of Chicago was given an original by Pablo Picasso to adorn the plaza outside the city hall. For months as the statue was being erected it was heavily screened from the curious gaze of the passers-by. When it was finished it stood there in the plaza thickly veiled. The day came however when the Mayor of the city of Chicago unveiled the statue to the astonished gaze of the citizens of that city and to the world. There it stood in all its glory, the latest offering at the altar of art, Chicago's own gigantic Picasso. Now what the Mayor did for Chicago when he unveiled the statue, the book of Zechariah does for us. It draws aside the veil. No wonder this book has been called the "*Apocalypse of the Old Testament*," meaning that it parallels the New Testament book of Revelation or apocalypse. You see, the Greek word which is translated "*revelation*," is apokalupsis which literally means "*an unveiling*."

George Robinson has called Zechariah "*the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the Old Testament*." Visions, symbols and prophecies of end times abound in Zechariah. This is why the book is often referred to as

"*the Book of Revelation of the Old Testament*." As such it is very appropriate that the book appears as the next to the last book in the Old Testament. Now have a look at,

1.The Person:

Zechariah. Sometimes we read through opening verses of a book without considering their significance. But Hebrew names often carry a weight of meaning. Zechariah is called the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo. In the book of Ezra (5:1 6:14) he is called the son of Iddo. It seems that Zechariah's biological father died as a young man, and his grandfather reared him as his own son. This Iddo (1:1) was one of the priests who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Neh 2:4) This means that like Jeremiah and Ezekiel Zechariah was also a priest. Indeed from this time on the priesthood takes the lead in the nation as to its government. You see, the history of the Jews falls into three main periods. *First from Moses to Samuel we have Israel under the Judges, then from Saul to Zedekiah we have Israel under the Kings*. But now from Joshua and the return of the "**remnant**," down to the destruction of Jerusalem in Ad 70 we have Israel under the Priests.

Now the meaning of these three names is interesting.

Zechariah means "**God remembers.**"

Berechiah means "**God will bless.**"

Iddo means "**Appointed time.**"

Putting all of these together we have the message of the book in capsule “ *God will remember to bless His people in His appointed time.*” So much for The Person, notice,

2. THE PLACE:

Ezra says “ *Then the prophets Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel even unto them.*” (5:1) If the key word of the prophecy of Haggai was “ *From this day will I bless you.*” (Haggai 2:19) Then the keyword of the prophecy of Zechariah is found in (1:14-16) You see, the Lord was going to comfort Zion and prove to the nations that Jerusalem was indeed His chosen city.

3. THE PERIOD:

The timeline is much the same as the book of Haggai, for Zechariah began his ministry two months after Haggai (Haggai 2:10 1:7) began to raise his voice and protest against the Jews in not completing the Temple while being busy building their own homes. Look at (1:1) that was about 520 B.C. so Zechariah wrote from about 520 B.C. and most likely continued his ministry until the Temple was completed around 516-515 B.C. (7:1) So while Haggai’s ministry covers only four months (1:1 15, 2:1 10, 20) Zechariah’s ministry spans the centuries from the rebuilding of the Temple, through the times of the Gentiles to their fullness, on to the glorious return of the Lord and the setting up of His kingdom. (14:1)

4. THE PURPOSE:

Haggai’s purpose was to rebuild the temple, he was used to start the revival while Zechariah was used to keep it going strong with a more positive emphasis, calling the people to repentance and reassuring them of future blessings. I suppose we could put this way. The purpose was to encourage them for the present and enlighten them for the future. For Zechariah’s visions were of greater scope than his fellow preacher. John Phillips says,

He soared on eagles wings far beyond his own day and age, seeing the coming of the Greeks, the coming of the Romans, the crucifixion of Christ, the scattering again of the Hebrew people, the events of the last days, the rise to power of the Beast, the ultimate horrors awaiting Jerusalem and the final return of Christ to impose upon this planet a righteous reign for God. Just a word about,

5. THE PROPHECY:

Itself.

1. It is Prophetic:

The “ *Apocalypse of the Old Testament,*” as it is often called relates both to Zechariah’s immediate audience as well as to the future. In each of the three main sections the prophet begins historically and then moves forward to the time when Messiah returns to the temple to set up His earthly kingdom. Now sometimes this leaves in confusion as to the time period that is being considered and we need

to be careful. The first two sections were written during the rebuilding of the Temple and the last section seems to have been written considerably later. The first six chapters have an immediate reference to the “*Jewish Remnant*,” now back in the land while the last section refers to Israel in the last days. So as with most Old Testament prophecy we must distinguish between the “*near*,” and the “*distant*,” meanings of what Zechariah says. 1.

2. *It is Messianic:*

For one pervading Person dominates the prophecy, the Messiah. Lamoyne Sharp says Christ is

The Angel of the Lord: (1:9)

The Array of Fire around Jerusalem: (2:5)

The Advocate to assure deliverance of the accused: (5:1)

The Anointed One for Priestly Administration: (4:1)

The Appointed Priest: (6:12)

The Authoritative King: (6:12)

The Abiding Lord: (7:1)

The Approaching King: (9:9)

The Afflicted Shepherd: (11:1)

The Associate of God: (1:1)

The Appearing King to usher in His kingdom: (14:17)

Here were two men Haggai and Zechariah raised up by the Lord to inspire and give life to the waning zeal of the Jewish leaders and people. Now the book divides into three sections.

**(1) PICTURES CONCERNING ISRAEL'S
FUTURE: Ch's 1:12-6:15**

So this section is *Apocalyptic*: that is it has to do with visions and symbols and prophecies. But notice that it begins with,

(a) THE VISITATION OF THE LORD: (1:1-6)

Notice (1:1) You can see here *the Man that God Appoints*: According to (2:4) he's a young man. The Hebrew word for young man means “*a lad or youth*.” This youth, alongside of Haggai the elder who perhaps was in his late sixties were working side by side to accomplish the same goal. You know, the Lord can use both the young and the old in his work. And the old should not despise the young and the young should not despise the old. *The deciding factor is not age, education, experience or prestige but has he been called of God ?* If so, then he is God's man for the hour. I wonder has God been stirring your heart for His work ? Are you available to Him ?

You can see here: *the Message that God Ordains*: A preachers first sermon is usually difficult but in Zechariah's case it was doubly difficult because of the theme, ***repentance***. For God commanded his young servant to call the discouraged people to turn from their wicked ways and obey His Word. Look at (1:3) Israel had returned to the Land but not to the Lord, you can go to church without meeting with the Lord. Zechariah began with a pointed sermon. He reminded them that it was

because their forefathers would not listen to the prophets that the exile happened. It was a timely reminder. Zechariah cries, “ *Don’t make the same mistakes or you will be in trouble too.*” Occasionally we hear evangelists calling sinners to repent, but when was the last time you heard a preacher calling saints to repent ? Vance Havner says, “ *The last word of our Lord to the church is not the Great Commission, the great Commission is indeed our programme to the end of the age,*” but says Havner “ *our Lord’s last word to the church is repent.*” Is this not what the Risen Lord says to the church at Laodicea ? “ *Be zealous therefore and repent.*” (Rev 3:19) My Its one thing to ask God to bless us, it’s quite another to be the kind of people God can bless. (a) But notice,

(b) THE VISIONS OF THE PROPHET: (1:7-6:15)

Now scholars are divided as to how many visions Zechariah received. I think he had a series of eight visions that God gave to encourage the remnant in Jerusalem and motivate them to finish rebuilding the temple. Now these visions focus primarily on God’s ministry to Israel and His judgment on the Gentile nations that have afflicted Israel.

Vision No 1: The Vision of Comfort: (1:17-17)

It was a vision of the horsemen and the myrtle trees. Israel is symbolised as a grove of lowly myrtles in a shadowed place in the valley. It’s a time of despair and darkness for Israel now but an Unseen One stands among them watching symbolically mounted in power on horseback

and backed by other riders on horses. Isn’t it comforting to know that God also has “ *His spiritual spies,*” out checking upon this old sinful world as does Satan ? (Job 1:7 2:2 1 Pet 5:8) *We see here Divine Sympathy.* Israel though downtrodden is under the watchfulness and prayer.

Vision No 2: The Vision of Conquest: (1:18-21)

It’s the vision of the horns and the smiths. A horn in Scripture is usually a symbol of power. The vision of the four horns takes in the four world powers that over the centuries participated in the scattering of Israel. (Dan 2:37-45) These Gentile powers that scattered Israel remain unconcerned about the fate of the Jewish people. But the vision of the craftsmen summed to destroy the horns is a reminder that God has His own instruments at hand and is quite able to bring Gentile world power to nought. *We see here Divine Safety.*

Vision No 3: The Vision of Conditions: (2:1-13)

This is the vision of the Measuring Line. It’s a vision with a man with a measuring line in his hand. As this man goes out to measure the city of Jerusalem the interpreting angel says to the prophet. (2:4-5) This wonderful description of the coming peace of Jerusalem is followed by days of blessing that are to come upon Israel in the future. A causal glance at the headlines on any day of the week is proof that these days have not yet come for Israel. But those days will come for God has given His word on it. The Lord assured Israel “ *He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.*” (2:8) My The Jewish people

are precious to God and woe betide any nation that harms them. We see here Divine Security.

Vision No 4: The Vision of Cleansing: (3:1-10)

In this vision Zechariah see's Joshua the High Priest dressed in filthy clothing and standing before God in heaven. He is being accused by Satan because of his soiled clothing. Christ, however rebukes Satan removes Joshua's dirty clothing and dresses him in clean apparel. Joshua then is challenged to serve the Lord with his whole heart. What does it all mean ? Just this. God promises that that what He had done for this one Jew He would one day do for the whole nation. We see here Divine Salvation.

Vision No 5: The Vision of Communication: (4:1-14)

The Candlestick. Here he sees a sevenfold golden candlestick supplied by a reservoir of oil. On either side of the lampstand was a carved olive tree. It points to the day when the nation of Israel will experience a spiritual awakening that will make her a light to the world.

(Rev 7:1 11:1) You know oil always refers to the Holy Spirit and do you see what (3:6) says ? Not by military might not by political power “ *but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts.* ” Do you want to burn brightly in this dark world of sin ? Then you will need to know the enabling power of the Spirit of God. We see here Divine Sufficiency.

Vision No 6: The Vision of Condemnation: (5:1-4)

The Vision of the Flying Roll. Zechariah saw a flying scroll fifteen feet wide by thirty feet long. And as it flew over the land it was pronouncing a curse because of Judah's sins against God and man. Sin will yet be judged among the Hebrew people. We see here Divine Scrunity.

Vision No 7: The Vision of Control: (5:5-11)

The Woman in the ephah. You see, what Zechariah saw was a flying bushel basket covered by a heavy lead top piece. Two women appeared and they carried off the ephah with its burden to Babylon. What does it mean ? It means that sin will its focal centre once more in the very place where much of it began, back in Babylon. Historically, it was at Babel where organized rebellion against God began. (Gen 11:1-9) Prophetically, the book of Revelation hints at the rebuilding of Babylon and the final overthrow of the Beast's Empire. (2 Thes 2:7) We see here Divine Severity.

Vision No 8: The Vision of Command: (6:1-8)

Here is a picture of four chariots with red, black, white and dappled grey horses which go throughout the whole earth to do God's will. You see, God has a worldwide command and control of history. (Rev 6:1) God is still on the throne. We see here Divine Sovereignty. It was at this point that three men arrive from Babylon. They were merchants bringing silver and gold for the temple but Zechariah was told to take some of it and make a crown and then have a coronation for Joshua in the temple. Does this not anticipate the day when the Lord Jesus as

Priest-King (Ps 110:4) will be owned by the restored, redeemed and repentant nation of Israel ? No wonder the cry rings forth “ *Behold the man,*” (6:12) as they look upon Him as their true and long rejected Messiah. These then were Pictures Concerning Israel’s Future. Zechariah was carried down the centuries to see in broad, sweeping outline the plans and purposes of God in connection with His people, Israel. 1.

(2) PROBLEM’S CONCERNING ISRAEL’S FASTS 7:1-8:23

So this section is *Historic*: for Chapters 7 & 8 are the record of a visit from some Jews to ask about their fasts in the commemoration of the fall of Jerusalem. Notice,

(a) THE QUESTION ASKED:

Look at (7:3) You see, since the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. the Jews had observed four annual fasts to commemorate recent tragic events. (1) the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the fourth month (Jer 52:6) (2) the burning of the temple in the fifth month (Jer 52:1`2) (3) the murder of Gedaliah the governor in the seventh month (Jer 41:1-2) (4) the siege of Jerusalem in the tenth month (2 Kings 25:1) Now with the rebuilding of the temple going so well, the Jews wanted to know if it was still necessary for them to “ *weep in the fifth month.*” (7:3) to commemorate the burning of the original temple. I suppose this raises the whole question of traditions. The word “ *tradition,*” simply means “ *that which is passed along.*” It comes from a Latin word that

means “ *to hand over.*” Now the basic doctrines of the Christian faith must be handed from generation to generation (1 Tim 2:2 Jude 3) but man made traditions don’t carry the same authority as the inspired Word of God. “ *We have never done that way before,*” is the watchword in many churches. Do we not need to be careful lest tradition hinders the work of the Lord ? Centuries ago when the first missionaries went to Moravia they were not allowed to preach in the Slavic language. Why ? Because the only “ *holy languages,*” the church approved were Hebrew, and Latin. Church leaders had sense enough to revoke this directive, otherwise evangelism would have been impossible. (a)

(b) THE QUESTION ARGUED:

Look at (7:4-14) In other words “ *Why do you fast on those occasions ? Were your heartbroken over what these tragedies meant to God ?*” You see, to institute four feasts because of the tragedies that occurred in Jerusalem and yet not repent because of the sins that caused those tragedies was to miss the whole point of God’s discipline. My the attitude of the heart is it important is it not ? I mean is it not easier to have a religion of habit, than to have a religion of the heart ? Here were people who were concerned with empty ritual but the Lord referred then to divine revelation. So (a) (b)

(c) THE QUESTION ANSWERED:

Evidently the question about fasts touched a raw nerve and in answer Zechariah read his people a lecture. “ *Thus*

saith the Lord,” he cried ten times in (Ch 8) In answer to the question about fasts, God never ordained those irksome feasts (Lev 23:16-32) It did not matter to God whether they kept them or not. Do you know what mattered to the Lord ? That they keep the Word that He had given them. You see, all their national calamities stemmed from the fact that they did not obey the law of the Lord. Now here again Zechariah’s vision is enlarged. He saw once more the last days and the millennial reign when feasts would forever replace fasts and when the Jewish people would become the blessing to mankind that God always intended then to be. Now the closing chapters of this prophecy all focus on the future. So while the in the first section we have (1) and in the second section (2) in the final section we have,

(3) PROPHECIES CONCERNING ISRAEL’S FATE (9:1-14:21)

So this section is *Prophetic*. Bible Scholars believe that these prophecies were probably written some considerable time later. I want you to notice that they have to do with two burdens. Look at (9:1) and again (12:1) The word “ *burden*” signifies a prophecy or message which the prophet carries like a load on his heart. And these two burdens focus on the first and second advents of the Coming Messiah. Notice here,

(a) The FIRST Coming Of the KING: 9:1-11:17

There was Preparation for the King: For these opening verses in (Ch 9) describe the march of Alexander the

Great and his army through the area north and east of Palestine. The opening verse suggests that the eye of the Lord is on all mankind as well as on the tribes. Merrill Unger suggests that as the people were watching Alexander they were watching God at work for “ *history is His story.*” But why all this concern over the conquests of Alexander the Great ? Well, his victories helped prepare the world for the coming of the Lord Jesus. By building Greek cities and spreading Greek culture and the Greek language he unified the world and when the Romans took over they found an Empire all prepared for them. Greek was the language of literature and our New Testament is written in the common Greek language of the people of that day. The combination of Greek culture and Roman government, roads and laws was just what the early church needed for the spread of the gospel. God was preparing an era for the coming of His Son.

There was the Presentation of the King: for look at (9:9) Do you know when that was fulfilled ? When the Lord Jesus rode into Jerusalem on what we call “ *Palm Sunday,*” (Matt 21:1-11 Mk 11:1-11 Lk 19:29-44 Jn 12:12-19) and made a formal presentation of Himself to Israel as her long promised Messiah. It’s interesting that this is the only public demonstration Christ allowed during His ministry and He did it to fulfil Scripture. Can you see here,

The Uniqueness of His Person: He is “ *just,*” that is justified, vindicated, acceptable to God as sinless, declared righteous.

The Uniqueness of His Purpose: “ *having salvation,*” as the chorus goes,

**He did not come to judge the world
He did not come to blame
He did not only come to seek
It was to save He came**

The Uniqueness of His Position: “ *lowly,*” He was “ *high and lifted up,*” and the cherubim chanted before Him their ceaseless song (Is 6:1-3) yet He became “ *lowly.*” He was born in a cattle shed. He was raised in a provincial town where He worked as a carpenter. He was “ *despised and rejected of men.*” (Is 53:3)

The Uniqueness of His Power: for He would come “ *riding upon a colt the foal of an ass,*” (9:9) Alexander the Great rode a mighty steed but Jesus Christ rode a lowly donkey. But our Lord’s power did not need that “ *outward adorning.*” He might have built a palace with a word yet at times, He did not where to lay His head. Now unknown to Zechariah there would be a gap between (9:9) and (9:10) The Lord would stop the Jewish clock and between the two verses insert an age of grace. He would give birth to the church an entity of which the Old Testament prophets never dreamed. (a)

(b) The FUTURE Coming Of The King: 12:1-14:21

For Zechariah says, “ *Then shall the Lord go forth and his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem,*” (14:3-4) “ ***In that day,***”

(14:4) a day he explains as being “ *the day of the Lord.*” In other words the vision of the prophet is focused on end time events. Let me just highlight in closing some of these end time events. There will be,

1. AN INTERNATIONAL RENDEZVOUS:

Do you see what God says in (14:2) ? Do you see the emphasis ? “ *All nations,*” and “ *all peoples.*” (12:2-3 14:12) You see, this attack involves the armies of the world and is part of the famous “ *battle of Armageddon.*” (Rev 16:12-16) Zechariah describes Jerusalem’s situation “ *in that day,*” using the image of a cup and a stone. (12:1-3) Now a cup is a familiar biblical image for judgment. (Ps 75:8 Is 51:17 Rev 14:10) You see, the nation’s plan to “ *swallow up,*” Jerusalem but when they begin to “ *drink the cup,*” its contents make them sick and drunk.

My history shows that every nation that has ever tried to destroy the Jews has itself been destroyed. It will be no different when the nations of the world collectively attack God’s chosen people. Some of the enemy soldiers will enter the city, loot it, abuse the women and take half the inhabitants captive. But the Lord will make Jerusalem like an immovable rock that won’t yield. And this stone will eventually cut the invading armies to pieces. 1.

2. A LITERAL RETURN:

Do you see (14:3-4) ? The Lord is going to visibly appear. Jerusalem has been besieged so many, many

times. General Allenby led British forces against the city in 1917 and took it without firing a shot. The Jews and Arabs fought over Jerusalem in 1948 when Israel became a state. In 1967 the Jews captured Jerusalem from the Arabs, united the city and proclaimed it the capital of the state of Israel. Jerusalem history is troubled, but the worst siege still lies ahead. By the time two thirds of the population have perished (13:8) the Jews will have lost all hope. It will seem as though the Arabs have finally achieved their goal, the seizure of Jerusalem and the extermination of the Jews. But when all seems lost, the miracle will happen, “ *Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations.*” He will return to halt the siege, to thrash the nations, to seize the antichrist and to disarm the devil himself. Jesus Christ will come and defend His people and defeat His enemies.

3. A NATIONAL REPENTANCE:

You see, our Lord's goal is more than their national preservation it is their spiritual restoration. Do you see what (12:9-13:1) says ? My the Jewish people will come under strong conviction as their eyes are opened at last to Christ, to the One “ *whom they have pierced.*” Calvary in all its horror will loom up before them. Suddenly they will realize that right there at the place of the skull outside the city of Jerusalem they crucified their Messiah. They will mourn as they gaze like Saul of Tarsus on the One they pierced. My the day is coming, when Israel, although blind at present, will recognize the Lord Jesus as the Messiah, and He who was crucified by them, will then be received by them.

(Zech 13:1) “ *In that day,*” the Jews will see that fountain filled with blood and avail themselves of its cleansing power. But there is something else here.

4. A UNIVERSAL REIGN:

Look if you will in (14:9) After the nations have been punished and Israel has been purified, the Lord will establish His righteous kingdom and reign on David's throne. (Lk 1:32-33 Rev 17:14 19:16) Tell me, is He reigning and holding sway in your life ? If the King returned this would you welcome His return ? Do you pray with anticipation for the coming of Christ's kingdom ? Do you look forward to the coming reign of Jesus Christ ? Do you feel like Frances Havergal ?

**Oh, the joy to see Thee reigning
Thee, my own beloved Lord
Every tongue Thy name confessing
Worship, honour, glory, blessing
Brought to Thee with glad accord
Thee, my Master and my Friend
Vindicated and enthroned
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored and owned**