

ABIDE

DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



THE LORD REMEMBERS

ZECHARIAH

This is a man who had a dual job from God. Zechariah was both a prophet and a priest and provides one of the most exciting images of the future we have in the Bible. The only rival probably, in terms of future imagery, is probably the book of Revelation given to us in the New Testament.

The name Zechariah means “The LORD Remembers” and in this name, we see the great promise of God to bring ultimate healing, love, and satisfaction to the world and to His nation Israel. As far as other history revealed to us about this prophet, we can see that Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, and his grandfather (Iddo) came back with Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest.

In terms of the structure of this prophecy, it is broken up into two major sections, and separated by a significant amount of time between each of these sections. It appears that Zechariah wrote the first chapters (1-8) when he was a relatively young man, and the remaining chapters (9-14) were written when he was a very old man.

And if we consider how Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries of one another, we can also put their job tasks together and imagine that their messages combined would have been a great help to the people whom God called them to speak to. You should remember that Haggai was sent to encourage the people to do a work for God. And then, if we add in the writings of Zechariah, we find that while they were to continue to work, God gave grand visions of the future to help them along their way.

The prospect of the future is extremely exciting as long as there is a future to look forward to. The future can motivate to excellence, and keep a vibrant hope alive in terms of the work that is done. And this is certainly what makes God’s work so compelling for those who keep the end in mind as they work in the present. Sure, if once this life was over, oblivion was all we had to look forward to, by all means, get discouraged and pessimistic. However, if your mind is on what ultimately awaits, then as the hymn writer says, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.”

How to Think About Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is a series of sermons given by Zechariah and embedded in these sermons are a series of visions that serve as a warning and stunning predictions of the future kingdom age. The underlying message in these visions is to get God’s people to return to Him.

Really Good Bad News (1:1-6): Oftentimes (as we have observed over and over again) God gives people the bad news first. And really, it isn't bad news if we think about it reasonably; it's only bad news if we don't hear it. In this case, Zechariah gives a call to repent. And the reason it is good news is because God warns and gives us an opportunity to leave our sin behind.

Really Wonderful Wild Visions (1:7-6:8): Here we find a series of eight visions given to Zechariah by God.

A Man by Some Myrtles (1:7-17)— Zechariah sees the 'angel of the LORD' sitting on a red horse with other red horses around him. You'll also notice that they are speckled because they are in the shadow of the myrtle trees. They are red because the picture to be understood is one of war. God is angry with the nations who were at peace while Jerusalem was suffering. We are reminded here that God is not just the God of the Jews, but is in fact the ruler of the world and cares for their affairs as well.

The Four Horns and Four Smiths (1:18-21)— A 'horn' in this passage has to do with a gentile ruler. And because there are four horns, this passage is referencing four world powers (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome). The smiths possibly represent judgment that would come and dismantle these powers.

The Measuring Man (2:1-13)— God is measuring and it is an indication that He will once again resume His work in Jerusalem and the Temple. This ultimately leads up to the reign of Christ at this place in person. All nations will come and worship there.

The Branch (3:1-10)— At the beginning of this passage there is a bit of bad news that had to be endured by Joshua the high priest as he seeks to lead the nation. God tells him that he would not be sufficient to fight Satan and that a new righteousness was needed. The scene then switches to the imagery of the Branch. The Branch is a figure of Christ, and represents Him as the Servant who would be rejected at His first coming, but once you arrive in verse 10, we have a reference to the kingdom age.

The Golden Lamp Stand and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14): This imagery is identical to the lampstand found in the temple. The fact that there are two olive trees is an indication that something new has been added. As it relates to the immediate, it seems that Zerubbabel and Joshua are in view here, but for the future, it is very obvious that the ultimate revelation in this vision requires Christ to be the focus. The oil represents the Holy Spirit, and the olive trees speak of witnessing. The work of God continues not by the cleverness of people, but because of the Holy Spirit.

The Flying Scroll (5:1-4): The scroll here is the Word of God, and specifically the Ten Commandments. This is a passage explain that God would judge according to His Word.

Woman in a Basket (5:5-11): This vision is filled with imagery of significance. If we are quickly making our way through the meaning here, we find that the basket is full, and in this case, it is full of sin as indicated by the ephah. However, the woman in the basket indicates a specific kind of sin. The lead weight means that iniquity is sealed in the measure of the ephah. Then the two-winged woman carries this measure (with the woman inside) to Babylon. It is important to remember that Israel's great sin was idolatry and that Babylon is the land of Idolatry. The sin then is to be forsaken and returned back to Babylon.

Four Chariots (6:1-15): In this passage, there are four multicolored chariots that represent the four angels who will bring judgment upon the gentile nations. Here we also read of Christ setting up His kingdom and another mention of the "Branch" where Christ reveals His glory. This is an obvious reference to His second coming. Further, in the latter part of the chapter, we see the crowning of the high priest. But there exists also, another reference to the "BRANCH" who will build the temple of the Lord. This section is absolutely rich with references to Christ.

Really Great Question and Answers (7:1-8:23): This particular passage presents a problem the people had been struggling with in regard to fasting, and in the first three verses we have the set up for the answer to the question, "Should we continue to fast?"

In the following verses after the question, we see that Zechariah responds with four sermons and tells them in essence, that God's rituals have gone unchanged, but warned them, that if the heart is wrong, the worship is wrong as well.

Really Powerful Pictures (9:1-14:21): These verses can be broken up into two categories. The first section has to do with the rejection of the Messiah during His first coming, and the second has to do with His acceptance at His second coming.

What to Look for in Zechariah

Though this book of prophecy was written hundreds of years before Christ, it provides some of the most stunning claims regarding His person and ministry with breathtaking accuracy. Therefore, you would do well to focus here on your study of this book, because this is where the book focuses.

Pictures of Christ—

Christ is Pictured as the King: Zechariah 14:9 says, "And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one."

Here we are in the millennial reign of Christ and this is when His rule will be established. There will be no questioning, arguing, or calling for another. He is the One True King of all and forevermore.

Christ is Pictured as the Stone: Zechariah 3:9 tells us, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."

Christ would one day serve as the cornerstone of the Church He would found and build. It is apparent that the redemptive work of the cross is in view here.

Christ is Pictured as the Betrayed: Zechariah 11:12 "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price: and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver."

This is a clear reference to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas. (Matthew 26:15; 27:3-10; Acts 1:17-20)

Christ is Pictured as the Smitten Shepherd: Zechariah 13:7, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

Here, Messiah is called the Shepherd because He was called to feed and provide for the sheep, as well as to protect and save the sheep. This is exactly what Christ has done for us. He feeds and provides, and by His death, by this sword coming down upon Him, He has saved us.

Christ is Pictured as the BRANCH: Zechariah 3:8; 6:12 Let's look at both of these passages. First we have Zechariah 3:8 "Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH."

Next, we see 6:12-13, "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

The word branch means, “shoot” or “twig,” and is the title for the Messiah who would shoot up from the royal line of David. This line had been interrupted with the Babylonian exile, but God’s prophets assured God’s people that one day this line would be reestablished and would forever reign in righteousness by of a priest who would rule. Looking back, we know this BRANCH is who we call Jesus our Savior— who is both Priest and King.

What to Gain from Zechariah

If you endeavor to venture through this book in detail, no doubt you will find many themes and teachings that will be beneficial as you move along; far more than what will be presented here. But given the purpose of this work, and given this message and its partnership with the message of Haggai, it appears that one predominate theme emerges, in terms of a timeless truth for God’s people to use and cherish, and that is this:

You Have to Look Forward to Move Forward: What is meant by this is the fact that God never leaves us alone wondering about the future and what awaits us. Now, we may experience confusion in the moment. We may experience pain, suffering, tragedy, and shock that may cause us to be spiritually perplexed in the moment, and in the future. However, we never have to come to a place of despair where all of this is ultimately meaningless. We can look to the future and keep moving forward because that is where our temporary trouble will vanish in the endlessness of God’s glory.

Additionally, this is the same truth that should compel us to faithfulness. Our work is not in vain. Our service for God doesn’t just evaporate like your breath on a cold day. Even if all forget, God doesn’t. Your work goes somewhere; it has a purpose. Your faithfulness and endurance against sin goes somewhere; it has a purpose.

However, if you stop looking forward, moving forward will altogether cease. Biblically speaking, God always has us looking forward to move us forward.



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