

# ZECHARIAH

## ZECHARIAH 1-8 — THE PROPHET'S OWN TIME

Zechariah, like Haggai, had a twofold mission, to strengthen the hands of Israel for the rebuilding of the temple, and to quicken their hope as the earlier prophets had done, by painting in glowing colors the coming time of triumph over every foe.

This mission is set before us in a two-fold division of the book. Chapters 1-8 give us a series of prophetic visions bearing primarily, upon the prophet's own time, while chapters 9-14 deal chiefly with the events culminating at the end of the age and the opening of the millennium.

Part one, after the introduction, chapters 1:7-6:8; might be outlined thus:

### 1. The Prophetic Visions (chaps. 1-6)

The man among the myrtle trees

The four horns

The four smiths

The measuring line

The high priest in the temple

The golden candlestick

The flyer roll

The woman in the ephah

The four chariots

### 2. The Symbolic Crowning of the High Priest (6:8-15)

### 3. The Instruction about Fasting (chaps. 7-8)

## THE FIRST FOUR VISIONS (CHAPS. 1-2)

To understand the first vision is the key to the rest. When was it received by the prophet (1:7)? Describe what he saw (v. 8). Observe that two persons are referred to, the man upon the red horse, and the angel that talked with Zechariah, sometimes called "interpreting angel." The man on the horse seems afterward identified with "the angel of the Lord" (vv. 11-12), one of the Old Testament names of Christ. It is presumable that the other horses had angelic riders also. Who are these described to be (v. 10)? What report gave they of the earth (v. 11)? Prosperity and peace seem to have been characteristic of all the peoples, while Jerusalem was distressed, the temple unfinished, and the remnant of the Jews there persecuted by enemies. Who now intercedes on behalf of Jerusalem and Judah (v. 12)? Is the answer of Jehovah encouraging or the opposite (v. 13)? What was His answer in detail (vv. 14-17)? Was the peace and prosperity of the Gentile nations an evidence of the divine blessing upon them (v. 15)? Jehovah had used them to discipline His people, but what shows their selfish and wicked intent in the premises (same verse)? What does Jehovah promise shall be accomplished by the little remnant at this time (v. 16)? What of the future (v. 17)? This was fulfilled in the history of God's people at the time, in a measure at least. The temple was built, the cities restored, and Jerusalem and Judah comforted. And yet there is to be grander fulfillment in the days to come.

The two following visions, if we call them two — the four horns and four smiths (RV), are closely connected with the one just considered. The four horns are the four world-powers (Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman) who scatter Israel, but the four smiths are four corresponding powers of some sort, not necessarily nations, which shall overcome them at the last and bring deliverance. We are almost necessarily shut up to the conclusion that this prophecy extends to the latter days by its reference to the whole of the four powers.

The next vision, that of the measuring line, presents no serious difficulty. Its significance explained (2:4-5), is the same practically as that of the man among the myrtles. However it may have had an approximate fulfillment in the prophet's own time, verses 10-13 indicate that it looks toward the future. What declaration in those verses seem to prove that?

### THE HIGH PRIEST AND SATAN (CHAP. 3)

To understand the meaning of the vision now reached, keep in mind that a cause of dejection of the Jews was their consciousness of past sin. They felt that God had forsaken them, and that their present calamities were the result. We see herein, a parallel to the spiritual condition of a true believer in our own day, whom Satan torments with the belief that he cannot be saved on account of his many sins. This is now set before us in symbol, only there is a nation in the case here, and not an individual, for Joshua the high priest represented Israel.

Where is the high priest seen to be (3:1)? It is thought that he was represented as in the holy place ministering at the altar. Who is seen with him, and for what malign purpose? We have here in symbol, Satan's temptation of the saint to doubt God's power to forgive and save. How is this goodness and power shown, in the next verse? On what ground is Jerusalem to be saved, on that of merit or of the divine choice? What does verse 3 teach as to the truth of Satan's insinuation against Israel as represented by the high priest? Does the imagery indicate the holiness or sinfulness of the people.

Yet how is divine grace illustrated in the next command of Jehovah (v. 4)? What did the removal of his filthy garments signify? What did the changed raiment signify? Compare ~~4:12~~ Romans 3:22. What next was done (v. 5)? By this act the clothing of the high priest was completed and he was fitted for his official service. Who is represented as "standing by" all this time as if interceding for Joshua (and through him for the nation), and to see that these commands were carried out and these benefits conferred? With whom have we identified "the Angel of the Lord"? What charge is now laid upon Joshua, and what privilege is connected with it (v. 7)?

### QUESTIONS

1. Name the two-fold mission of this prophet.
2. Name the nine prophetic visions of Part 1.
3. Give some reasons showing the application of these visions in the future.
4. What leads to that conclusion in the case of the four horns and the four smiths?
5. What is necessary to understand the vision of chapter 3?

## ZECHARIAH 4-8 — MORE OF THE PROPHET'S OWN TIME

### THE GOLDEN CANDLESTICK (CHAP. 4)

The candlestick was a copy of that in the early tabernacle, but with what difference (v. 2)? From what source was its oil supplied (v. 3)? What did this supply of oil from the trees symbolize (v. 6)? The candlestick itself may represent the temple which the Jews were now essaying to build, or the Jewish nation as a whole which was now sought to be re-established and become a light in the world. The difficulties in the way of accomplishing these things seemed insuperable, if the strength of man only should be considered, but God would interpose, and His Spirit do what human agencies could not do. How is this difficulty and its removal figuratively expressed (v. 7)? How is the figure explained (vv. 8-10)? On what point did the prophet desire further light (v. 12)? What reply was made to him (v. 14)? By these "two anointed ones" is understood Zerubbabel and Joshua, the leaders of Israel at this time on whom, and through whom the Holy Spirit would be poured out for the successful termination of the work.

It is proper to apply this symbol to the church of the present day in its testimony and work; in which case the "two anointed ones" may represent any who, "filled with the Spirit," execute the Lord's will in power. At the same time the whole thing applies primarily to Israel, not only in the time of Zechariah, but in the last times when through the blessing of the Spirit, she shall be restored, and become a rejoicing in the earth. It is proper to add that the deeper meaning of verse 14 is probably Christ Himself, "The Priest upon His throne," who will supply Israel as He now supplies the church with His Holy Spirit!

### THE FLYING ROLL AND THE EPHAH (CHAP. 5)

The two visions in chapter 5 are mysterious and like the four chariots in chapter 6, seem to express the idea of judgment. That the "flying roll" has that significance would seem plain by a comparison with ~~and~~ Ezekiel 2:9-10, and ~~and~~ Revelation, chapters 5 and 10, where similar figures have such meaning. We have seen that judgment is coming upon the Gentile nations,

and that Israel also is to be purified before she is finally restored, and it may be that to both the present vision applies.

What is now seen (v. 6)? An ephah or measure is an emblem of trade of commerce. What was seen sitting in the ephah? What is the woman said to symbolize (v. 8)? The whole figure then represents wickedness in commerce. What is done with the ephah and where is it carried to? The land of Shinar suggests Babylon again, of whose revival in the latter days mention has been made. Every one knows that commercialism is prominent in <sup><680></sup>Revelation 18 as the climax of ungodliness. Read that chapter in connection with <sup><812></sup>Habakkuk 2:12 and James 5. Babylon is real, and the woman represents the commercial spirit that will reign there at the end. The spirit of self that prevailed in the Babylon of Genesis 11, will build up and prevail in the Babylon of <sup><680></sup>Revelation 18. The description of the Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's day will fit the one to come. It will be the city of "the prince of this world," the seat of the Antichrist. It is noticeable that certain prophecies concerning Babylon in Isaiah and Jeremiah have not yet been fulfilled, while these prophecies are closely identified with those in <sup><670></sup>Revelation 17 and 18. The drift in our day is in the direction of a commercial center in the East.

The ninth and closing vision, verses 6:1-8, furnishes another spectacle of judgment on the nations and the quieting of the divine Spirit with the result.

### **CROWNING OF THE HIGH PRIEST (CHAP. 6)**

The prophet is now called upon to do something in the nature of an object lesson to symbolize that great future event which will follow the judgments referred to, viz: the manifested reign of Christ over the millennial earth. Who have now come from Babylon on an embassy (v. 10)? Whose guests are they (same verse)? What articles do they seem to have brought as gifts for the temple (v. 11)? What is the prophet to do with some of this silver and gold? What is he to say in connection with this transaction (vv. 12-13)? What then shall be done with the crowns, and why (vv. 14-15)?

That this transaction is symbolic is plain from two or three points of view. In the first place, the royal crown did not belong to the high priest or any son of Levi, but to the tribe of Judah in the line of David. In the second place, there is the expression "Behold the Man whose name is the Branch!" To whom does that name belong? Third, we have the declaration, "He shall

build the temple of the Lord." To whom in the fullest sense can this apply, save Christ? And then, "He shall bear the glory," and "He shall be a priest upon His throne." Of none other than Christ has this ever been predicted. He only is the priestly King. Compare ~~98101~~ Psalm 110, and ~~98101~~ Hebrews 7. What language in verse 15 bears a possible reference to the Gentiles in that day? On what condition is all this to be fulfilled (same verse)?

We pass over particular consideration of the two next chapters, which are in a sense parenthetical, although in accord with the whole book. Men of Babylon sent messengers to Jerusalem to inquire on the subject of ritual or ceremonial fasting. Had their fasting hitherto been acceptable to God and were they to continue it in the new regime? They are shown what a hypocritical thing that service had been hitherto; how it was such formalism and hypocrisy which had brought punishment upon their fathers: how that the fasting Jehovah desired was of a different nature, and finally, that in the blessed time coming feasting will take the place of fasting. These hints will enable the reader to reach a fair understanding of the chapters.

### QUESTIONS

1. What may the golden candlestick typify?
2. How might the reference to "the two anointed ones" be applied?
3. What about the flying roll and ephah?
4. What shows the crowning of the high priest to be symbolical?
5. Give briefly the substance of chapters 7 and 8.

## ZECHARIAH 9-14 — END THE AGE, OPEN THE MILLENNIUM

It was stated that the first part of the book, chapters 1-8, referred chiefly, though not entirely, to the prophet's own time. The basis of all the prophecies in that part had a historical relation to the period then present. They were uttered, to encourage the people in rebuilding the temple. And yet there is not one of them that did not take cognizance of the far future. The discourses of this, the second part, deal almost entirely with the future.

It will aid in the understanding of these chapters if we recall a few historical facts. At the date of this book the Medo-Persian was the world-power to which the Jews were subject.

It was followed by the Greeks, and the Greeks by the Romans. During the Roman regime our Lord was crucified and Jerusalem destroyed. The present (i.e., our own time), is an interregnum so far as Jewish national history is concerned, which will continue till Israel is once more in Jerusalem, in covenant with Antichrist and about to pass through the tribulation prior to her final deliverance and blessing. Here are three periods in Jewish history which we may call, the Grecian, the Roman and the final periods. Zechariah, it is believed, treats of each of these in the chapters following.

### **THE GRECIAN PERIOD (CHAPS. 9-10)**

You will recall from Daniel that this period begins with Alexander the Great, the notable horn between the eyes of the he-goat. When he crossed from Greece into Asia he swept down the Phoenician and Palestinian coast of the Mediterranean, besieging and capturing Damascus, Sidon, Tyre, Gaza and other cities in south Philistine country. But he passed Jerusalem more than once without harming it. The Jewish historian Josephus explains this by a dream the great monarch had, which was fulfilled by the appearance to him at Jerusalem of the high priest and his train. However this may be, 9:1-7 give us the prophetic outline of his career at this time. For the deliverance of Jerusalem which occurred, read verse 8.

But now we come to a further illustration of the law of double reference, for the verse which speaks of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Alexander, speaks evidently of another deliverance which can only find fulfillment in the latter times. What shows that this deliverance, thus foreshadowed, is connected with the coming of Christ (v. 9)? When were these words fulfilled at least in part? (<sup>4215</sup>Matthew 21:5). What shows that their complete fulfillment is reserved for the latter times, or Christ's second coming (vv. 10-11)?

Verses 13-17 are obscure, but thought to refer to the period of the Maccabees who delivered their people for a while from the yoke of the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes 170 B.C., or thereabouts, while the Grecians represented by him were still in power. However this may be, it is evident

from what follows that, as in so many other instances, this deliverance foreshadowed a greater and final one to come.

### THE ROMAN PERIOD (CHAP. 11)

Greek supremacy is at an end, and we have reached the Roman period culminating in the rejection by the Jews of the Son of God. The eleventh chapter opens with a scene of judgment (vv. 1-6). Then follows the cause of it (v. 7-14). In verse 4 the prophet is commanded to do a symbolic act, and in verse 7 he is in the performance of it. What was this act? There will be little doubt after reading the context, that in this act he is the type of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Compare <sup><40B></sup>Matthew 9:36, and John 10. What does the Shepherd carry with Him to guide and protect His flock? There is difficulty in the meaning of these staves unless we adopt that hinted at in verses 10 and 14, where "Beauty" seems to refer to the divine covenant, and "Bands" to the union between the ten tribes and the two.

Who are "cut off" (v. 8)? It is supposed that these "three shepherds" stand for the three classes of rulers that governed Israel, priests, prophets and lawyers (<sup><40B></sup>Jeremiah 2:8; <sup><40C></sup>Matthew 16:21). Our Lord pronounced woes against them (<sup><40D></sup>Matthew 23), and when the city was destroyed their rule came to an end. What portion of the flock paid attention to and were fed by the shepherd (v. 11)? Compare <sup><40E></sup>Matthew 5:3; 11:25 and <sup><40F></sup>1 Corinthians 1:26-29. How does verse 12 point to the rejection of the Shepherd by the flock? What is foreshadowed in the next verse? Who is the prophet commanded to impersonate (v. 15)? What person yet to come will answer the description in verses 16-17? Can this be any other ultimately than the Antichrist? Read <sup><40G></sup>John 5:43.

### THE FINAL PERIOD (CHAPS. 12-14)

The prophecies in this section of the book are to be fulfilled at the end period frequently referred to. It is the time when Israel is once more in Jerusalem in the national sense, though at first in an unconverted condition.

We saw in Daniel that the Antichrist would at this time enter into covenant with Israel, and afterwards (in the middle of the last seven years), break that covenant. Then "the time of Jacob's trouble" begins, the nature of which will in part be the combination of the Gentile nations, i.e., the Roman world, against it. Antichrist will be at the head of this combination if we may judge from a comparison of Daniel with Revelation. It is at this



point, when the nations are besieging the Holy City, that the "burden of the Word of the Lord" begins (12:1-2).

We can not outline these chapters in detail, nor is it necessary for those who have perused the earlier prophets in connection with these lessons. A hint here and there will suffice. For example, in this siege Jerusalem will for the first time be victorious (12:2-3); the victory, however, will be of a supernatural character (vv. 4-8 RV); the conversion of the nation will accompany it (v. 10), also 13:1, and it will take place coincident with the great tribulation (13:8-9; 14:1-3); Christ shall appear to them (14:4); the earth will rejoice (v. 9); and especially Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 10-11); their enemies will be punished, and the millennium will have begun (v. 16 if).

### QUESTIONS

1. With what period chiefly, does this lesson deal?
2. Name the world powers of which these chapters treat.
3. Give the story of ~~300~~ Zechariah 9:1-8.
4. What illustration of the law of double reference is here shown?
5. Who is suggested as a type of Christ in chapter 11?
6. For whom do the three shepherds stand?
7. To what time do chapters 12-14 refer?
8. Give an outline of their application.