
BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Approximate date: 520-400s B.C.E. (Right, conservative-moderate, some Left); 400s-100s B.C.E. (some Left)

Time period: post-exile period of sin, coupled by national discouragement

Author(s): Zechariah (Right, some conservative-moderate); Zechariah and/or anonymous other(s) (some conservative moderate); “Proto-Zechariah” and “Deutero-Zechariah” (Left)

Location of prophet/author(s): somewhere in Judah (Right, conservative-moderate, Left)

Target audience and their location: Southern Kingdom Israelites and Jerusalemites

People:

Zechariah (son of Berechiah, son of Iddo), Joshua (high priest), Satan, Zerubbabel

People mentioned:

Darius, “Daughter of Babylon,” “Daughter of Zion,” Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, Josiah (son of Zephaniah), Hen (son of Zephaniah), Sarezzer, Regem-Melech, Philistines, Jebusites, Ephraim, Greece, Joseph, Ephraimites, David, house of Nathan, house of Levi, clan of Shimei, Uzziah

Places:

Judah, Jerusalem, Bethel, Gilead, Lebanon, Nile, Assyria, Egypt, Bashan, Jordan, Mount of Olives, Azel

Places mentioned:

Babylon, land of Hadrach, Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Haddad Rimmon, Megiddo

Key Themes:

Zechariah calls the people to turn from their sins toward the Lord / horsemen are sent by God to go about the whole Earth / God describes how He will one day live among His people who have been scattered / the high priest Joshua is given clean clothes and a turban in a vision / the golden lampstand and olive trees represent the mission of God’s people to serve Him in the Earth / a flying scroll goes out, condemning the people of high sins / a basket with a woman representing “wickedness” is sent to Babylon / four chariots sent by God go out into the Earth / one named “Branch” will build the Temple and sit on the throne of Israel / some men ask if fasting in the fifth month is appropriate, and are told instead to not oppress others / the Lord promises that the city of Jerusalem

will be restored / the Lord will judge the enemies surrounding Israel / the Lord promises complete defeat of Israel's enemies when its King comes / the Lord Himself will miraculously save Israel / the Lord describes a salvation of Israel involving both Judah and scattered Ephraim / Israel will be judged as a flock intended for slaughter / God promises to judge all of those who come against Jerusalem / corporate Israel will mourn over the pierced One / Jerusalem will be purged from idolatry and false prophets / God's Shepherd will be struck by the sword / the Lord will physically arrive at the Mount of Olives (at the Second Coming) / those who oppose the Lord will be consumed / in the Messianic Age all nations will come to Jerusalem to regularly celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles

Key Scriptures: Zechariah 1:4; 2:10-11; 4:11-15; 6:12-13; 7:8-12; 8:1-3, 20-23; 9:9-10; 10:6-12; 12:1-5, 10-11; 13:1-2; 14:3-5, 16-17 / **Zechariah's night visions and words of encouragement** (1:1-8:23); **Messages after the completion of the Temple** (9:1-14:21)

Theological Summary: Zechariah, just like Haggai, was a post-exilic prophet and one of his contemporaries (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), and it should not be surprising that there are parallels between the two books that bear their names. Zechariah returned to the Land of Israel with the exiles from Babylon, and succeeded Iddo, his grandfather, as leader of a priestly family (1:1, 7; cf. Nehemiah 12:10-16). Zechariah's name (Heb. *Zekaryah*, זְכַרְיָה) means "the LORD remembers," and many extrapolate this as relating to God's covenant faithfulness demonstrated in the text that bears his name. The Book of Zechariah, though, unlike Haggai, forms a much broader period of time. Zechariah is the longest of the Minor Prophets.

Conservatives generally hold to some kind of unity for the Book of Zechariah, following Jewish tradition which has historically held to a unified composition. Zechariah first prophesied shortly after Haggai (1:1-6), which was followed by several prophetic visions (1:7-6:15). It is significant that two dates are given in the text of Zechariah: the second year of Darius Hystaspis (1:1, 7), and the fourth year of his reign (7:1). This places at least part of the Book of Zechariah in 520-518 B.C.E.,¹ even though it is most likely that Zechariah's prophetic ministry continued. It is notable that there are a few conservatives who, while not necessarily being against the unity of Zechariah, would make note of the differences between the "first section" (chs. 1-8) and the "second section" (chs. 9-14) of the text.² They would still argue that it is most important that interpreters look at the final form of the text to draw conclusions.

Liberals make a stark divide in the Book of Zechariah, breaking the text between chs. 1-8 and chs. 9-14, classifying them as "Proto-Zechariah" and "Deutero-Zechariah." It is argued that chs. 1-8 depict the immediate future of the Jewish community, and chs. 9-14 depicts the future, indicating that these are from two different prophets.³ It is proposed that chs. 1-8 and chs. 9-14 are of different literary genres, employing different imagery, thus requiring different

¹ Dillard and Longman, 429.

² Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 954-956.

³ W. Neil, "Zechariah, Book of," in *IDB*, 4:944-947; Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 951-954; David L. Petersen, "Zechariah 9-14," in *ABD*, 6:1061-1064.

authors; some early propositions attributed chs. 9-14 to Jeremiah.⁴ Liberals are not agreed among themselves whether chs. 9-14 actually make up a unity, or could be divided further.⁵ Liberals are forced to conclude that “Deutero-Zechariah” was anonymous.⁶

One of the main propositions for chs. 9-14 coming from a different prophet or source is often argued on the basis that “Javan” or Greece (9:13) is presented as a power in the Ancient Near East, not Persia, thus “necessitating” chs. 9-14 as being composed sometime in the 100s B.C.E. Concurrent with this is the idea that chs. 9-14 explains the rise of Alexander of the Great and the military actions of the Maccabees. This late dating of chs. 9-14 assumes that Greece was not any kind of power or unknown by the 500s, which cannot be sustained in comparison with other Tanach passages (Isaiah 66:19; Ezekiel 27:13, 19).⁷

There is no evidence in tradition that chs. 9-14 were ever considered separate from the text of chs. 1-8.⁸ Conservatives do recognize the difference in style between chs. 1-8 and chs. 9-14, but do not believe that this requires two different “Zechariahs.”⁹ There are even those who believe in the division of Proto- and Deutero-Zechariah who must say, “It has to be admitted that none of [our] reasons offers conclusive proof that Zechariah should be divided into...sections” (*ECB*).¹⁰ Many conservatives believe that the differences in the Book of Zechariah proposed by liberals are artificial.¹¹

No major difficulties exist with the Hebrew text of Zechariah,¹² even though the Greek LXX may offer a better reading in some places.¹³

The events of Zechariah are set in the early years of Darius I (522-486 B.C.E.), also covered in Ezra 5-6. The chief purpose of Zechariah was to rebuke the returned Jews to rebuild the Temple (4:8-10). If the people would return to the Lord, then He would return to them (1:7-6:8). The people of Judah needed to be riveted out of their procrastination, and give themselves wholly to the purpose of rebuilding their community and Temple.

A theme seen throughout Zechariah is that God is true to His covenant promises. Jerusalem is depicted as playing a crucial role in the future of God’s Kingdom. Zechariah takes on Messianic significance, depicting a coming One who will defeat the enemies of Israel (9:9-17; 14:1-21). Israel’s restoration would include the regathering of His scattered people (10:1-11:3), with God’s ultimate victory over those who reject Him (12:1-9) as the world recognizes His universal kingship (2:13; 6:1-8; 14:16-21).

Many of the themes in Zechariah are applied directly to Yeshua the Messiah and His ministry (Mark 14:27 and Zechariah 13:7; Matthew 27:9 and Zechariah 11:12-13; John 19:37 and Zechariah 12:10; John 12:15 and Zechariah 9:9).¹⁴ Some consider Zechariah to be among

⁴ Kenneth L. Barker, “Zechariah,” in *EXP*, 7:596.

⁵ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 950.

⁶ Paul L. Redditt, “Zechariah, Book of,” in *EDB*, 1413.

⁷ Cf. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 952-953; Barker, in *EXP*, 7:597.

⁸ R.E. Higginson, “Zechariah,” in *NBCR*, 787.

⁹ Steven Barabas, “Zechariah, Book of,” in *NIDB*, pp 1083-1084.

¹⁰ John W. Rogerson, “Zechariah,” in *ECB*, 721.

¹¹ Dillard and Longman, pp 430-431.

¹² F.C. Fensham, “Zechariah, Book of,” in *ISBE*, 4:1185.

¹³ Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp 956-957.

¹⁴ Cf. Dillard and Longman, 436.

the most Messianic texts in all of the Tanach.¹⁵ Other themes seen in Zechariah are expanded upon in the Book of Revelation,¹⁶ and are directly applied to Yeshua as being the One who defeats Israel's enemies and comes to reign over the whole world.

In the Jewish tradition, Zechariah 14:9 is used in the *Aleinu* prayer, Zechariah 14:1-12 is the Haftarah used for the first day of *Sukkot*, and Zechariah 2:14-4:7 is read on the first Sabbath of *Chanukah* and the Haftarah for *Beha'alot'kha* (Numbers 8:1-12:16).¹⁷

Zechariah is an encouraging book for the downhearted, who believe that God has left them or that their actions are indifferent. There is some limited Messianic engagement with Zechariah, but most often only with its prophecies pertaining to the Last Days. The overall message of Zechariah, of shaking God's people out of their laziness, is not something widely emphasized in today's Messianic community. Zechariah, just like Haggai, could definitely be a text to inspire us to make the progress that God desires us to make.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION ON ZECHARIAH:

- 1. What themes, ideas, or imagery seen in Zechariah struck you as being the most important or significant?**
- 2. What parallels could you see in Zechariah, and concepts directly discussed in the Gospels relating to the life of Yeshua the Messiah?**

¹⁵ Barker, in *EXP*, 7:599.

¹⁶ Higginson, in *NBCR*, 788; Fensham, "Zechariah, Book of," in *ISBE*, 4:1186.

¹⁷ Cf. Ehud ben Zvi, "Zechariah," in *Jewish Study Bible*, 1250.

3. How prominent is the judgment and restoration of all Israel to the Book of Zechariah?

4. How important do you believe it is to comprehend Zechariah, in order to have a fuller understanding of Biblical eschatology?

5. Do you believe today's Messianic community takes the message and themes of Zechariah seriously? Why or why not?

REFLECTION ON ZECHARIAH'S PLACEMENT IN THE CANON

Write two short paragraphs about what struck you about reading the Book of Zechariah: