

Proclaiming Restoration: Zechariah

By [Sean Morris](#)

This coming Lord's Day Evening, we will be back in our series on the Book of Zechariah. We began this series a number of weeks ago, taking a brief pause due to the Mission Conference and the pleasure of having Paul Levy as our guest preacher. In conjunction with this ongoing sermon series, we will continue to post a number of short blog entries regarding the Post-Exilic Prophets (Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, Joel). We continue today, appropriately, with Zechariah.

The thrust of Zechariah is essentially this: After the discipline of the Exile, Zechariah declares that God is renewing his commitment to restore Judah as his treasured people.

Remember that the defining moments for Israel are situated around the two big "E's": Exodus and Exile. Zechariah takes place after God's people have been released from Exile in Babylon in 538 BC. They have since returned and resettled their homeland, Judah. Zechariah himself was a priest who began his ministry in 520 BC.

Now, nearly 20 years after their return, discouragement abounds for God's people: the rebuilding of the temple has come to a halt, the great transformations that the earlier prophets had anticipated (regarding Jewish independence and spiritual reformation) were still unrealized, life in the Persian-ruled Judah was hard, Jerusalem was still only partially rebuilt, and she was no longer a significant player on the global scene.

Under the circumstances, it was easy for the people to conclude that God was absent. And so, faithful obedience was viewed by many as useless; it simply made more sense to pursue the best life possible in the midst of all their difficulties.

Zechariah is a book of prophecy, and as such, it does not read with a traditional narrative flow. Zechariah's night-time dream visions in the first half of the book and the oracles of God's blessing in the second half of the book are all individual units of prophecy that follow each other quickly and a bit disjointedly. Much the book needs to be approached by simply allowing the barrage of images and symbols to capture the imagination, and then to study what those details symbolize.

Through Zechariah's fantastic, albeit at times perplexing, images and oracles, God provides real sustenance for the souls of his people. Zechariah is a book of glorious promises and reassurances from a Covenant God to his Covenant People.

Zechariah addresses the people's discouragement in numerous ways, including by reminding them:

That the Sovereign Lord oversees all things, and that when the time was right, He would act to reorder the universe (1:8-11).

That, citing the example of their forefathers, if the people would heed the words of the prophets and turn to the Lord, they would discover him turning to them (1:3-6).

That He will trouble the nations who were enjoying rest and grant rest to his troubled people (1:14-17).

That the temple that was being rebuilt and its priesthood were signs of the Lord's commitment to his people, a commitment that would be demonstrated by the ultimate removal of all their sin from the land— when the promised Davidic king, the Branch, arrived (3:8). The result would be peace, harmony, and prosperity for all the inhabitants of the land, as the Lord once more dwelt in their midst.

That this new ruler will come to Jerusalem, a ruler who will not be like the existing rulers but will be righteous and humble, bringing salvation (9:9–11).

That, in contrast to the shepherds who feed themselves at the expense of the flock, this good shepherd will take care of the flock and provide for them (9:16).

That this coming Davidic King will cleanse them of all their iniquities (13:1).

But there are also words of warning that Zechariah brings to God's people, as well as words of glorious comfort:

The people will reject this good shepherd, and the Lord's own sword will be unleashed against him (11:4–16; 13:7).

The sheep will be scattered and left to their oppressors in a time of trial and testing.

Yet, ultimately, God will redeem his flock and rescue his city. Final judgment will come upon all the nations that assaulted God's people, and the end result will be the complete holiness of Jerusalem. It will be restored as God's chosen city, to which the nations will come in pilgrimage (ch. 14).

Indeed, though the people will undergo more distress, God vows that He ultimately will judge the Gentile oppressors and we know, most glorious of all, that the line of Judah one day yields the Messiah, God's Anointed Servant-King who will rule over the whole world and bring His people to worship the one true God.

Be on the lookout for these things as we study this marvelous book together in the coming weeks.

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