

Preface

1. While prophecy includes prediction, it is very often more than prediction. It frequently teaches a moral and spiritual lesson.

1.1 Such is certainly the case with Zechariah who declares national discipline will follow national error although ultimately, the grace of God will deliver his people in His time.

1.2 Ezekiel, Daniel and Obadiah were written in Exile to first Babylon and later Persia. The exilic period is a name customarily given to a seventy-year (Jer 25:11 predicts the 70 years) period during which the Jews were displaced from their country after the destruction of their temple, capital city, and commonwealth by Nebuchadnezzar from c. 606 to 536.

1.3 Zechariah was known as a post-exilic prophet, i.e., he did his work after the 536 return.

2. The displacement came as a result of a continued and prolonged rejection of God's protocol plan; mainly a sustained dalliance with "foreign gods" and a refusal to listen to their major prophet Jeremiah. One of the more major errors of Judah which seemed to stick in the craw of Nebuchadnezzar was their alliance with Egypt and Assyria.

3. This destruction came in three stages:

3.1 First, in 606 when Nebuchadnezzar brought Jehoiakim to his knees and carried off several hostages, one of whom was Daniel.

3.2 Later in 597 Nebuchadnezzar returned in force to punish several rebellious acts of **Jehoiachin**, Judah's king.

3.2.1 Nebuchadnezzar in 597 took some 10,000 captives, among whom were the king himself and a young prophet named Ezekiel. (Eze 1:1-3; compared with 2Ch 36:10; 2Ki 24:8-20).

Eze 1:1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God ... it was the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin—

2Ch 36:9 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD.

2Ch 36:10 In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and brought him to Babylon, together with articles of value from the temple of the LORD, and he made Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, king over Judah and Jerusalem.

2Ki 24:9 *Jehoiachin* did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.

2Ki 24:10 At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it,

2Ki 24:11 and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it.

2Ki 24:12 Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him. In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner.

2Ki 24:13 As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD.

2Ki 24:14 He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans--a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.

2Ki 24:15 Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land.

2Ki 24:16 The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand craftsmen and artisans.

3.3 Finally in 586, after a long siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the Temple and disrupted the entire Jewish community.

2Ki 25:1 So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it.

2Ki 25:2 The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.

2Ki 25:3 By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.

2Ki 25:4 Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah,

2Ki 25:5 but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered,

2Ki 25:6 and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him.

2Ki 25:7 They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

Jer 34:1 While Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms and peoples in the empire he ruled were fighting against Jerusalem and all its surrounding towns, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

Jer 34:2 "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Go to Zedekiah king of Judah and tell him, "This is what the LORD says: I am about to hand this city over to the king of Babylon, and he will burn it down.

Jer 34:3 You will not escape from his grasp but will surely be captured and handed over to him. You will see the king of Babylon with your own eyes, and he will speak with you face to face. And you will go to Babylon.

Jer 34:4 "Yet hear the promise of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah.

This is what the LORD says concerning you: You will not die by the sword;

Jer 34:5 you will die peacefully. As people made a funeral fire in honor of your fathers, the former kings who preceded you, so they will make a fire in your honor and lament, "Alas, O master!" I myself make this promise, declares the LORD."

Jer 34:6 Then Jeremiah the prophet told all this to Zedekiah king of Judah, in Jerusalem,

Jer 52:3 It was because of the LORD'S anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.

Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Jer 52:4 So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. They camped outside the city and built siege works all around it ...

Jer 52:7 Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled. They left the city at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah,

3.3.1 Zedekiah was captured, blinded and imprisoned.

4. Restoration to the land began in c 536 when the victorious Cyrus, king of the new Medo-Persian empire and conqueror of Babylon, decreed the Jews could return (2Ch 36:22-23; Ezr 1:1-4).

2Ch 36:22 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

2Ch 36:23 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you--may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up."

Ezr 1:1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and to put it in writing:

Ezr 1:2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah.

Ezr 1:3 Anyone of his people among you--may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the LORD, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem.

Ezr 1:4 And the people of any place where survivors may now be living are to provide him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem."

4.1 Isaiah some 150 years earlier had predicted Cyrus's actions by name and substance.

Isa 44:28 who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, "Let it be rebuilt," and of the temple, "Let its foundations be laid."'

Isa 45:13 I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the LORD Almighty."

5. Let's stop here and take a look at several important dates and actions which will help place Zechariah's work in proper chronological perspective.

5.1 539 Cyrus conquers Babylon (end of the Chaldean Empire).

5.2 538 Edict of Cyrus permitting Jewish repatriation of Judah is made.

5.3 536 Return of 49,897 Jews to Jerusalem.

5.4 535 Altar rebuilt and sacrifices offered (seventh month Oct. - Nov.).

5.5 535 Work on the temple is stopped.

5.6 535-520 Hardships and economic depression prevailed in Jerusalem; people forgot the Temple and selfishly concentrate on their own needs.

5.7 530 Death of Cyrus occurs.

5.8 530-522 Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, who conquered Egypt reigned.

5.9 522-486 Darius I, the Great, saved the empire from civil war, erected the Behistun Inscription (multi-language stone-helped decipher), and was friendly to the Jews.

5.10 520 Darius confirms the decree of Cyrus and aids in the construction of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

5.11 520 Sixth month (Sept. or Oct.) first day of the month, Haggai's first sermon is preached. (Hag 1:3-11)

5.12 In 520 on the first day of the eighth month (Nov.- Dec.), Zechariah's opening sermon is preached. (Zec 1:1-6)

5.13 In 520 in the eleventh month (Feb.- Mar.), on the twenty-fourth day, Zechariah's eight night-visions occur. (Zec 1:7 - 6:8)

5.14 In the eleventh month on the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth day Zechariah is shown the symbolic crowning of Joshua; a prefiguring of the Messiah King.

5.15 In 516 in the twelfth month (Mar - Apr.), the third day, the completion and dedication of the Temple occurs. (Ezr 6:15)

5.16 Xerxes I or Ahasuerus the husband of Esther reigns. (486-465)

5.17 In 480 the Persians are defeated by the Greeks at Thermopylae and Salamis.

5.18 Artaxerxes I reigned from 465 to 424.

5.19 In 445 Artaxerxes I authorized Nehemiah to restore Jerusalem's walls.

Introduction:

1. Zechariah's book is one of the twelve Minor Prophets. The twelve are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

2. Style and Value

2.1 Because the prophet (See Zechariah chapter 1) used the apocalyptic form to convey prophetic truth, his book has been called the Apocalypse of the Old Testament.

2.2 His revelations are succinct and terse, hence he has been called the epitomist of the prophets.

2.3 His style varies from a direct prophetic address to the presentation of visions and various symbolic acts.

3. Many have complained in ancient and modern times that the book is full of abstruse prophecies.

3.1 Especially have Jewish commentators expressed their inability to fathom the visions and prophecies of the book.

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