

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) 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. This destruction came in three stages:

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

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

3.1.1 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)

3.2 Finally in 586, after a long siege, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the Temple and disrupted the entire Jewish community. Zedekiah was captured, blinded and imprisoned. (2Ki 25:1-27; Jer 34:1-6; 52:3-7)

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; Psa 118:24 [in a Psa of Ezra, the High Priest praises God that all is ready for the Messiah's return])

4.1 Isaiah some 150 years earlier had predicted Cyrus's actions by name and substance. (Isa 44:28; 45:13)

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.

5.3 536 Return of 49,897 Jews to Jerusalem.

5.4 535 Altar rebuilt and sacrifices offered.

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.

5.7 520 Haggai's first sermon is preached. (Hag 1:3-11)

5.8 In 520 Zechariah's opening sermon is preached. (Zec 1:1-6)

5.9 In 520 Zechariah's eight night-visions occur. (Zec 1:7-6:8)

5.10 In 520 Zechariah is shown the symbolic crowning of Joshua; a prefiguring of the Messiah King.

5.11 In 516 the completion and dedication of the Temple occurs. (Ezr 6:15)

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

6. Style and Value

6.1 Because the prophet used the apocalyptic form to convey prophetic truth, his book has been called the Apocalypse of the Old Testament.

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

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

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

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

7.2 The outlook and framework of the prophecy are so definitely Messianic, it should come as no surprise that unbelievers find difficulty understanding its truths.

7.3 The book of Zechariah is full of Messianic predictions some of which are:

7.3.1 Jehovah's Servant, the Branch,

Zec 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.

7.3.2 Man the Branch,

Zec 6:12 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:

7.3.3 King Priest,

Zec 6:13 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.

7.3.4 True Shepherd,

Zec 13:7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts;

7.3.5 Betrayal of the Pride of Jordan,

Zec 11:2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

Zec 11:3 There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

7.3.6 False Shepherd, Antichrist,

Zec 11:15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

7.3.7 His piercing and suffering,

Zec 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

7.3.8 His sufferings and smiting when the sheep are scattered,

Zec 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.

7.3.9 His Second Advent,

Zec 14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

8. Though the book is difficult to exegete it has not forfeited its importance. Martin Luther for example referred to this book as "the quintessence of the prophetic books."

8.1 Its contribution to messianic prophecy is certainly out of proportion to its size. Only Isaiah provides a fuller portrayal of the person and work of the Messiah.

8.2 Zechariah treats both the first and second comings of Israel's Redeemer. Like Isaiah, Zechariah treats the Messiah's coming in lowliness, His shepherd ministry to His people, their rejection of Him, the Father's smiting and the consequent scattering of His sheep.

8.3 Christ's return in glory to a repentant Israel is perhaps covered best by Zechariah.

8.3.1 His establishment of peace among the nations, and the inauguration of His blessed millennial rule over all the earth is powerfully presented.

8.3.2 Other eschatological themes such as the ravaging of God's city, His return and the attendant earthquake resulting in the deliverance of Israel are all covered by Zechariah.

9. Authorship and Date

9.1 The critical questions concerning the book are second in importance only to those related to Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and the single or multiple authorship of Isaiah and Daniel.

9.2 In brief, chapters 1-8 have been assigned to Zechariah, whereas Zechariah chapters nine-fourteen- are said to be either pre-Exilic or post-Zechariah.

9.3 Criticism of the book relates primarily to Zechariah's predictive writings.

9.4 The critical animus is based on the accuracy of his predictive prophecy.

9.5 For example many argue that the reference to Greece in Zec 9:13 makes it impossible for the chapter to have been written before Alexander the Great, this because predictive prophecy has been arbitrarily ruled out.

Zec 9:13 When I have bent Judah (bow) for me, filled the bow with Ephraim (arrow), and raised up your sons, O Zion, against Your sons, O Greece, and made you as the sword of a mighty man (Maccabean revolt).

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