

(all numbers in parentheses list chapters and verses in this month's Bible book, except where otherwise noted)

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Zechariah

Zechariah calls God's people to return to Him (1:2-6) and promises the Spirit of God to encourage the weak and erring (4:6; 12:10).

What: eleventh of the minor prophets, between Haggai and Malachi
Where and when written: in Jerusalem as the Jews were returning from Babylon, about 500 B.C.

Zechariah lived 500 years before Christ, when the Persian King Darius ruled God's people (1:1, 7; 7:1). God had punished the Jews 70 years for their sins (1:2-6, 12; 7:7-14). Now many were returning to their homeland to rebuild (1:13-17). The prophet exhorts them to continue immigrating, not to fear, and to live righteously (2:6, 7; 7:9, 10; 8:13, 15-17)

Longest of the minor prophets (14 chapters), the book of Zechariah is one of the less understood and more difficult prophetic writings. Even so, it contains several familiar passages:

- a popular phrase ("The apple of His eye," 2:8)
- a memory verse ("Not by might, not by power . . .," 4:6)
- many prophecies of Messiah (3:8, 9; 6:12; 9:9; 11:12, 13; 12:10; 13:1, 7)
- a thrilling chapter that predicts the last great battle (14)

Zechariah was a man of the Spirit. Using the word seven times (4:6; 6:5, 8; 7:12; 12:1, 10; 13:2), he also speaks symbolically of the Spirit's work: fire; oil in lampstands; anointed ones; and latter rain (2:5; 3:2; 4:11, 12, 14; 10:1; 14:17, 18). For the prophet, nothing is revealed or accomplished by human ability, but by the Spirit (4:6). Angels and grace are also expressions of the Spirit (ch. 1 — 6; 4:7).

Important people

- Joshua: A high priest, he was opposed by Satan for his filthy garments (3:1, 3). The Lord removed his dirty clothes, gave him a clean robe, and rebuked Satan instead (3:2, 4, 5). With the governor, he helped to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (6:9-13).
- Zerubbabel (4:6-10): Governor of the returnees to Jerusalem, he and

Joshua led them to rebuild their temple, called the second Jewish temple or Zerubbabel's temple (6:12, 13). This building was unimpressive at its start (4:9, 10). A history of this period (Ezra 3 — 6) mentions Zechariah and Haggai as prophets successful in urging the people to complete their task (6:14-16).

Because Zechariah uses symbols, numbers, and strange phenomena (ch. 1 — 7), it is often classed as an "apocalyptic" book with Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation. Examples of mysterious or other-world imagery:

- the number seven (3:9; 4:2, 10)
- appearances of angels and of Satan (ch. 1 — 6; 3:1, 2)
- fire, lamps, lampstands (2:5; 3:2; 4:2, 11)
- a flying scroll (5:1, 2)

- a woman in a basket and women with wings (5:5-9)
- horses and chariots (1:8; 6:1-7)
- mountains of bronze (6:1)

The book consists of personal visions and revelations (ch. 1 — 8), followed by public "burdens" concerning the nations (ch. 8 — 14). Some short "burdens" mention nearby cities and lands (9:1-8; 11:1-3), but greater emphasis is on God's plans for His people: Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem, called Zion (9:8ff; 10:6ff; 12:1ff).

What does God say about Zion, His holy mountain?

- He is zealous for it and will dwell there (1:14-17; 2:10-12; 8:2, 3).
- He will re-populate it from many lands (8:4, 5, 7, 8; 10:9-12).
- He will make it a burden to many and strengthen it (12:1-4, 5-9).
- He will open its eyes to grace, producing mourning (12:10-14; 13:1).
- A remnant will be spared after suffering (13:7-9; 14:1, 2).
- The Lord will come to His people (9:9; 14:3-5).
- Their final destiny is peace over all the earth (9:9-12; 14:5-11).
- Some enemies shall suddenly be destroyed (14:12-15).
- Others who remain will have opportunity to learn God's ways (14:16-21).

Memory verse: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord of hosts" (4:6).

Zechariah in a sentence: Through a series of visions, Zechariah urges folks to return to the Lord and to Jerusalem and Judah, promising them cleansing, grace, and ultimate safety when He comes to dwell in Zion.