

Zechariah: The Righteous Branch



Zechariah has been called the revelation of the Old Testament. If you love the book of Revelation in the New Testament, you will have a field day with the book of Zechariah. Honestly, this may be my favorite stop on Route 66 so far. The Old Testament book of Zechariah is exit 38, and what a wonderful exit! The name, Zechariah, basically means 'Yahweh remembers.' Our purpose in studying the book of Zechariah is to see the big picture. As we see the big picture of Zechariah, it will help us to understand the big storyline of the Bible.

Studying this book critically, you will quickly see that it divides into two parts, chapters 1-8, and chapters 9-14. Chapters 1-8 were preached by Zechariah a couple of months after Haggai preached his famous sermon. Zechariah preached two messages in about 520 BC. At the beginning of chapter nine, perhaps as much as forty to fifty years have passed, so it would now be 480 or 470 BC. The reason the first part of the book is so different from the last part of the book. The first part was a prophecy, a preaching, during the early days of his ministry while the temple was being rebuilt in Jerusalem, after they came out of the Babylonian captivity. But, the last part of the book was a message preached and written much, much later. As a matter of fact, these two messages are so different that most critical scholars actually believe there are two Zechariahs. One wrote the first book part of the book and another wrote the last part. I don't follow that thought. If I have been preaching for thirty years. If I am still preaching

in another twenty and you compared my sermons from 1983 to sermons I would preach 50 years later, hopefully, there would be a big difference.

We are not going to look at Zechariah critically; we are going to look at Zechariah for the big picture. Therefore, I am going to break it into three parts that to me capture the big picture of Zechariah.

- 1. The message in the day**
- 2. The message in the night**
- 3. The Messiah in the light**

In chapter 1:1-6, Zechariah is going to bring a message in the day to the children of Israel. A couple of months later, he is going to bring another message, not in the day, but a message in the night. The first message has four parts. The second message, the message in the night, has eight parts because there are eight visions he sees in one night. Throughout this book, from the beginning of his ministry to the end of his ministry, the theme is really the Messiah in the light. There are seven specific passages in this book that deal with the coming of the Messiah, who will be revealed as the Lord Jesus Christ in the book of Matthew later on.

A friend of mine used to be an evaluator of teachers, and we have talked several times during my ministry about public speaking. One of the rules of public speaking is that at the very beginning, you need to tell people what you are going to tell them. Then, you need to tell them what you told them you were going to tell them. When you conclude, you need to remind them of what you just told them, which is what you told them you were going to tell them in the beginning. ☺ If you do that three times, most people will go away with the message. In the very beginning, Jesus said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." When you study the rest of His ministry, His message basically talked about repentance. Repentance in the Bible is best described today as life change. The ministry of Jesus was about changing peoples' lives.

The Message in the Day

Open your Bible to chapter 1:1-6 as we quickly look at the message in the day. In the very beginning of Zechariah, he gives us the message of the book and how it affects our lives. It has four parts.

The first part is simple:

God said, through Zechariah, to the children of Israel, return to Me and I will return to you.

This word, “return,” is basically talking about turning from the way you are living now, and I will turn back to you. The context of this book (Zechariah being a contemporary of Haggai) is saying that you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing. In Haggai, the children of Israel were neglecting building the House of God because they were preoccupied with building their own houses. Let me just state that if you are not doing what you should be doing, you are not where you should be. There are a whole lot of us who want to believe that we are where we are supposed to be, but we’re just not doing what we are supposed to be doing while there. That is not what the Bible teaches. If you’re not doing what you are supposed to be doing, which is building the House of God, you are not where you are supposed to be. Do not talk to me about your walk with God when you are more concerned about you and your possessions, than you are Him and His possessions. You are deceived.

The second part of this message is really simple:

Don’t be like the generation before you.

They heard the Word of God through the prophet, but they didn’t listen. When the Bible says they didn’t listen, it didn’t mean they didn’t hear. It meant they heard, but didn’t obey. They just kept doing their own thing. There are so many of us today who struggle with what the generation before us struggled with. We made a vow not to be like one of the former generational members of our family. We were not going to let that be

passed to us; we were going to get victory over it. But honestly, some of us are just like our dad, or just like our mom, and we vowed we were not going to be. The message here is do not be like the generation before you who didn't obey the Word of God. If you don't make that change, that generational sin will just continue to hinder your family and your life.

The third part of this message in the day is:

Time is short.

You have just one life to get it right. To me, the saddest thing in life is to see people get it right just before they die. Then in death, they will wonder why they didn't get it right earlier. They feel like they wasted their life. Zechariah says, "Where is your father?" He is dead..."Where are the prophets that preached to them?" They are dead...You just get one opportunity to get it right, and that is the life you have right now. This message in the day from Zechariah would be do not wait to make things right, return to God today so that He will return to you. Then, you won't be like the generation before you, because in your life, you are getting it right.

The fourth and last part of this message is:

God's Word will prevail.

If you don't bring your life in line with God's Word and His revelation to you, you will lose and He will win every time. No matter how many excuses you make for what you do right now, if you live disobediently to the Word of God; in the end, the Word of God is right and you will be shown to be wrong. There is a consequence, not only to you, but to those in your family and in your life, when you don't live in obedience to what God says is true.

Why does God give us two books that deal with Israel as they come out of exile, and keep reminding them they are supposed to be building the Temple of the Lord? In Deuteronomy chapter 12:5, God made it plain that one day He would choose a place on the planet where there would be a House built. He would indwell that House so that all would know who He is.

Why does God want us to not be concerned only about our house, but about His House? It is because it is in His House that He chooses to dwell and make Himself known. That House is the Church. Please hear me! Church is not a place we go; Church is who we are. It is through the people of God that God chooses to manifest His presence...wow! You and I, the House of God, are part of God's redemptive plan, so let's heed Zechariah's message in the day as we turn to His message in the night.

The Message in the Night

Zechariah goes to sleep, and in the night, he has eight visions. They come rapidly. The way these visions are lined out, the way God gives them to Zechariah, is in a literary pattern. When you look at visions one and eight, two and seven, three and six, and finally, four and five, you begin to understand there is pairing. These eight visions all ultimately point to visions four and five, which are the core of the message in the night. Please see this, when you count the visions, you see that they are all important, but they are building to that central message which is found in vision four and vision five.

- **Vision One**

Zechariah goes to sleep. He sees a man on a horse in the myrtle trees with colored horses around him. He doesn't understand what it means, so he asks. He is told these are the guardians of the universe who patrol the planet. They are God's warriors. They are God's divine policeman, if you will, His army. At that very moment, they were announcing there was peace; rest on the earth.

- **Vision Two**

Then, he has a vision of four horns and four craftsmen. The four craftsmen take their hammers and hammer the four horns. We understand the four horns to be the four nations that are going to struggle and prevail against God's covenant people. But ultimately, they are defeated. The enemy of God's people, ultimately, gets crushed.

Vision Three

In the next vision, a man appears with a tape measure in his hands. He pulls out his Sears and Roebuck tape measure and begins to measure Jerusalem. Suddenly, Jerusalem that was so small becomes large. The city doesn't have a wall around it because it is still destroyed, and will not be rebuilt until the day of Nehemiah, but Zechariah sees that the Lord will be the wall around Jerusalem. It is flourishing with people coming from everywhere to inhabit the city. That's good news for a group of people who are being called from working on their house to build a House in Jerusalem. They suddenly get the message that once again people want to quit living in the country and move to the city. Why did they move away from the city? They had moved from the city because it was destroyed by the Babylonians, and now it will be rebuilt and will be a prosperous, vibrant city once again.

- **Vision Four**

Next, he sees Joshua. This is one of the core messages. He sees Joshua standing before God, and Satan is there to accuse him (remember Satan in the book of Job). He has an accusation, and you see Joshua, the High Priest of Israel, and his garments are filthy. You get the picture; he is a sinner. Joshua represents Israel, God's covenant people. The people who are supposed to be rebuilding the temple of Yahweh are not fit to build the temple because their lives are not right before God. Who brings this to God's attention? Satan does.

Let me stop right here for just a moment and ask who reminds you from time to time that you are not fit to do what God tells you to do? It is Satan. The New Testament will teach in the last book of the Bible that he is still the accuser of the brethren. He does not live in Heaven anymore; he has been cast down to the earth. Therefore, he doesn't bring an accusation before God about us; he now brings accusations about us to us.

Then in the vision, you see God rebuke Satan. Then Joshua is clothed with garments of righteousness. They put the turban on his head! Do you understand that you can be clothed in the righteousness of God? As a sinner who does not know Christ, you can have your sins forgiven and removed from you. God will put the new wardrobe of the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ on you. Wow!!

- **Vision Five**

I love this next vision! It is a vision of a lamp stand. It is golden and has seven lamps. Back in those days, the oil that supplied those lamps was olive oil. These lamps have two olive trees standing beside them. Zechariah doesn't get it, so it is explained to him. This vision represents this truth that the temple of God will not be built by man's might or skill, but by God's Spirit. What Zerubbabel started with his hands, he will finish, not because of any personal skill he had, but because of the dynamic ministry of God's Holy Spirit. Suddenly, Zechariah notices that the bowls on the lamp stand are connected to the two olive trees. He begins to understand that there is a supply of oil that runs to the lamp stand continually. You know, when gasoline was so high, I thought it would be nice if I had my own personal gas station! Wouldn't it be nice to have your own oil well? That is the picture here.

What are these two visions saying? They are saying to the people of God who have been redeemed, whose sins have been forgiven, that we have the Spirit of God to enable us to do what God has called us to do. And, what He has called us to do is to rebuild His temple so the whole world will know He is who He is! Wow! Did you catch that? This message in the night is reminding us that the reason we have been redeemed is not to build up our own kingdom, not to make our life's purpose our possessions, our property, our house, but to build His House. In the book of Haggai, we saw that the foundation was laid seventeen years earlier, and Haggai had to ask why they had quit working on the temple.

Do you remember when you first got redeemed? What happened? How did you lose that zeal? How did you lose that flame? How did you lose that passion? Why did you quit? Zechariah is saying get back to doing what you are supposed to be doing. If you think you were redeemed to keep you out of Hell, and get you go to Heaven, you missed it. I'm not saying that is not one of the messages of salvation, but it is not the prominent message of the Bible. The prominent message of the Bible is that you and I are redeemed so we can be a part of something bigger than ourselves, and that is to build God's House! The New Testament teaches He is not going to indwell a physical building that stands in the city of Jerusalem in the land of Israel, but He is indwelling His church because He wants His presence to be in every country on the planet. He wants the folks on your road, and your communities to know He is God. Amen!

- **Vision Six**

Now we see a scroll that is 30'x15,' flying through the air, and it is calling out those who steal and those who swear falsely.

- **Vision Seven**

Then there is a basket of iniquity. I mean no disrespect to ladies, but I get tickled every time I read this vision. When the basket of iniquity is opened, what pops out is a woman! Guess what her name is...wickedness! In the vision, the basket was taken back to Babylon...whoa! The children of Israel went into Babylon because of their sin, and now, they have come out of Babylon and sin is back in their lives. This vision is saying whoa, sin does not belong here! Sin goes back to where it was when you used to be there. But you are not there anymore; you are now in Christ, not in Adam! Our lives should be different.

- **Vision Eight**

The night message ends again with horses; there were four chariots coming out of two mountains. Again, they patrol the earth telling us God is sovereign.

The Messiah in the Light

The last message is the Messiah in the light. When we started this series, it was based on Jesus' words to those two disciples on the road to Emmaus. He opened the Scriptures, and starting with Moses and the prophets, He expounded to them the Scriptures concerning Himself. Jesus started in Genesis with Himself as the Promised Seed, but you just have to know that it took Him a while to go through them all when he got to Zechariah. Some scholars believe that in the book of Zechariah alone, there are seventy-one allusions to Christ that are referred to in the New Testament. During the passion week of Christ, that last week of His life on earth, Zechariah is used more than any other book to show how His last week fulfilled what the Old Testament prophet had predicted. Remember, Zechariah is preaching in 520 BC, the message may not have ended until 480, possibly 470 BC, over 500 years before the last week of Jesus on the earth.

- **First Passage**

God revealed a Messiah to Zechariah. The first thing we learn about Him is that He is the Branch. Let's look at chapter 3:8-10, beginning with verse 8, *"Oh Joshua the High Priest, you and your friends who sit before you for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch."* Now catch this, if you read this literally, you can get the idea that Joshua is the branch....no. Joshua, and the men around him, is a sign that God will send forth a Branch.

Remember that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel identified the Messiah as a branch, and they called Him a Righteous Branch. Zechariah tells the children of Israel, in the midst of rebuilding the Temple when they came back into the Promised Land after the Babylonians destroyed it, they will rebuild the Temple, but God will still send forth the Branch. That ties the servant to David. We saw a promise in 2nd Samuel, chapter 7, that there would be one who would always sit on David's throne; He is this Branch. God tells Zechariah He will send the Branch. Verses 9-10 continue, *"For behold, on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with*

seven eyes, I will engrave its inscription, declares the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree." Wow! Please catch what Zechariah is saying; Israel should look forward to a day when the Messiah, the righteous Branch of David, comes, and when He does, their iniquity will be dealt with in a single day! Can you imagine God making right everything that is wrong, in one day? When that happens, you will invite your neighbor over to share in your life.

Why is it with kids that we always have to teach them to share? If you have multiple kids, I guarantee you had one of them that wouldn't share! It amazes me that non-sharers want the other child to share with them, but they don't want to share themselves. Even non-sharers understand the value of sharing!

Do understand what this is saying? When the Branch comes, those people who have had their sin dealt with in a day, it will change their lives to a point they will no longer be self-centered people, keeping what is theirs for themselves; instead, they will invite their neighbors to come and join in on what they have! We struggle to embrace evangelism, but evangelism is basically being a sharer. He changed your life, and you don't want to keep this life just for you, you want to share it with others, your neighbors. Now, back in the Biblical world your neighbors were your family. Do you know where sharing starts? It starts in your family, and it just keeps going down the road. Guys, listen to this. The foundation of being a sharer is that you have something to share. What you have to share is that the Messiah dealt with your sin in a single day.

- **Second Passage**

Our second passage is Zechariah 6:9-14, *"And the word of the Lord came to me: "Take from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon, and go the same day to the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah. Take from them silver and gold, and make a crown, and set*

it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. And say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch:..." Once again, it looks like the Scripture is saying Joshua is the Branch, but that is not what it is saying. Joshua is a sign to us that there is a Man coming who is the Branch. The passage continues, *"...for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."* And the crown shall be in the temple of the Lord as a reminder to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah."

When we begin to see the Messiah in the light, (remember that Israel was looking for the coming of the Messiah) we begin to see that He is the branch. The Branch is going to build the Temple of the Lord. Now wait, Zerubbabel, in the fourth vision in the night, was the man who started and completed the Temple. In this text, Zerubbabel is not the one building the Temple; the one building the Temple is Joshua. What is going on here? This isn't talking about the Joshua in 520 BC. It is talking about the coming Joshua, the Righteous Branch. When Jesus comes, do you know what He is coming to do? He is going to deal with iniquity in a single day because His purpose is to build the Temple of God, to build a people where God is going to dwell in their midst and reveal His presence to the world! He is going to rule His House. In other words, He is going to be the King of the House.

Then, the Scripture talks about a priest who is going to sit on the throne and there will be peace between them. You have to understand that the Old Testament is picturing the coming ministry of Jesus Christ for us. Because of the limitations of God's Old Testament covenant people, there was no way they could understand the full ramifications of the ministry of Christ; how he could be a King and a Priest. In the Old Testament, kingship and priesthood were divided. This is teaching that a King and a Priest will be sitting on the throne and ruling the House of God. In this passage, it

sounds like there will be two different people, but there is not. There is just One, and that is Jesus, both King and Priest. There has to be two people in the Old Testament because Old Testament people could not conceive of, picture, one man being both. Does that make sense?

An example of this is in the book of Exodus. The Day of Atonement pictures the ministry of Jesus Christ, how He would deal with sin once and for all. He would take sin into the presence of God, sin would be forgiven and removed, and it would be cast as far as the East is from the West. In the Old Testament, to picture the ministry of Jesus, there were many two goats. There was the Lord's goat and there was Azazel's goat. Do you remember what happened to the Lord's goat? It died. When it died, its blood was taken into the Holy of Holies and splattered on the altar. Then the High Priest came out and laid his hands on the second goat, and they lead Azazel's goat out into the wilderness. They took sin back to where it came from, Azazel, the wilderness. This is to picture the coming redemptive work of Christ in making atonement for our sin. When they killed that goat, they couldn't resurrect it. They had to have a goat that died to take sin in, but to symbolize taking sin out, they had to have another goat. So, they had to have two goats. Do not think there are two Messiahs. There are not two Saviors, there is only One; a Savior who laid His life down and took His blood into the very presence of God. He dealt with our sin by taking our sin into the presence of God, God judged Him, poured His wrath out upon Him, and He died! But praise God, He came back alive, and when He came back alive, our sin was cast as far as the East is from the West! In the house of God, we not only have a King, we have a Priest. He was made just like us, tempted just like us, so that when we need to come before Him, we know He knows. He can say to you, I've been there; but He never says to you, I did it. He can say been there; didn't do it. You understand that where you failed, He was victorious. He fully understands because He went deeper than you went...amen!

- **Third Passage**

The third passage about the Messiah is found in Zechariah 9:9-10. *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth."*

The gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke pick up on this and tell us this was fulfilled when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. In the Messiah in the light, we are looking for a coming King. You expect kings to ride horses, you expect kings to make war. But when the Messiah comes, He is not going to ride on a horse of war first; He is going to ride in on a donkey. Mark said he rode on the colt of the donkey, and the colt had never been ridden.

Have any of you ever ridden a horse that has never been ridden? Fun, isn't it! A horse trainers never just get on horses that haven't been ridden; they ease into that activity. They prepare that animal for the weight to transfer on them for the first time. Normally, there is a reaction from the animal that is not good for the man who will ride for the first time.

Have you ever noticed that the Lord of creation can mount a horse that has never been ridden, in a crowd of people; and calm is that donkey! This is saying that when He comes, if He can calm the animal world, He can calm what is not right in you. If you would let him have the reigns to your heart and your life, He will be Lord over you, a new creation in Him. Amen!

- **Fourth Passage**

The next part of this message, as we bring about the Messiah in the light, is in chapter 11. Basically, they pay Zerubbabel thirty pieces of silver for the work he does on building the Temple. Can you imagine that? That is the price of a slave. The price of a servant who got gored by an ox was

given thirty pieces of silver. Zechariah is getting a glimpse from God of a Messiah to come, who will basically be sold for thirty pieces of silver. Judas fulfilled Scripture. Once he had it in his hands and realized what he did, he threw it back into the Temple. With that money, they bought the potter's fields. All of that had been done so that we would know Jesus is our Savior.

- **Fifth Passage**

The next passage is in Zechariah 12. They are going to mourn the one they pierced as for an only child, a reference to the fact that the children of Israel who rejected their Messiah would one day see that they had pierced Him. They crucified Him and they would mourn for Him, as you would mourn for the loss of an only child.

- **Sixth Passage**

The sixth passage is in Zechariah chapter 13, "*Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.*" It goes on to say that when the shepherd struck, a third, which is the remnant, would be refined like silver and tested like gold. Before Jesus was crucified, He quoted that passage to His disciples, saying, they will strike Me, the Shepherd, and you will get scattered.

When you get scattered, you will be tested and refined. The way they refine gold and silver is to heat them up. Please, hear me. Why do you think your life gets heated up from time to time? Why are we in what we are in at this very moment? It is to understand that because of the redeeming work of the Shepherd, the Messiah in our life, God has chosen to test and refine us before He ultimately redeems and gathers us into one place in a new Kingdom, on a new earth where there is no sin.

Life is going to get rough; it is going to get tough. That is why most of us aren't building the House of the Lord. We get into one of those situations and someone betrays us, someone says something that hurt our feelings, someone does something that we didn't think a Christian should do, and we decide really quickly they are not a Christian or they are not right, so

we decide we are not going to do this anymore. Can I just say this? Your reaction doesn't reveal them, your reaction reveals you. The bottom line is many of us here are not who we think we really are. We judge who we are when we are at church instead of what is happening at work when we lose our temper, what happens at home when we are impatient, or what happens when it is just us when no one is looking.

- **Seventh Passage**

The last passage is in Zechariah 14:4 and 9, *"On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward."* Then verse 9, *"And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one."*

That is a reference to those disciples who watched Jesus go up into the Heavens. An angel asked, "Why do you men stand here staring? This same Jesus who you have seen rise will come again in the same manner." The Lord Jesus, whose feet after His resurrection, left the Mount of Olives and ascended back to a Heaven, will one day come back and touch down again. When He does, the Mount splits and the whole world is going to know He is the King. He will set up an eternal reign as King over the Heavens and the earth. Sin will be done away with once and for all. Wow!

I love Zechariah. If you struggled reading this book, go back and visit again. Let God open to you the glory of the message in the day, the glory of the message in the night, and the glory of the Messiah as seen in the light of God.