

Zechariah

1. Repentance and the eight visions

March 25, 2010

There are two distinctive styles of motivation. One is the aggressive, highly charged emotional style that appeals to the will. It relies on fear and if necessary, public demand to motivate us to get a job done. This is what we might call “extrinsic motivation.” It offers tangible rewards. It provides us with visible stimulant to get a job done.

There is a second type of motivation, which is called “intrinsic.” It is quiet. It digs deep. It is at least outwardly less emotional but much more inspiring. It does not dangle the carrot and offer us a lot of external reward. It doesn’t use guilt or fear to motivate us, but it appeals to our sense of purpose and/or inner feelings of deep-seated passion and concern.

It often takes both types of motivation to get a big job done. Elijah, Jonah or Ezekiel would be extrinsic motivators while Jeremiah and Zechariah would be intrinsic motivators.

While the Book of Haggai was a pretty much in-your-face Book from the Lord, the Book of Zechariah was telling the Jewish remnants about their future – immediate as well as the distant future – that will be filled with God’s blessings if they just obey the Lord.

This is the second Book that was written after the Jewish remnants returned to Jerusalem from the exile to Babylon which was the time of postexilic. It is the longest Book for the Minor Prophets.

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

Zechariah 1:1 In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

Zechariah means “The Lord remembers.” It is a name that reminds everyone around of God’s faithfulness to His people. There were thirty people with this name in the Bible. It is the perfect name for this particular prophet who reminded the faithfulness of God to the Jewish remnants in Jerusalem.

He was born in Babylon and returned to Jerusalem under Cyrus’ decree with his grandfather in 538 B.C. He was a contemporary of Zerubbabel the governor of Judah, Joshua the high priest, and Haggai the prophet. Zechariah started his ministry around 520 B.C. like Haggai.

B. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

Zechariah’s major theme is “Build the temple; build your future.” It is only second to Isaiah among the prophets in messianic passages.

This Book can be divided into four sections:

- 1) A call to repentance – 1:2-1:6
- 2) Apocalyptic section with the eight visions – 1:7-6:8

3) Questions regarding fasting, failure and future of Zion – 7 & 8

4) Deliverance section – 9-14

Tonight we are going to cover first two sections.

C. A CALL TO REPENTANCE

Zechariah 1:2-6 "The Lord has been very angry with your fathers. 3 Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Return to Me," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. 4 Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds.'" But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the Lord. 5 "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? 6 Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers? "So they returned and said: 'Just as the Lord of hosts determined to do to us, According to our ways and according to our deeds, So He has dealt with us.'""

The prophet was not prophesying about the future of Israel, but rather he was reflecting on the past.

Returning to the Promised Land and rebuilding the temple didn't guarantee God's blessing. The ancestors of the people who had returned had the land and the temple and so much more, yet they disobeyed the Lord and ended up in exile. By reminding them of their ancestors' fault, the Lord warned them through prophet Zechariah not to make the same mistake.

Just because we attend the church or read the Bible, it does not guarantee that we are right with the Lord. As important as those things are, the more important thing is our obedience to the Lord from our hearts. Jesus warned His disciples about the Pharisees' long-public-seen prayers, yet their hearts were far from the Lord.

James also echoes what Zechariah tells us:

James 4:8a Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Unless our hearts are right with the Lord, we can not hear His Word with true spiritual comprehension.

1 Corinthians 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Hebrews 3:7-8a Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion

D. APOCALYPTIC SECTION WITH THE EIGHT VISIONS

1) Horses and riders – 1:7-17

In this vision, a rider on a red horse, identified as "the Angel of the Lord" in v11-12, explains that He and three other horsemen have conducted a reconnaissance mission throughout the earth and found it to be "resting quietly". I believe that these riders are Jesus Himself and a part of God's angelic army.

God answers that He is angry with the nations, such as Assyria, Babylon and Moab for going beyond with unnecessarily brutal treatment toward the Jews. As for the Jews, the Lord will once again raise the temple, rebuild Jerusalem, and bless those who belong to Him.

2) Horns and Craftsmen – 1:18-21

In Scripture, a horn is a symbol of power, especially the power of a nation or a ruler. The four “craftsmen” represent nations that God uses to defeat the enemies of the Jews.

The concept of four horns – nations, reminds us of Daniel’s visions of the image in Daniel 2 and the beasts in Daniel 7, both of which speak of four empires: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome.

3) Man with a Measuring Line – Chapter 2

The remnant that had returned to Judah was concerned about rebuilding the temple and restoring the city and the nation, but their work was extremely difficult. In this vision, God assured His people that He planned future glory and honor for them and their city when He Himself would come to dwell with them.

The man with the measuring line is evidently the Angel of the Lord, Israel’s Messiah. Leaders and diplomats may debate over who shall control Jerusalem, but the Lord Jesus Christ has the final word. By measuring the city, He declares that it is His and He will accomplish His divine purposes for the city no matter what world leaders and international assemblies may decide.

The Obama administration this week applied intense and unprecedented pressure on the Israel government to make huge unilateral concessions to the Palestinians even before direct peace talks begin.

Obama and Germany, France and Great Britain pressured Israel that they should not have any more new Jewish building in Jerusalem.

The Israel Prime Minister Netanyahu was strong and principled. He did not cave into the intense pressure from the White House and State Department. He refused to divide Jerusalem and he clearly explained why Israel would never give up the right to build homes in her capital. He sent the U.S. and the world a straightforward and sobering message that if they don’t move quickly and decisively to stop Iran from getting the nuclear bomb, then Israel will do it herself. He didn’t threaten. He simply stated the facts that the Israeli government is united.

Everything Obama does is disastrous and ungodly.

4) Joshua’s Garments – Chapter 3

Zechariah’s fourth vision takes him from Jerusalem during the time of Millennium back to the courts of the temple. Here he witnesses what may be one of Scripture’s clearest portrayals of God’s gracious gift of salvation.

The high priest, Joshua, who returned from Babylon with Zechariah, stands in filthy garments before an Angel of the Lord. Satan, who tries to disqualify Joshua for his unworthiness, is rebuked by the Lord.

The Lord Himself removes Joshua’s soiled clothes and replaces them with clean garments, symbolizing God’s forgiveness of Israel’s – and our – sin. This is so rich. You all remember Joshua means “God is salvation” in Hebrew and in Greek “Jesus”.

When we put our trust in Christ, God removes the filth of our sin and clothes us in His Son’s perfect righteousness. Though we are indeed unworthy to stand before

God, as Satan accuses, God's gracious gift allows us not only to stand before Him but to serve Him.

Forgiveness comes with responsibility. As Joshua is expected to follow the Lord's commands and lead by example, so we are to live out our faith by obeying our heavenly Father.

5) Golden Lampstand and Olive Trees – Chapter 4

Just as the previous vision was a message of encouragement to Joshua, the high priest, this vision is intended to encourage Zerubbabel, Judah's governor.

Zechariah 4:6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.

It is never about our own strength and intelligence. Whenever we do the works of God with our own power, program and human ingenuity, we always fail no matter how the beginning goes. But when we finally realize that it is the power of the Living God and we step aside for Him, we cannot lose.

6) Flying Scroll – 5:1-4

If Israel is to become a light to the nations, she must first be purged of sin. A flying scroll, thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide which happens to be the same size of the Holy Place of the tabernacle, symbolizes God's purifying judgment on those who break His written Law.

7) Woman in a Basket – 5:5-11

In order to understand this vision, we must ask ourselves, "What did the Jews bring to their land from Babylon when they returned after their captivity?" It wasn't idolatry, because their years of exile cured them of that sin. The answer is commercialism.

Throughout Scripture, Babylon symbolizes the world's enmity against God. The contrast in the Book of Revelation is between the Bride – the heavenly city – and the harlot – the earthly city of Babylon. When you read Revelation 18, you see that the emphasis is on the commercial success and the vast wealth of Babylon, the very "virus" that some of the Jews had caught during the Babylonian exile.

This doesn't imply that the people of Israel today are all guilty of bad business practices, or that it's wrong for anybody to earn money by engaging in business. Both believers and unbelievers, Jews or Gentiles, can be manufacturers and merchants and faithfully do their work. But if the worldly commercial spirit infects the child of God, it will result in twisted values, confused priorities, and a craving for wealth and position that grieves the Lord. The best antidote is found in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Unfortunately, money has become a god around the world and, like a god, money is trusted by people to give them help, to solve their problems, to provide happiness, and to empower them to accomplish their goals in life. The last of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not covet" in Ex. 20:17, but coveting will cause people to break the other nine commandments.

God has now cleansed the land. What is His next step in preparing His people for their promised kingdom?

8) Four Chariots – 6:1-8

In a vision similar to the first, Zechariah now sees four chariots drawn by horses of varied colors. These “four spirits of heaven” blanket the four corners of the earth, dispensing judgment on the nations.

E. THE CROWNING OF JOSHUA

Though technically not a vision, this passage serves as a symbolic climax to the previous eight visions. The Lord instructs Zechariah to place a crown upon the head of Joshua, the high priest—an event that looks forward to the Messiah who will come as the Priest-King to sit on David’s throne.

The Jews recognize this as a prophecy concerning Messiah. In fact, if you ask many Orthodox Jews when they will know that Messiah has come, they will cite this very verse 13 and say, “Messiah will rebuild our temple.” But this will be used by the Antichrist in the middle of Tribulation period, as he will make a treaty with Israel, which will allow them to rebuild their temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This will allow him to claim to be the Messiah and many will believe him. But the Antichrist will end up defiling the temple, according to Revelation 13, and will turn against the Jews.

We ARE living in the last days.