

Zechariah

Original Historical Setting

Author: Zechariah

Written: ~518 B.C.

Audience: Israelites after they returned from exile

Occasion: The Jews had been back in Jerusalem for over fifteen years and yet the walls were still ruined, the city was in physical disarray, and the people were questioning the future of the city. Zechariah came to encourage the Jews about their future.

Timeline:

538 BC – Zechariah and other exiled Jews return home

536 BC – Jews complete Temple foundation then stop

520 BC – Zechariah's first recorded prophecy from God

516 BC – Temple is completed

World Events that occur simultaneously

550 B.C. – Temple of Artemis built in Ephesus

539 B.C. – Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon

522 B.C. – Darius succeeds Cyrus as king of Persia

509 B.C. – Rome becomes a republic

Features and Structure

Zechariah is easily divided into two distinct parts, leading some to speculate that the book is the work of two writers.

OUTLINE

Ch 1-8 Zechariah's night visions, concluding with God's blessings on Jerusalem

Ch 9-14 Zechariah's oracles (sermons) concluding with God's victory in the final war against Jerusalem.

Memory Verse: Zechariah 4:6

Genre/Literary style

Prophecies written in Hebrew prose and some poetry

Key text(s)

7:9-10 – Do justice, mercy and compassion

8:3 – “I will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.”

9:9 – Messiah will ride in on a donkey.

13:7 – The sheep will be scattered

What to look for

- Notice how Zechariah is similar to other prophets in how he telescopes near and far prophecies. Sometimes near and remote prophecies are so compressed together (like looking through a telescope at two mountaintops that appear close together and are many miles apart) that it is sometimes a challenge to tell whether specific predictions are near or distant.
- Notice the many references to the Messiah in this 14-chapter book—the most references of any other book besides the 66-chapter book of Isaiah. Here are a few:
Ruler on the throne – **2:10-13**
Holy Priesthood – **3:8**
Heavenly High Priest – **6:12-13**
Riding a donkey – **9:9-10**
Betrayal price of 30 pieces of silver – **11:12-13**
Money used to buy potter's field – **11:13**
Body pierced by spear – **12:10**
Good shepherd killed and sheep scattered – **13:6-7**

Interesting facts

- According to Jewish tradition, Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the Canon of revealed Scripture.
- Zechariah was a popular name shared by no fewer than twenty-nine Old Testament characters.
- Matthew 23:35 indicates that Zechariah was “murdered between the temple and the altar.”