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**2024 TERM 2 – ZECHARIAH**

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# Introduction: Zechariah Studies

## Approach

These studies explore the main themes of the book as they are developed and have an emphasis on reading chunks and considering the context for the original hearers. Having appreciated that message in context we can then consider how it relates to us today post Jesus’ death and resurrection.

One difficulty faced in studying the Old Testament is the lack of familiarity we have with names, places, and the historical context. Each study has a brief introduction to help set the scene. The pre-reading aims to help give context and/or background to the passage being studied as well as reducing the amount of time required for the studies. Another challenge is the volume of material to cover. Summary sections provide an overview of parts of the book that are skipped to help with continuity.

A question followed by a star in superscript (\*) indicates that the supporting notes at the back have more information.

## Quick Facts

**Author:** Zechariah

**Message:** Call to trust God and his word, and to rebuild the temple in expectation of God’s return. In the future, God’s king will be installed, sin and idolatry will be removed, and the nations will be included.

**Timing:** Approx: 520 BC

**Genre:** Mix of Apocalyptic Visions and Prophecy

## Outline

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## Timeline

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# Study 1 Zech 1:1-6 Waiting for God to return.

## Introduction

Zech 1:1 dates the book at 520 BC. Some of Israel has returned to the land but they are still ruled by a foreign king. It has been nearly 70 years since they were exiled for disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28:15, 36-37).

Zech 1:1-6 Return to the Lord.

Discuss

Why do you trust in God’s promises?

## Investigate

Read Jer 25:1-14

1. What was Jeremiah’s message v1-6? How was it received?

Turn from your evil practices, to not follow other gods and God will not harm you. Jeremiah spoke this word to the people for 23 years, but they did not listen nor paid attention.

1. What is God’s judgement? v7-11?

Judgement will come via Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar who is described as God’s servant. They will be banished, and the land made a wasteland for 70 years.

1. What hope is held out in v12?

The punishment has a time limit on it, 70 years.

King Nebuchadnezzar does indeed come and attack Judah, they are exiled in the year 589 BC (2Ki 24:1-17) and the temple destroyed later in 586 BC (2Ki 24:18-25:12). In 539 BC Cyrus the Persian King defeats the Babylonians.

Read Ezra 1:1-4

1. It is the year 539 BC and v1 references Jeremiah, indicating we are at an important point in history. What does Cyrus proclaim?

God has appointed him to rebuild the temple! He proclaims people are free to return and undertake the work.

The book of Ezra records what happens as the people return; they face opposition and hardship. In Ezra 4:24 we learn that the temple rebuilding stops. Some 20 years later, Darius is the ruling Persian king, when Haggai starts preaching.

Read Hag 1:1-11

1. It is now 520BC, what is his message to the returnees?

God has caused their hardship and poor crops. He has caused this to happen because they are focused on their own homes, not rebuilding God’s temple. Called to rebuild the temple.

Zechariah’s message now comes a couple of months after Haggai (Hag 1:1 cf Zech 1:1)

Read Zech 1:1-6

1. What is Zechariah calling the people to do?

To return to God, to not be like their ancestors (note how v4 uses similar language to Jeremiah 25:5). Ultimately to repent.

1. There are three questions in v5-6. What is the goal of these questions?

Q1: where now are your ancestors? Q2: do the prophets live forever? Q3: Did not my words overtake ancestors? By looking back can see that God’s word was fulfilled, thus it is a challenge to the people; respond now by listening (unlike ancestors), repent and turn to God.

1. God promises to return, what expectations would Zechariah’s audience have?

They would expect blessing, the hardships to be overturned. They would expect that God will dwell once more in the temple (visible through the Glory of the Lord as it was for King Solomon 1Kings 8:11). They could also expect removal of foreign rule, instead a Davidic king to rule them (fulfilling 2 Sam 7:16 where David’s throne endures forever).

## Reflection

Jeremiah prophesied that after 70 years of exile, Israel would be restored. It has been nearly 70 years, they are in the land, but not experiencing God’s blessing or presence. Zechariah’s message: they must not be like their forefathers, they must be obedient to the covenant, repent and turn from their evil ways to follow God. Today, like Zechariah’s contemporaries, we are told to learn from history and to be careful to heed its lessons (1 Cor 10:11-12).

1. How are we to respond to God today?
2. Mark 1:14-15

Jesus who is God’s king, came claiming kingdom of God is near so repent! This is like Zechariah’s day - the right response to God’s return is repentance and to follow him.

1. 1 Thess 1:9-10

We wait for God’s return – we reject idolatry and instead serve God faithfully.

1. Do you believe God’s word will achieve its purposes in the future?

# Study 2 Zech 1:7 – 2:13 Waiting for God to dwell.

## Introduction

It is approximately 20 years after the Israelite returnees had left Babylon and entered the land: life was hard, the temple rebuilding had stopped (Ezra 4:24) and God’s blessing was not evident. The 70 year period of the exile (God’s judgement for continuing disobedience) was nearing completion, but could they see that becoming a reality? Would they continue to trust God’s promises? In this context, Zechariah receives 8 visions. The first 3 relate to God’s return.

Zech 1:7-17 Vision 1: Man among Myrtle trees.

Zech 1:18-20 Vision 2: Four Horns and Craftsmen.

Zech 2:1-13 Vision 3: Man with measuring line.

## Pre-reading

Exodus 14:19-25

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Discuss

What helps you to persevere in the Christian life?

## Investigate

Read Zech 1:7-17

1. What is the report given in v11 by the horses?

The horses have gone throughout the whole earth, it is at rest and peace.

1. How does the Angel of the Lord respond to this report (v12-15)? How does God respond?

Angel of the Lord questions how long. By mentioning the 70years the expectation that God’s anger should turn to mercy as per Jeremiah 29. God responds by comforting and then declaring to the people that his anger will now turn to the nations as they went too far in executing judgement.

1. What does God promise (v16-17)? What impact might these have had on the original hearers?

God will be merciful. Currently the temple has not be rebuilt, but it will occur – not only that but they will be blessed and prosper. This is very different to their current experience (compare Haggai 1:5-11). Given the mention of 70 yrs the exile has yet to be reversed and they would be hopeful of an imminent fulfilment of these things.

Read Zech 1:18-20

1. What historical events does v19 refer to?\* (See pre-reading)

Four horns represent the nations that scattered God’s people. Israel was exiled in 722BC by the Assyrians and Judah in 586BC by the Babylonians. It was a covenant curse for disobedience. (Lev26:33)

1. How might the craftsmen coming terrify the nations? (Consider v15-16 and the rebuilding of the temple. Also: Hag 2:20-23 a prophecy given a couple of months prior to this vision)

God is returning to Jerusalem; he is also angry with nations. The temple being rebuilt is a sign to nations that a great reversal is taking place, the nations that scattered Israel will themselves be thrown down.

Read Zech 2:1-13

1. What is significant about the city without walls? v5.

V5 God is a wall of fire around it and its glory within. God will be with his people once more. Reminds us of Exodus 14 where God’s protected his people from Pharaoh’s army – they don’t need walls for protection as they have a living God amongst them. Also, it is an indication of blessing – there will be a great number of people – which was not the case at the time.

1. Why is it imperative that people flee Babylon? v6-7

With the end of the exile, the expectation is that they will gather again in the land. Further, God has declared he will judge the nations, now is the time to act.

1. God is coming, what do we learn about that day? v10-13

Israel is to be glad as God will live amongst them. Interestingly the nations will also be included in God’s people.

## Reflection

The three visions point to a reversal of the exile: God returns in mercy and will dwell with his people; the temple rebuilt; Israel regathered and the nations joining in, a time of gladness and prosperity. Israel was expecting the temple rebuilding to usher in a new age. The temple was rebuilt four years later, but God’s glory did not return at that time: the fullness of Zechariah’s visions was not fulfilled in their lifetime.

1. Israel was looking towards the rebuilding of the temple, yet in the New Testament we learn God’s plans are bigger than a physical building. What does the New Testament say about Jesus?
2. John 1:14

Jesus became flesh and dwelt amongst us.

1. Heb 1:3

Jesus radiates God’s glory and he dwelt amongst us.

We face a similar situation to Zechariah’s audience, we have God’s promises, yet we wait for them to be ultimately fulfilled - we look forward to a future day when Jesus will return. (1 Thess 1:10).

The Gospel is a message of comfort for God’s people, but of judgement for his enemies. Christians today should not be seduced and look for rest and ease in the world rather than Jesus’ kingdom. Revelation 18:4 calls us to come out of Babylon – the personification of all who oppose God, for it faces judgement. Revelation 21 describes the ultimate fulfilment of God’s promise to dwell with us.

Read Rev 21:1-4 & 22-24

1. How is this an encouragement to you?

# Study 3 Zech 3 - 4 Waiting for a functioning Temple.

## Introduction

The first three visions focus on the reversing of the exile, the next two focus on the temple in readiness for the return of God. Joshua was the high priest and Zerubbabel\* the governor, but they faced sin and opposition, do they have the strength to persevere?

Zech 3:1-10 Vision 4: Joshua’s sin removed.

Zech 4:1-14 Vision 5: Zerubbabel will rebuild the temple.

Discuss

How does God achieve his purposes?

## Pre-reading

Leviticus 16:29-34

Isaiah 11:1-11

Jeremiah 23:5-8

## Investigate

Read Zech 3:1-10

1. The high priest had a special role – only he could perform the Day of Atonement ceremony where Israel’s sin is forgiven. In Lev 21:10-12 what do we learn about this role?

His holiness is important. He cannot make himself unclean by visiting a place where a dead body is - even for his parents! He is dedicated to the work of God.

1. Given the first question, how could the events in the vision (v1-7) relate to the rebuilding of the temple?

If God is returning, then the people must be holy. Currently the people are defiled, and for their sin to be forgiven they need a high priest and a temple - but he cannot do his job if he himself is sinful/unclean. Satan accuses Joshua rightly(!), but God mercifully declares Joshua clean.

1. Joshua and associates are a symbol of God’s servant, the Branch. What will God do in the future? V8-10

Just as Joshua is to perform the day of atonement ritual and sin is forgiven, we look towards a future day where God will remove the sin of the land in a single day. Sitting under your vine is a sign of prosperity and also occurs on that day.

## If you have time

1. From the Pre-reading what do we learn about the Branch, what expectation is now set? (Compare v8-10)
2. Jer 23:5-8

Branch associated with King in David’s line who will be righteous and called a saviour. His saving work is compared to, and will supersede, the Exodus! Thus, we expect God to save his people from exile and restore blessings.

1. Is 11:1-11

From a shoot from Jesse – who was David’s father – a Branch will come from. He will judge with righteousness and usher in a new age of peace, regathering the exiles and the whole world will know God and the nations will rally to him.

By using this language Zechariah sets expectation that this future day is of greater magnitude than the day of atonement.

The Old Testament roles of King and Priest are separate types or patterns, that the New Testament joins in describing Jesus, who is both King (Rev 17:14) and High Priest (Heb 9:11).

1. Read Heb 9:11-15. How do the Old Testament patterns help us appreciate what Jesus has done for us?

Jesus is the Messiah, the promised Branch. He, as the great high priest, offered his body as a sacrifice and once-for-all dealt with sin – the day Zechariah spoke of. The Old Testament patterns help us to recognise what God has done for us in Jesus.

Read Zech 4:1-14

1. How does the vision in v1-3 relate to the temple? What aspects are different? (Ex 27:20-21)

The priests were to tend the lamps in the temple daily, refilling with oil. In the vision however, the lamps are connected to olive trees – so have a supply of oil.

1. What is the meaning of the vision: How will the temple be rebuilt? (v6-7)

The temple will be rebuilt by Zerubbabel (he did several years later) but it will be via God’s spirit.

1. What is the challenge to the community in v8-10?

The community was living in a day of small things – facing major challenges (financial, food, morale). God has called this community to rebuild the temple and he will empower and sustain them to succeed by his Spirit.

1. Zechariah asks three times what the olive trees/branches are about (v4, v11, v12)! How might the answer relate to Zech 4:6-10?\*

There are several possible answers as to who these two trees represent. However, the point is the same as the Angel’s message: God is a work via his Spirit to achieve His purposes, yet he uses people in the process too.

## Reflection

God’s word will achieve its purposes via His Spirit despite appearances. In Zechariah’s day, Zerubbabel and the community had to overlook small beginnings and continue to build the temple. God graciously includes them in his plans. The New Testament doesn’t focus on a physical temple, instead we see Jesus referring to his body as the temple (John 2:18-22) and himself being the place where God dwells (John 1:14). As Christians, we too are being incorporated into Christ’s body! (1 Pet 2:4-5)

1. Read Eph 2:19-22. How is God’s building method the same as in Zechariah’s day?

God via his Spirit is building a temple today, but it is not a physical building for we are the temple!

1. Preaching the gospel may seem weak (small). 1 Cor 1:18 says “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” How does Zechariah’s message challenge us to think differently?

# Study 4 Zech 5:1 – 6:8 Waiting for sin’s removal.

## Introduction

In visions 1 to 3 God is returning with mercy to dwell once again in Jerusalem. In visions 4 & 5 the priesthood has been recommissioned and God desires the temple to be rebuilt. But if God returns then the community must conform to the covenant, historically they have been unable to do so due to sin. Thus, the final three (cryptic!) visions focus on the removal of sin from God’s community.

Zech 5:1-4 Vision 6: Flying scroll.

Zech 5:5-11 Vision 7: Woman in basket.

Zech 6:1-8 Vision 8: Four Chariots.

Discuss

God is Holy. What does that mean for us?

## Pre-reading

Jeremiah 7:9-19

Ezekiel 8:1-12

## Investigate

Read Zech 5:1-4

1. A flying scroll is unusual! What does it represent? \*

It is a curse going out over all Israel (whole land). The fact that it is flying could signify that it is coming from God without human intervention.

1. What two crimes does it judge? Do you think the judgement is harsh? (Compare with Jer 7:9-15 written before the exile).

Swearing falsely and stealing. These are crimes against God and your neighbour. Perhaps these issues were prevalent in the community at the time. God will come and bring justice – the community must be Holy if God is to dwell in their midst.

1. What is the message for the Israelite community?

God’s judgement is imminent and there is no escaping it. He will punish the ungodly.

Zech 5:5-11

1. The basket represents the Israelites iniquity (v6) and contains wickedness (v7) . What were the issues that lead to the exile? (see pre-reading)

Israel’s continued disobedience to the covenant, in particular idolatry. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel portray Israel’s brazen behaviour. A holy God cannot have a sinful people in his presence. Ezek 8:6 says that this behaviour will drive God from his temple!

1. What will happen to this basket? (V11). What significance could this have for Israel’s iniquity?[[1]](#footnote-1)

The basket is sent far away to Babylon. Israel’s sin is removed from the land, this is necessary as God is returning.

Read Zech 6:1-8

1. What do the chariots symbolize? What do they do? (v5)

They represent the hosts of heaven going out over the whole world (Four represents the whole world). They do God’s bidding and bring rest in the north which is the direction of the road to Babylonia.

1. In v8 God’s Spirit is given rest. How does this compare to the first vision Zech 1:11? What could be the significance of this?[[2]](#footnote-2)

The whole world is at rest in Zech 1:11 and God is angry with the nations taking judgement too far. Now we see God’s spirit at rest after the work of the horses. This implies a reversal of the situation at the beginning of the visions.

1. How are these three visions an encouragement to the hearers of the day?

The issues that lead to the exile are being dealt with – sin is being removed from the land and taken far away. God is returning, his covenant people need to live in holiness. All the action is initiated by God.

## Reflection

The eight visions form a pattern, in the first three, the world is at rest, God returns to Jerusalem and a house (temple) is built for him. At the centre, the priesthood and temple are established. In the last three visions sin and iniquity go out and finally God’s Spirit is at rest. There is a symmetry between the visions in terms of movement in/out and topic (Vision 1 -> 8, Vision 2 -> 7, Vision 3 -> 6 and Visions 4 & 5). This helps us to understand the final visions removing that which caused the exile in the first place. If God returns – an obedient and holy people are required, and God will remove their sin far away.

In the exile, the curse of the law came on Israel and now after 70 years God is calling them to respond to his gracious offer to return. But we know from history that they struggled to fully act in obedience to God’s covenant requirements.

In the New Testament we are given hope as Jesus became a curse for us and in doing so redeemed us, thus we are now blessed. (Gal 3:11-14). The elimination of idolatry and wickedness will be dealt with finally at Jesus’ return.

1. God’s return required a change in Israel’s behaviour. How does this help us better understand the warning given to us in Heb 12:14?

The exile came about due to hardness of heart, living in idolatry without concern for God. To dwell with God, you cannot be tokenistic – to rely on a temple or place but you must have a relationship with Him – and that requires holiness. In Zechariah God removes sin from the land, and it is the same for us today in Jesus (thankfully!)

1. Zechariah reminds us that sin and idolatry will be dealt with. Rev 18:4-5 portrays a future judgement on Babylon and calls us to come out of her. How should we live considering this?

# Study 5 Zech 6:9 - 15 Waiting for a Davidic King.

## Introduction

The word given to Zechariah is to be acted out. Not all aspects of this prophecy occur in their lifetime, thus, this prophesy functions to shift the focus from the present historical reality to a future day and begins the transition from the visions of Ch 1-6 to the prophecies Ch 9-14.

Zech 6:9-11 Make a crown.

Zech 6:12-13 Branch and Temple built.

Zech 6:14-15 Crown as a memorial.

Discuss

How does the Old Testament relate to Jesus? Why is it important?

## Pre-Read

Jeremiah 33:14-18

Psalm 110

## Investigate

Read Zech 6:9-15

1. Zechariah is to make a crown, what is he to do with it?

He is to put it on Joshua’s head. (note: Joshua is the high priest) Then proclaim God’s word. Once the actions are completed the crown is to be a memorial in the temple. (Noting that the temple was not finished being rebuilt at the time of this word)

1. List the things Joshua is told about the Branch. What questions/observations do you have?

1: he is a man, 2: he will branch out from this place, 3: will rebuild temple, 4: he will be clothed with majesty, 5: will sit on throne; will rule, 6: he will be a priest upon the throne, 7: there will be harmony between the two.

1. Why is Joshua a symbol and not the Branch himself? (Compare to Zech 3:8-10)

In Zech 3 told he is symbolic of the Branch. Also in Jer 33:14-18 the Branch is associated the line of David and Joshua being a high priest is from line of Levi.

1. Why is Zerubbabel not the Branch himself? (Compare to Zech 4:8-10)

In Zech 4:9 we are told Zerubbabel will build the temple so we could see this pointing to him. Zerubbabel was from the line of David (Matthew 1:12-13), but he didn’t bear majesty or rule on the throne. (Haggai 2:21 he was a governor) Thus whilst he might partially fulfil this we look beyond him for one who will do all of these things.

1. What does v13 imply about the roles of King and Priest?\*

This passage is complex and there are different proposals regarding Interpretation. The Branch will be a king on the throne and a priest on the throne. (Recall in Zech 3:8 he will remove sin). Thus, the roles of king and priest are merged in the one person. See Ps 110 where idea of king and priest are joined in the one person.

The aspect of harmony between the two can be between the roles of King and Priest (compare Jer 33:14-18) but more likely it is between the Branch and God. The Branch will co-reign (not like Israel’s previous kings) and his priestly service will result in peace for the community.

1. After the role play the crown is to be a memorial. What clue does that give us about the timing of God’s fulfillment of this prophecy?

Expectation is the Branch will come in the future. The crowning of Joshua looks forward to the crowning of the Branch and therefore to the coming future king.

## Reflection

The Old Testament prophets looked forward to a Davidic King who would rule Israel and the nations. Zechariah’s message and action, putting the crown on the head of Joshua, appears to merge the roles of priest and king and was perhaps confusing and unexpected in his day.

However, in the New Testament, we see Jesus who comes and has both these roles applied to himself, he merges the roles and expectations, he is the promised Messiah, God’s king who comes to rule and deal with sin.

Complete the following table:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **New Testament** | **What do we learn about Jesus** |
| Matt 1:1 | He is the Messiah (King). Also he is from the line of David |
| Matt 16:18, 1 Cor 3:16-17 | Building the church. We are God’s temple his Spirit lives amongst us |
| Acts 2:34-36, Matt 25:31 | Messiah, sits at God’s right hand. Glorious (Majesty) |
| Heb 1:3, Heb 8:1-2 | High priest who sat down at God’s right hand on throne. |
| Eph 2:14-18 | Brings peace. Temple that Jesus builds is comprised of Israel and Gentiles. |

1. Recall your answer to question 2, how does Jesus fulfil these aspects?

All aspects are fulfilled in Jesus. He is the promised Branch the one who removes sin. Zechariah gives us the concepts for which to identify the Messiah.

1. Read Eph 2:19-22. How does Zechariah enrich your understanding of what God has done for us and is doing to us in Christ?

# Study 6 Zech 7 - 8 Ritual or Relationship?

## Introduction

Chapter 7 starts in the 4th year of King Darius. This tells us that Israel is still under foreign rule. However, the temple work is progressing and is nearing completion (from Ezra 6:15 we know it completes two years later). The Israelites would be hopeful that the 70 years of exile is finally, nearly completed. If God is returning, do they need to change what they are doing? This section contains four words from God: fast, obey, bless, feast (see page 3)

Zech 7:1-7 Word 1: Past: Peoples request and God’s response.

Zech 7:8-14 Word 2: Past: God requires and people’s response.

Zech 8:1-13 Word 3: Present: Cursing to blessing.

Zech 8:14-17 Present: God requires and people’s response.

Zech 8:18-23 Word 4: Future: Feasting and nations response.

Discuss

Does ritual behaviour have a place in the Christian life?

## Pre-reading

Isaiah 58:3-6

Jeremiah 7:1-26

## Investigate

Read Zech 7:1-7

It is thought that the fasts observed commemorated key events leading up to the exile. (See Zech 8:19)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Fast** | **Event** | **Ref** |
| 5th Month | Destruction of temple | 2 Ki 25:8 |
| 4th Month | City wall breached | Jer 39:2 |
| 7th Month | Gedaliah (governor) murdered | 2 Ki 25:25, Jer 41:1-3 |
| 10th Month | Siege began | 2 Ki 25:1-2, Jer 39:1 |

1. Why might people be asking about fasts now?[[3]](#footnote-3) Is it a reasonable question?\*

The fast in the 5th month remembers the destruction of the temple, now that it is nearing completion – perhaps the fast is no longer required? They come from Bethel – 20kms away to ask- so from their perspective it is a reasonable question.

1. God’s reply in v4-7 is perhaps unexpected! What is the message for the people?

God challenges their motives and obedience to His word – did they really fast for God or themselves? When they feasted (presumably at the festivals) they feasted for themselves. Earlier prophets like Isaiah (Isa 58:3-6) also condemned false fasting. Their fasts and feasts had become an empty ritual.

Read Zech 7:8-14

1. What does God require of his people? v9-10.

Their attitude to the disadvantaged matters – Moses highlighted this, as did Jeremiah (Jer 7:4-8) – it demonstrates their relationship with God.

1. God reminds them of their history, what is the lesson for Zechariah’s hearers? (see Jer 7:4, 9-11).

Israel was warned in the past to listen, to repent, but they did not. In Jer 7:4 & 9-11 they claimed the temple of the lord was enough to save them regardless of their behaviour – but they were very wrong. Because of their disobedience God allowed the destruction of the temple and Israel to be exiled. With the Temple about to be rebuilt Israel now should not be like their ancestors. They need to listen and be obedient to God.

Read Zech 8:1-17

1. Use the table below to summarise each of God’s 7 statements.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verse | This is what the Lord says… |
| 2 | He is Jealous for Zion |
| 3 | He will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem |
| 4-5 | Repopulate the city: Both Old and young people inhabit it |
| 6 | People will marvel at this (but its not a surprise to God) |
| 7-8 | Regather and save them from the nations |
| 9-13 | Rebuild the temple – God will now start to bless them |
| 14-17 | Reversal of fortunes, determined to do good for them – they are to live righteously |

1. How would you summarise the overarching message from these statements?\*

The temple is soon to be rebuilt; God has turned from Judgement to compassion. It paints a very positive picture. As God returns the covenant curses will be changed to blessings.

Read Zech 8:18-23

1. How is the future portrayed? How does this and all of chapter 8 relate back to the question asked in Zech 7:3?

Fasts will turn to joyous occasions and the nations will also seek God. Now that the 70 years of judgement are over and God has turned in mercy they are to respond in obedience. They are not to fast hypocritically but instead are to live ethically, faithfully and in right relationship with God

## Reflection

Ritual or Relationship, what does God require? These chapters challenge the people’s understanding. You cannot have a mechanistic view of God (as they did in Jeremiah’s time with the temple see Jer 7:1-8). Zechariah 1-6 focus on the temple being rebuilt, but Israel cannot go back to behaving like they did before the exile, they need to relate to God properly not in religious hypocrisy. A restored covenant requires a faithful covenant people. This call is in view of the future salvation and blessing, privilege, and responsibility that Israel has in God’s purposes for salvation of the nations.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Ultimately, we know being obedient was too hard for Israel, however Jesus came as the obedient Son. He won the covenant blessings for Israel and for the world. God’s presence (8:23) finds its fulfilment in Jesus (Matt 1:23). The salvation of the nations also finds fulfilment in Jesus, as now we (the nations) are included (Eph 2:11-13) in God’s household.

1. If God doesn’t want ritual religion from us, then what does he want? (James 1:27, 1 John 3:17, Gal 6:10)
2. Israel treated the fasts as a ritual and were asked “were you fasting for me”. When it comes to going to church on a Sunday, how can we avoid God saying to us “Were you attending for me?”

# Study 7 Zech 9 Return of the King.

## Introduction

Returned from exile they expected the imminent restoration of Israel and its fortunes. They expected God to triumph over their enemies, a return of God’s glory over the temple and a Davidic king to rule. At the time of the prophecy perhaps decades have passed since the temple was rebuilt\*, and all their hopes have not fully been realised.[[5]](#footnote-5) We see the prophetic focus shifting from the present to the future.

Zech 9:1-8 Restored land.

Zech 9:9-10[[6]](#footnote-6) Restored king.

Zech 9:11-17 Restored people.

Discuss

What do you find difficult about waiting for God’s promised return?

## Pre-reading

Isaiah 9:1-7

Jeremiah 7:1-26

## Investigate

Read Zech 9:1-8

1. What will God do to the surrounding nations v1-6?

God will Judge and subdue the surrounding enemy nations.

1. What is surprising about v7?\*

The philistines, long time enemies of Israel, will become part of God’s people and incorporated into Judah! The reference to Jebusites harks back to 1 Kings 9 where they were incorporated but in a subservient role.

1. What is significant about God’s promise in v8?

God encamps and guards his people. The land will have peace from its enemies for God is watching.

Read Zech 9:9-10

1. Israel is waiting for the triumphant return of a Davidic king (see Isa 9:6-7). What is odd about the king’s entrance in v9?\*

The future Davidic king is portrayed in glorious terms with endless peace and just rule. When Zechariah says see, your king comes righteous and victorious, we expect a military procession. Instead, he comes lowly and on a donkey. The coming king will not come as we expect .

1. What do we learn about this Kings rule? (v10)

God is the one who brings an end to warfare, and his King will rule over the whole earth, proclaiming peace to all nations.

Read Zech 9:11-17

1. Summarise the four promises God makes:
2. 9:11

God will free people from captivity/exile.

1. 9:12

Return to God and they will be blessed.

1. 9:13-15

God will use his people to defeat the nations.

1. 9:16-17

God will save his people and they will enjoy blessing in the land.

1. What hope does this chapter create?

The return of God to overthrow his enemies and save his people ‘on that day’. On that day is a phrase that points to an end times day of salvation. The three sections pick up theme of God’s people in God’s place (land) under God’s rule via Davidic king. (Note The nations are included in this promise if they accept his offer of peace)

## Reflection

Zechariah 9 paints a picture of the future where God has saved his people, restoring them in the land under God and a king. Even the nations will be included. Israel must now look forward to this future king to come and usher in a glorious future. However, there are hints that this king will not come as they expect, that is, in weakness and suffering. This aspect is somewhat obscured by the NIV translation where “victorious” could be “having been saved” and “lowly” could be “afflicted”. Related words are used in Isaiah 53:1-6 to describe the suffering servant.

Jesus himself had this expectation. On the road to Emmaus after his resurrection he spoke to his disciples and explained from the scriptures that the Messiah had to suffer first then enter glory (Luke 24:25-27).

Read Matt 21:1-11

1. All four gospels mention Jesus riding a colt/donkey (Matt 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-38, John 12:12-19). What does that tell us about Jesus?

Jesus is the promised Davidic King. Note how Jesus intentionally did this action, directing the disciples to obtain the animal. God’s word via the prophets is fulfilled.

Read Eph 1:19b-23

1. What do we learn about Jesus’ rule now?

Jesus, through his death and resurrection now rules everything. The hope created in Zech 9 is fulfilled in Jesus.

1. We, like Israel, wait for our king (Jesus) to return. We also hope in God’s power to win the victory over our enemies. How does seeing God at work in history help you with your faith now?

# Study 8 Zech 10 - 11 Rejected shepherds, redeemed people.

## Introduction

Chapter 9 holds out a future hope of a restoration of land, king, and people. Chapters 10 & 11 deal with the issue of leadership, using the image of a shepherd. How will God deal with these leaders?

Zech 10:1-2 Lack of a shepherd: oppressed.

Zech 10:3-12 Leadership anew: compassion.

Zech 11:1-3 Foreign shepherds judged.

Zech 11:4-17 Israel and shepherds judged.

Discuss

Why does good leadership matter?

## Pre-reading

Ezekiel 34:1-31

Isaiah 2:12-18

## Investigate

Read Zech 10:1-12

1. What issues do Israel face in v1-2? What is the cause?

They lack rain and a shepherd to lead them. Israel should look to God for provision rather idols and mediums. They are being led astray and hence oppressed.

1. What will God do about it? (v3-5)

God will punish the leaders (perhaps foreign leaders), and take care for his flock, he will empower them to fight by raising up leaders from Judah.

1. V6-12 uses imagery from Israel’s past, what expectation is set for the future?

Overwhelmingly positive, God will restore his people to the land. He will redeem and regather them from the nations – reversing the exile. It will be like a new Exodus, and they will be so numerous that they can’t fit in the land. (v10). This sets expectation and a hope for restoration.

Read Zech 11:1-3 and Isaiah 2:12-18

1. How are the arrogant leaders dealt with?

The fate of the bad shepherds is now considered, the cedars and oaks are metaphors for the bad leaders (from Isaiah 2), they will be humbled by God, and they will wail as their land is destroyed.

**Summary**

The message of Zechariah Ch 9 & 10 is that God is coming to save his people, to re-establish them in the land. Ch 11 complements this message, God will remove all foreign kings and their agents, just as he has removed false shepherds in the past.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In Zech 11:4-17 we have two scenes (possibly acted out) to reinforce the message of Zech 10:1 - 11:3:

1. Zech 11:4-14 recounting events from Israel’s past. Showing the deterioration of relationship and ultimately God’s judgement on false shepherds and the people for rejecting God.
2. Zech 11:15-17 the present destructive foreign leadership and their coming judgement.

Read Zech 11:4-14

1. How do the shepherds behave? What is God’s response? v6

Shepherds do not care for the flock; they sell them to become rich. God therefore no longer has pity and will hand them over to others, he will not rescue them and the land will be devastated. Note that this is looking back at Israel’s history, this judgement came on Israel in 722BC via the Assyrians, and Judah by the Babylonians in 586BC.

1. What happens to Israel’s relationship with God in v7-9?

The people reject God as their true shepherd, and He grows weary of them. God eventually hands them over to the nations and exile - a consequence of their rejection of him.

In v10: the staff “Favour” is broken. The staff represents the Mosaic covenant at Sinai that was made with the peoples (nations) of Israel and Judah. This symbolic action represents the ‘breaking of the covenant’ thus the people watching will know that the covenantal curses of Leviticus and Deuteronomy have been enacted upon them.

1. In light of this action, how do the people respond? V12-14. Why is this surprising?

The people willing pay out the Shepherd rather than follow him. The amount given ultimately is an insult to God and is ironically called a hansom price. The rejection is surprising as despite being threatened with the end of God’s covenant they don’t care, they do not want to follow God. Sadly this is what happened in their history.

In v14: the staff “Union” is broken. Given the historical nature of the message this is likely representing the division of the kingdom into Judah and Israel under Jeroboam and Rehoboam (1 Kings 12).

Read Zech 11:15-17

1. What does the foolish shepherd action represent?

Israel has rejected God and the covenantal curses brought down on them resulted in the exile. God will now raise up foreign foolish shepherds over them – they will not care for the flock. This is the result of God’s judgement on them for rejecting Him.

## Reflection

The temple has been rebuilt but Israel is still waiting for God’s promises to be fulfilled. In Ch 9 & 10 they are looking forward to God’s king to return and rule justly. This chapter reminds them of their past and how God has dealt with rebellion and bad leaders (theirs and foreign). Ezekiel 34 also has strong words to say to the bad shepherds, but it holds out hope for restoration where God’s servant David will be a shepherd over them (Ezek 34:23). Thus, the prophets look forward to a king who will also be a shepherd of God’s people.

Jesus claimed to be God’s king promised in Zech 9:9 when he rode a donkey into Jerusalem. He also claimed to be the good shepherd (John 10:11). Yet, God’s people were not ready when he came. This prophetic drama of Zechariah is acted out on a larger scale when it finds its fulfilment in the betrayal and rejection of Jesus. Matt 27:9 typologically uses Zech 11:13, that is, the same pattern occurs where God’s people despise and reject him as their shepherd for 30 pieces of silver.[[8]](#footnote-8)

1. How does Jesus as shepherd compare to the shepherds in Zechariah?
2. Matt 9:35-38

He has compassion on them because they are not being led (shepherd-less). Compare to Zech 10:2 where the people wander and are oppressed.

1. John 10:14-18

He is the good shepherd; sheep listen to his voice. Compare to Ch 11 where Israel do not listen to God – and detest him. Zech 11:8

1. 1 Pet 5:1-4

Jesus is the chief shepherd, leader of God’s people. Compare to Ezek 34:23. God raises up a true shepherd to lead his people.

1. How does Jesus shepherd his people today? How should we respond?

Note that the sheep listen to His voice. How do we hear from Jesus today?

# Study 9 Zech 12 - 14 Ruling King: Coming Day of the Lord

## Introduction

God’s final victory results in a re-establishment of his kingdom and all its blessings. As you read, note the repeated use of “on that day” in each chapter. It is a day when God will intervene in history to establish his kingdom by overcoming his enemies and saving his people.

Zech 12:1-9 Siege and Salvation.

Zech 12:10-14 Mourn pierced one.

Zech 13:1-6 Forgiveness and cleansing.

Zech 13:7-9 Shepherd and restored relationship.

Zech 14:1-11 Battle and transformed Jerusalem.

Zech 14:12-21 A king over nations.

Discuss

What aspects of Jesus’ return do you look forward to?

## Pre-reading

Isaiah 53

Ezekiel 21:8-17

## Investigate

Read Zech 12:1-14

1. V1-9 describe a future battle. What happens to the nations, to Israel?

God sets Jerusalem and nations against each other. It will initially look bad for Israel, but God will save them and use them in defeating the nations.

1. V10-14 describe the aftermath of the battle.[[9]](#footnote-9) Who is pierced? What is the result?\*

The ‘me’ in this sentence is God. But how can God be pierced? The reference to Megiddo and mourning probably points back to the events where King Josiah was pierced in battle and died. Although God defeats the nations and pours out his Spirit onto the people, there will be mourning over the one they have pierced?! This is a perplexing section, but it becomes clearer once we read the New Testament.

Read Zech 13:1-6

1. At the end of Ch 12 the community is mourning, how is 13:1 a message of hope?

God will provide a way for sin and impurity to be dealt with.

1. V2-6 how is the land cleansed? Why might this too be a message of hope? (hint: consider why they were exiled)

Idols and false prophets will be removed for the land. This was a persistent problem for Israel and a key reason for their being exiled, but now God will remove these.

Read Zech 13:7-9

1. Who is the shepherd struck by the sword? What happens as a result?

He is close to God (v7). The imagery of shepherd implies he is a leader. If he is close to God, then he is not like the bad shepherds of Ch 11. God’s sword is an image of judgement (see Ezekiel 21:8-17). Strangely, the shepherd is struck down (judged), yet God will refine a remnant to be his people.

**Summary**

The text is difficult to decipher on its own, however, the Shepherd when read in the wider context of the book can be identified as the Branch (Zech 3:18, 6:12), the king (Zech 9:9) and the pierced one (Zech 12:10).[[10]](#footnote-10) We are left wondering, when is this day? How will it all unfold, particularly in relation to this shepherd? The New Testament interprets and expands that day to relate to two events: firstly, to Jesus’s crucifixion and secondly with his return.

1. How does the New Testament use Zechariah?
2. Acts 4:25-28 (Zech 12:1-9)

This parallels Zech 12:1-9 and the nations fighting against God. Acts quotes Psalm 2 – the nations rage against God’s king, which is then applied to Jesus in his dealings with Herod and Pontius Pilate (v27).

1. Mark 14:27-28 (Zech 13:7)

Jesus quotes Zech 13:7 and applies it to himself. He is the shepherd who is struck down.

1. John 19:33-37 (Zech 12:10)

Jesus is pierced on the cross and v37 says scripture was fulfilled quoting Zech 12:10

1. Rev 1:4-7 (Zech 12:10)

Again, quoting Zech 12:10 this time including all peoples will mourn because of him

1. Heb 9:14 (Zech 13:1)

Jesus’ death brings cleansing from sin. Zech 13 implied that this would happen ‘on that day’.

1. Summarise what this tells us about Jesus? About God?

The different imagery in Zechariah (Branch, King, pierced one) is applied to Jesus – he is the Messiah. The day of the Lord when these things happen point to Jesus’ death and resurrection when God will achieve salvation and forgiveness of sins for his people.

God’s plan for salvation was foretold but how it would unfold was not expected – it occurred via a king who suffered first – pierced for our sin (Isaiah 53:5). We can look back and see God at work throughout history. Looking forward, we should trust that Gods promises to us will come to fruition.

## If you have time

This section is not chronological but rather provides another perspective of the same battle already described in Ch12-13.

Read Zech 14:1-21

1. V1-11 How is the day described? What is the end result? (v9)

Dramatic! Evokes memory of the days before the exile when Jerusalem was under siege, however, this time God will intervene and be victorious. The return of God in V6 ushers in a change in the created order – a unique day, which ends with continual light. In V9 God is king over the whole earth (not just Jerusalem).

1. V12-19 What happens to the nations after the battle?

Those that survive the battle (v16) will worship God and celebrate the feast of tabernacles. Nations go from warring to worship – but if they fail to observe they will be punished.

1. V20-21 What happens to Jerusalem after the battle? (Note Ex 28:36-38)

The inscription holy to the lord was engraved on a gold plate attached to the turban of the high priest. In the future age the holiness that once belonged only to the high priest will extend to all items in Jerusalem because of Gods return.

## Reflection

Zech 12-14 paints a picture of the coming of the kingdom of God and his king. It portrays a final battle with the nations and results in no ordinary day – the heavens and earth will be transformed, and God will be worshipped by both Israel and the nations. The holiness that had been associated with the priesthood and the temple will spread throughout Jerusalem and Judah.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Read Rev 21:1-4

1. We like Zechariah’s audience look forward to a future event where God will reign, what do we look forward to?

A new heaven and earth and a new Jerusalem where God dwells with his people.

1. How does Zechariah encourage us in our faith today?

# Supporting Notes.

Study 2

**Q4:** In visions the number 4 is often used to symbolise the whole world (ie north, south, east and west). Four horns represent the nations that scattered God’s people. Israel was exiled in 722BC by the Assyrians and Judah in 586BC by the Babylonians. It was a covenant curse for disobedience. (Lev 26:33)

Study 3

**Intro:** Zerubbabel in the bible. Ezra 2:2, 3:2, 8. Neh 12:1 and Hag 1:1, 14, 2:2,21 he is a returnee from Babylon who rebuilt altar and re-laid temple foundation and was called a governor.

**Q9:** Joshua and Zerubbabel are often identified as the two given they are community leaders who rebuild the temple and community by God’s Spirit. However, the translation “anointed” is misleading here, the footnote “sons of oil” or ”two who bring oil” is a more likely translation. Supporting this view is that the context shows these are oil suppliers not receivers (if anointed you receive oil). Therefore, Haggai and Zechariah: prophets proclaiming God’s word via the spirit are the likely two candidates. This may also explain why Zechariah doesn’t understand what this part of the vision represents and has to ask three times about this aspect – he cannot see his own involvement (v4, 11,12).

Aspects fulfilled in Jesus:

* Zech 3:7 place in God’s court 🡺 Jesus high priest & mediator Heb 9:14.
* Zech 3:8 remove sin in a single day 🡺 Jesus death does this Heb 12:2.
* Zech 3:2 Satan accuses 🡺 Rev 12:9-10 Satan silenced.

Study 4

**Q1:** The curse evokes those given by Moses in Lev 26:14-46 & Deut 28: 15-68. They outline the consequences if Israel disobey. Dan 9:1-19 shows that Daniel understood that their disobedience resulted in God pouring out these covenantal curses on them (v11) and resulting in them being exiled.

Study 5

**Q5:** Zech 6:13 “…and there will be harmony between the two.” This passage has more than one valid way of being interpreted. Who are the two being referred to? One option is that there are two thrones or seats, one for the king another for the priest and so there will be harmony between these two roles. Another option is that it’s the same person on the same throne playing role both of king, priest and the harmony is between them (Branch) and God.

Study 6

**Q1:** The only fast prescribed in the law is on the day of atonement (10th day of 7th Month). Ref Lev 16:27, Num 29:7. So these fasts held remembering the past were optional/man made.

**Q6:** Deut 30:1 highlights the covenant has blessing and cursing. If the exile was the outworking of covenant curses for disobedience, then these verses imply that God now wishes to reverse the situation and usher in a time of covenant blessings.

Study 7

**Intro:** The timing of these prophesies is not known. The mention of Greece in Zech 9:13 is an indicator of time but inconclusive. It is possible that these prophesies date late in Zechariah’s life. E.g. Greece defeats Persia at the battle of marathon ~490BC.

**Q2:** Jebusites were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem (Deut 7:1-2) who were not dislodged by Judah (Josh 15:63). When David later captures Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:6-7) his son Solomon conscripts them as slave labour. (1 Ki 9:20). In a sense they were marked for destruction but survived and incorporated into Israel.

The philistines 5 cities are identified in Josh 13:3, 1 Sam 6:17.

**Q5:** Kings don’t normally ride a donkey, but in 2 Sam 15 & 16 king David rides a donkey away from Jerusalem, as he flees his son – a time of affliction, sadness and near defeat.

Study 9

**Q2:** Context “me” is God. But how can God be pierced? Note this is after God’s grace and supplication has been poured out on them.

# Resources

The following resources will help with reading/learning about Zechariah.

Petterson, Anthony R., *Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity press 2015).

A technical commentary that thoughtfully considers the more complex issues. References Michael Stead and Barry Webb’s works below which is helpful for understanding alternatives in interpretation.

Stead, Michael R., *Zechariah The Lord Returns*, Reading the Bible today series (Sydney: Aquila press 2015).

Approachable to read and makes a connection to Jesus at the end of each chapter.

Webb, Barry., *The message of Zechariah*, Bible Speaks Today (Nottingham: Inter-varsity press 2003).

Focuses on the coming kingdom of God and applies this to Jesus and thus Christians today.

*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology.* England: Inter-Varsity Press. 2000.

“Zechariah “p257: summary of book and key themes.

“Kingdom of God” p615: Development of the theme of Kingdom of God throughout the Old Testament and how it is used in the New Testament.

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1. Note use of house in v11 and compare to temple currently being built. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note in the land of the North is the direction of Babylonia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bethel is 20km North of Jerusalem. Even though it was part of the northern Kingdom (Israel) it had a long history of connection with Jerusalem. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Petterson, A.R. p211 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stead, M. R. p151 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ignore the NIV headings – they are not helpful here! [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Petterson, A. R. p252 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Petterson, A. R. p253 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Megiddo see 2 Ki 23:29-30 and 2 Chron 35:20-26. Josiah was a king who was pierced in battle and mourned by the people. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Petterson, A. R. p280 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Petterson, A. R. p298 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)