

Sermon Series: The Minor Prophets

Sermon title: Book of Zechariah

Scripture reading: Zechariah 1:1-6 ESV

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

November 25 , 2018

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Introduction:

Today we come to the book of Zechariah. And I must admit that this book has been the hardest book I have ever studied. It is a tough book to understand. Martin Luther said this when studying Zechariah, *“Here, in this chapter (14), I give up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about.”*

But the length is the biggest difficulty.

It has 14 chapters and I am trying to condense all of this marvelous info in Zechariah down to 30 minutes. There are glorious visions that I can't explain and wonderful texts about Jesus Christ in Zechariah that I will have to skip. There is so much about Jesus in Zechariah that it is often called, *The Gospel According to Zechariah.*

So, I need great help this morning in trying to explain this book and how it applies to us.

Let's pray.

Have you ever royally messed up?

I don't mean like failed a test..I mean like really caused a big mess...maybe not even publicly but made a mess of things in your own life?

Or have you ever had your dreams crushed?

A dream marriage end in divorce?

Get laid off from a dream job?

Facing difficulties from circumstances you can't control is one thing, but you want to know what's really hard?

It's really hard when it's our own fault!

Well, how do we begin again?

How do we dig yourself out of a hole?

Is there any way back?

Is there any forgiveness, true forgiveness?

The book of Zechariah is intended to be an encouragement. It is written to people who are having a really tough time and need words of hope.

It's a lot like the book of Revelation, which was written to encourage people.

So far in the Minor Prophets, the content has mostly been one of repentance; calling people to repentance.

And now in Zechariah we have a lot of what's called Apocalyptic visions, like Revelation and Daniel.

Richard Phillips describes best the purpose of these visions in his commentary.

He says, "*The prophetic word calls a sinful people to repentance. Apocalyptic visions call a downtrodden people to hope and belief.*"

God sent his prophetic word to afflict the comfortable but he gave visions of hope to comfort the afflicted.”

So, ‘the gospel according to Zechariah’ is meant to give hope and belief to a people who are in great need of it.

Why do they need it? What’s going on?

The date is 520 B.C. We know this from **chapter 1:1**.
“The second year of Darius”

It has been 16 years since some Jews have been allowed to return from exile in Babylon. Most have stayed in Babylon.

Jerusalem was utterly destroyed. It was burnt down. The temple was obliterated. The articles from the temple were gone. The people were gone. It was a ghost town.

The people were few. They were discouraged. They even had enemies around them taunting them that they couldn’t rebuild. Read the books of Nehemiah and Ezra.

We get the main point of the book in the first few verses. Let’s read **1:1-6**

1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, 2 “The Lord was very angry with your fathers. 3 Therefore say to them, Thus declares 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 cried out, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the Lord. 5 Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? 6 But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, 'As the Lord of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.'"

Here in this opening section we see several things:

- I. **THE NEED FOR REPENTANCE-** The call is to not to be like your fathers, to hear God, to pay attention to God's word.(v.4)
We see a little summary of this in **chapter 7:7-13**
[READ]
- II. **THE DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE-** He says in **1:3** a very simple definition...**"Return to me"**, return from your evil ways and deeds. Hear! Pay attention!
"Return to me"
- III. **GOD'S RESPONSE TO REPENTANCE-** I want you to notice God's response to true repentance....What is it? **"I will return to you" 1:3** This is key. I WILL return to you IF you return to me. But God says he WILL do it. Guaranteed.

So, that's the main point: **“Return to me and I will return to you.”** And God is going to give Zechariah in one night's sleep....8 visions and the point of these visions are to give a *‘heavenly perspective on earthly events’* (Phillips) and encourage the people.

I can't go into detail into these strange visions he has but let me summarize for you.

1. **Vision of a cavalry (1:7-17)** We are told in verse 10 that these are *‘whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.’* This was to show the people that God has knowledge and sovereignty over the whole earth. He knows, he's in control and nothing is escaping him.
2. **Vision of horns and craftsmen (1:18-21)** The horns represent the nations who have scattered the Jews and the craftsmen are God's servants who are able to crush the horns to powder. It may look like God is not able, but he is.
3. **Vision of a Surveyor (2:1-13)** He sees a man measuring Jerusalem but his idea for the city is too small. God shows him in verses 5-6 that his plan is much bigger than theirs.
4. **Vision of Joshua the High Priest (chapter 3)** Joshua, as the high priest, stands as a representative of the people. He is filthy, symbolic of the people's sins (and his own). But God says in **3:4**

“Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you and I will clothe you with pure garments.”

God is comforting the people that he and he alone is fully able and willing to remove their sins. More about this later.

5. Vision of a golden lamp stand and 2 olive trees.

(chapter 4) The lamp stand is the Holy Spirit. **4:6** says **“Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD.”** This is to say, “Don’t rebuild in your own power but trust me.” The 2 Olive Trees in verse 14 are Joshua, the high priest and Zerubbabel, the governor. They symbolize the ministry of Priest and King under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

6. Vision of a flying scroll. (5:1-4) Symbolize the word of God judging sin.

7. Vision of a woman in a basket (5:5-11) This is a picture of God removing sin completely from the land.

8. Vision of Four Chariots (6:1-8) This time it is not a cavalry on patrol (vision 1) but chariots that will mow down the enemy. God will one day destroy all his enemies.

***In all of these visions God wants to give a heavenly perspective on the earthly events that have been happening and he wants to encourage the people,**

as they have come back to Jerusalem to find the city burnt and empty...to not be discouraged but.....
'Return to the Lord'; start again, rebuild, restore, start anew, reestablish.

- I. **There's a NEED for REPENTANCE-** The call is to not to be like your fathers, to hear God, to pay attention to God's word.(v.4)
- II. **The DEFINITION OF REPENTANCE is simple-** He says in **1:3...“Return to me”**
- III. **GOD'S RESPONSE to REPENTANCE is clear-**
“I will return to you” 1:3 God says he WILL do it. Guaranteed.

I mentioned that Zechariah is sometimes called “The Gospel According to Zechariah” and the reason is that Zechariah points us to Christ.

IV. **GOD'S MEDIATOR OF REPENTANCE.** God's call to repent was linked to the rebuilding of the temple where lambs were slain for atonement. Christ is the the lamb who was slain so that we can be forgiven and repent. And Zechariah points us to him.

-In **Chapter 2** God says he will dwell in their midst. In the New Testament in John 14:6 it says, **“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”**

-In **Chapter 3** there is the high priest named Joshua (the same name as Jesus) who stands guilty for sinners. In 3:9 he is told he is a sign of someone else, The Branch, the stone, the servant of the Lord. And this sign is that he will remove the iniquity of the land in a single day.

-In **Chapter 6** we see Joshua the priest again. **6:12** says, **“Behold the man whose name is The Branch; for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne.”**

-In **Chapter 9** he is the **“coming King of Zion who comes riding on a donkey and his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”**

-In **Chapter 12:10** **“I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced..”**

-In **Chapter 13** he is the one who is wounded on his back and the shepherd who is struck and the sheep fled.

-In **Chapter 14**- he is the LORD my God who will come and place his feet on the Mount of Olives and rescue his people.

Zechariah points a people who are broken **TOWARD** Jesus Christ for forgiveness and restoration.

And that is where I point you **TO** this morning.

Do you need a new start?

Have you messed things up?

You may feel like you are in spiritual exile!

I have good news for you today.

Return to the LORD and he will return to you.

[James 4:8]

Draw near unto God and he will draw near unto you.

[Hebrews 4:16]

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Return and he will forgive.

Return and trust.

Return and believe and hope.

Return to the LORD everyday. Never stop returning.

Draw near to God AND... he will draw near to you.