

PostExilicProphets 21-12-29a

Good evening, welcome to the Wednesday night Bible class here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. After what I believe is a five week hiatus, we're back in Zechariah and we are resuming in chapter 11, Zechariah chapter 11. There are a total of 14 chapters in the book, so we're creeping up on the end.

But what we're going to do tonight, since we've had a bit of a break, is do a quick review of the book itself, its overall structure and message, and that will refresh our context so that when we dive back into chapter 11 we'll know who we are and why we're here. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship, on our study, cultivate the presence and power of God's Holy Spirit as we begin our investigations tonight. Shall we pray? Father, how grateful we are for all of your many graces, the wonderful provision you make for us, the protection you provide for us, the sustaining power of your word and your spirit ever present, ever available to us if we are willing to look and to listen.

We thank you for this portion of your word, we thank you for the opportunity to spend time looking at it together with believers of like mind who share an appreciation and enthusiasm for all of the things that you reveal to us. We pray that as we examine this portion of the book of Zechariah that your Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts, help us to see its pertinence and how it applies in the time ahead of us that remains before you send your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, to retrieve us, to gather us to Himself and to present us before your throne. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

Certainly don't want to be prevented from being before the throne. So the book of Zechariah, just as a quick reminder, we have the nation of Israel. It was delivered out of bondage, wandered for 40 years, went into the land under Joshua, the conquest was achieved, the land was distributed, you had the days of the judges.

Then, this is in the book of Judges, you have 1 Samuel and the days of Saul. That comes to kind of an unhappy end. And then you have the reign of David, then of Solomon, then the kingdom divides.

And you have the northern kingdom of Israel, often known as Ephraim, and you have the southern kingdom, often known as Judah. Through a series of unfortunate events, the northern kingdom is judged in 721 B.C. God uses the Assyrians to capture them, to scatter them, to take their land away, and you're left only with the southern kingdom of Judah, which persists for about another 150 years. But through similar acts of disobedience and outright rebellion, if not just apathy and distraction, the southern kingdom is also taken out by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians.

They go into captivity, Jeremiah told them, as a pre-exilic prophet, that they would repay God for the Sabbath years that they had ignored, and the captivity would thus last 70 years. Daniel

reads this prophecy while in captivity, Ezekiel prophesies while in captivity. Ultimately, the Babylonians are conquered by the Medes and the Persians, and it is during that time that the 70 years expires, the people begin to return.

They return with Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest, and it is in these days that they have the opportunity to begin to rebuild. Naturally, the priority ought to be to reestablish the temple, which was utterly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, but the people are unmotivated. They don't seem to appreciate the opportunity to once again have a place where God can dwell with them.

So Haggai and Zechariah are the two prophets sent by God to stir the people up to remembrance of who they are and why they're here. And they are the people of God, it is their privilege to prepare and to maintain the presence of God at the temple. So under the stirring encouragement of Haggai and Zechariah, this effort begins.

We've already seen Haggai, and we've seen that Haggai and Zechariah are interlaced. You will remember that the dates, the dated prophecies of the first six chapters of this Zechariah book tell us that as Haggai is ending his ministry, Zechariah begins his. But after Zechariah begins, Haggai has one more prophecy, and then Zechariah continues from there.

So they are inextricably linked. This is one reason one follows the other in the section of minor prophets. So beyond exhorting the people to get busy and prepare the physical temple, you may remember that the actual theme of both Haggai and Zechariah is God's people should first and foremost be his dwelling place.

It is an early adumbration, it's an early expression of the idea that it's not just the temple building where God actually dwells. God's desire is to dwell in and among his people. So the prophetic encouragement to prepare a place for God begins really in this post-exilic day with Haggai and Zechariah.

To put this in some context, it is going to be about 40 years before Ezra and Nehemiah's day. This is the first wave of returnees, but they're not yet trying to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. They're concentrating on restoring and rebuilding the temple.

They lay its foundations, it lays fallow for many, many years, and God sends these prophets to say, hey, when are you going to get with the program? You're dwelling in houses that are lined with cedar and my house isn't even built. But it of course speaks at a metaphorical level, you have returned to the land, but you're acting like any other people. You don't remember who you are, what your covenant relationship with the creator God is.

Repair all of these things. Get all of it going. The work on the temple should be an expression of work as the people of God preparing for the presence of God.

This is really the dual message of faith and works in an incipient or nascent form. That brings us to Zechariah. Remember Ezra and Nehemiah are yet future by about 40 years.

It's going to be about 60 years before you get to the days of Esther the queen, still in the Persian empire. Remember the Medes kind of come in first, but it's the bear with one shoulder higher than the other in the visions that Daniel records. And ultimately it is the Persians who prevail in that dual kingdom that supplants Babylon.

Well about 60 years hence will be the days of Ahasuerus or Xerxes and Esther. About 40 years in the future is going to be Ezra and Nehemiah. This is in about 518, 516, 515, along in there in the return from Babylonian exile.

So now the book of Zechariah, we saw that it's author is Zechariah the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo the prophet. He is referenced later on as Zechariah the son of Iddo. Some people say well who is he the son of? Is it Berechiah or is it Iddo? The answer is yes.

This is a reminder that son of is a flexible term. Jesus is the son of David, right? So obviously Iddo was the memorable figure in the lineage and we have seen this before in some of the genealogies going all the way back to Genesis. Generations are skipped to preserve the names of those who stood out in either a very positive or a very negative way.

In this case it's a positive way and Iddo the seer is the grandfather of our author. So we have these dated prophecies but if you have a little bit of space in your notes here, if you're toward the bottom of a page, turn over and start afresh because I'm going to give you kind of a broad brush review of the outline of Zechariah and this may be a little bit more fulsome than what I provided in our introduction but it's really simple. It's a simple outline.

The book of Zechariah is comprised and you can put this on three lines. The first line is eight visions, eight visions. We've been through these visions, you remember them, we've looked at them in some detail.

That's chapters one through six, eight visions. This is followed by four sermons in chapters seven and eight, thus saith the Lord. Four sermons and that is the first section of Zechariah.

Zechariah breaks very emphatically, very visibly into two parts. The eight visions and the four sermons are the first section, which is chapters one through eight, one through six, eight visions, seven and eight, four sermons. The remainder of the book, chapters nine through 14, is two burdens.

Very symmetrical, eight visions, four sermons, two burdens. Then the two burdens in chapters nine through 14 divide into the first burden, chapter nine through 11, and the second burden, chapters 12 through 14. That's your book.

The first section with the visions and the sermons addresses itself to the present. The second section addresses itself to the future. So, in those eight visions, you have a description of present problems, present unresolved issues, and God's corrections that are going to be applied to those problems.

In the second section, the two burdens, you have future promises, and future promises and directions. This is not original to me, I ran across it, I consulted so many different things, I don't remember where it came from now, but somebody else thought of this. But you have, in the first section, present problems and corrections.

In the second section, you have future promises and directions. And that's really a nice, I can't come up with a better way to say it, so I'm just borrowing whoever God can bless them for dreaming it up. Future promises and directions.

That's the book of Zechariah. Now, we have seen the eight visions and the four sermons. I'm going to just very quickly point out what the meaning of those eight visions was.

And I've done this review once or twice before, so you may have it in your notes, but let me just go back through it to read us back into the book, because we're two-thirds to three-quarters of the way through. The first vision of the horseman in the glade tells us God is currently aware, fully aware of the present prevailing evil. God is fully aware of currently prevailing evil.

He knows about it. He's not busy. He's not asleep.

He's not distracted. God is aware. Remember, this is the recon team in the glade.

Second vision of the horns. God has detailed plans for breaking the power of evil. Not only is He aware of it, but He's got a plan for dealing with it.

The third vision. This is the man with the measuring rod. God will reward, not according to human expectations, but according to His own standard.

The man with the measuring rod wants to measure the city, but he has stopped. God will expand the city according to His own idea of what the capacity needs to be. How many faithful believers are going to live in the New Jerusalem? Only God knows.

Man can't see them. Many of them are off the radar, are invisible, but God knows. Man cannot dimension the coming capital city of the kingdom.

God will do that. That's the third vision. And the fourth vision is Joshua with his filthy robes.

And his robes are removed and the clean robes are placed on him. Sin is solved by God through the high priest. And there is a symmetry here because these visions break down into four and four.

You can see the two, four, and eight structure of this wonderful prophecy throughout. So that's the first four visions. The first four visions end looking at the high priest through whom God is going to take away sin and Satan.

Remember, Satan is there accusing Joshua. But by the time you get to the end of that vision, Satan's gone. And so are the dirty robes.

And you have the high priest standing there in beautiful gleaming robes. And Zachariah himself, being a priest, says, hey, where's his hat? Remember that? It's very cool. So then you have the, and those first four visions, by the way, bring you to the end of the Old Testament age.

They comprise the present problems, the plan and the purpose of God and how he is going to solve them with the coming and the adornment and the work of the high priest. The next four visions look ahead to the millennial kingdom. This is promise.

First four deal with the present. The next four deal with how we should act in the present based on what's coming or how Israel should actually. But of course, there's application for us.

So the fifth vision was the two olive trees and you have Zerubbabel there and two olive trees. And this is one of those mystery hints that the church is coming. There is the olive tree of Israel and there's the olive tree of the church.

And people scratch their head and say, wow, where did this second olive tree come from? I thought Israel was the olive tree. And people say, well, one olive tree is Zerubbabel and one is Joshua. It doesn't say that.

It says there are these two olive trees and they're associated with Zerubbabel and the church with the Holy Spirit. Remember the oil that is coming in from its source and enabling and empowering both trees. And ultimately, the church is going to be the first tree to have that oil, to be imbued with that oil.

And millennial Israel is when God will fulfill his new covenant to Israel, which is to pour out his spirit on all flesh. Old men see in vision, young men see in dreams, sons and daughters prophesying and so on. So that's the fifth vision.

The sixth vision is the flying scroll. The flying scroll. The scroll is written on the front and on the back with God's word.

God's word is the standard. All of it. Everything written on the front, everything written on the back is God's word.

God's word is the standard for faith and obedience. And when it flies through a house, it will destroy what needs destroying and it will preserve what needs preservation. The seventh vision, the woman in the basket.

This woman is the seductress. This is the whore of Babylon. This is the personification of evil.

But she's put in a basket with a lead lid and she's suppressed. This is a picture of Satan being cast into the bottomless pit during the millennium. This is Jesus ruling with a rod of iron and the sons of David ruling with that rod of iron in the millennium.

Evil is not gone. You just can't see it. They didn't destroy the woman.

They didn't drop the woman. She's hidden. She's contained in a container.

But she's not gone. And where is that basket put? The plain of Shinar, which is your beautiful symmetry in the millennial kingdom. That is the plain of Shinar.

This is where the tower of Babel was built. These people have just come back from Babel on. So you've got the beginning, the middle and the end.

And there's the plain of Shinar in Babylon as an issue. Then the eighth vision is a vision of final judgment. This is the chariots and the horses and they ride forth.

Some of them to the north and some to the south. You remember that and the significance of the colors and so on. And those were the eight visions.

Back to our overall structure of the book of Zechariah now. These visions and sermons address present problems and their corrections. If you're frustrated by what you see in the present, God says through Zechariah to the returning Judahites, be comforted by God's promises.

There is a coming kingdom where righteousness will dwell, where sin and evil will be suppressed, where God's monarchy will reign. Comfort one another with these words in the Old Testament sense. So those are the eight visions.

Now, because I have done such a tremendous job of presenting this, even without looking at your notes, what comes after the eight visions? Four of what I'm doing right now. Four sermons. Eight visions, four sermons.

And you can see these marked out because the visions took up chapters 1 through 6. So when you go to chapter 7, oh, and by the way, I almost left out a very important thing. There is in the center of this section, after the eight visions and before the four sermons, there is this special little interlude, which is the crowning of the high priest. It harks back to the fourth vision where his dirty robes were taken off and the clean robes and the priestly hat was put on his head.

Zechariah's suggestion, right? But then in the last part of chapter 6, remember the word of the Lord came to me saying, this is verse 9 and following, receive the gift from the captives, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jediah who have come from Babylon. Go and enter the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, take the silver and gold and make an elaborate crown. Remember the elaborate crown? This isn't a vision and it's not a sermon.

This is an insert between those two halves of the first section and it focuses attention and emphasis and complete concentration on the high priest that we already saw. Remember, we've seen Zerubbabel and Joshua emphasized. What do they represent? Joshua is religious leadership, high priesthood, representation before God.

Zerubbabel is civil government. He's the governor. He's got civil power.

He's the earthly manifestation of authority. Joshua is the manifestation of heavenly authority,

right? So you have that in the visions, but by the time you get to the end of the visions and before you get to the sermons, you now have those two things combined in Joshua alone. Interestingly, not combined in Zerubbabel, combined in Yeshua, excuse me, Joshua, who for some strange reason, God wanted his son named after.

Joshua, the conqueror of the land and Joshua, the high priest, two prominent Joshua's in the Old Testament. We wouldn't have the second one if we didn't have Zachariah. But you got the book of Joshua and you got the book of Zachariah that give you this double Joshua.

One is the priest, one is the conqueror and the presider, the next best thing to a king, all of his days in the land. Moses was the leader in the wilderness. Joshua is the leader in the land, right? And people are obedient all the days of Joshua.

They don't start spinning out and getting into the days of the judges until after Joshua dies. All of these things are so significant. This is why God said, you will call my son Joshua.

You will call him Yeshua because he has been previewed in both of these outstanding Joshua's. So you have him featured here at the end of chapter six. So take silver and gold and make him an elaborate crown.

This is not a priestly crown. He had that back in the fourth vision. This is the ruling crown, silver and gold and Zerubbabel is nowhere to be found.

This is Joshua who is the priest king. Speak to him saying, behold the man whose name is the branch, the Netzer, the Nazarene. From his place he shall branch out and he shall build the temple of the Lord.

Who was originally tasked with building the temple? Who helped lay its foundation when the captives first came back from Babylon and from Persia? That was Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel is my right hand man, God said earlier. He's going to lay the foundation and so on.

Well, the foundation was laid in the Old Testament law and prophets foreshadowing Jesus Christ. Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid and it's Christ. But that foundation in the Old Testament is a foreshadowing of Christ.

He is the Word, capital W. He is the law and the prophets. He's the one who affirms them. He's the one who fulfills them.

I've not come to destroy them but to fulfill them. One jot, one tittle will not pass till it's all fulfilled. Heaven and earth will not pass away until all is fulfilled.

And by the way, you can't say, well, it was all fulfilled when Jesus came and walked the earth and died on the cross. Half of it is not fulfilled. Joshua, the high priest in Zechariah, that's fulfilled.

The dirty robes have been taken off and the clean robes have been placed on and he's wearing

the high priestly hat. He is even now sitting at the right hand of the Father making intercession. But what has he not done that is also throughout the Old Testament law and prophets? Joshua, the conqueror, the coming one.

John the Baptist questioned from prison. I know you're the lamb that takes away sin. Are you also the coming one? And Jesus, via scripture, says go back to your Old Testament prophecies and you'll know when you see the lame walking and the deaf hearing and the blind seeing and the gospel being preached to the poor, that is the fulfillment of the coming one.

And because I am doing that as a preview and an entree to the kingdom with the king, John had his question answered. You're not only the lamb of God, you are also the one who comes. You're both Joshua's.

And John the Baptist dies a happy man because he got to introduce both sides of that coin and to understand it. So here in Zechariah, you have this so clearly previewed. Behold the man whose name is the branch.

From his place he shall branch out and he shall build the temple of the Lord. This temple idea is profound. I was reading somebody that's really way out in the weeds, but he had a great idea.

And he said, the garden of Eden was like a temple. Man came and met God. God came and met man in the garden.

God came down to earth and walked in the breeze of the day where man was. But through sin and failure and disobedience, man had to leave. Now he can't go back into the garden in the same way that nobody but a high priest could enter God's tabernacle or God's temple.

When is that fixed? Jesus said, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up. He's the temple. There's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

He is Jacob's ladder. He is God descending and being Immanuel God with us. So you have Eden as a prototype temple where God and man can meet and dwell together.

You have the Lord Jesus Christ where God and man can meet and we can be indwelt not just by the Holy Spirit but by the Lord Jesus and by his Father. If you have his words and keep them, I and my Father will come to you, Jesus said, and make our home with you. Make our home with you.

Dwell. Do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit? When is there going to be another temple, a physical temple? Ezekiel 43-48, the millennial temple. Jesus will be on earth and he will be both high priest and king and there will be the temple with those memorial sacrifices that are not looking forward to his work but looking back on his work and for a thousand years reminding everyone who comes to Jerusalem bringing tribute from the nations that the light of salvation has shined in fulfillment of the covenant promise to Abraham a light to the Gentiles and salvation for my people Israel.

Anyway, it's fascinating so this is so important to see that this first section of Zechariah centers on, points at, the eight visions and the four sermons point at this scene right here which is central and by itself. Look at the branch he shall build the temple of the Lord he shall bear the glory and shall sit and rule on his throne so he shall be a priest on his throne never happened in Israel there was never a priest king in Israel ever but this symbolic crowning of the actual Joshua in Zechariah's day by Zechariah himself is prophetic it's an acted out parable it's an acted out prophecy counsel of peace shall be between them both there will be peace on earth toward men of good will eudokia as we saw in our Christmas special so the elaborate crown is a memorial in the temple of the Lord the memorial crown it's just and we covered this when we were here in chapter six all right so now keeping in mind your structure that completes the visions and gives you the centerpiece of section one of Zechariah then you move into the four sermons and this begins in chapter seven and so they come and ask about the fasts and they're all hang dog about do we still have to keep these fasts and some of them were ones that they had made up themselves they had turned the law into a burden and into an onerous set of traditions that didn't even reflect God and you remember these these fasts in the tenth month were a reminder of the final siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar they fasted every year on that day because that was when the final siege began that destroyed their capital city this was a man-made fast it wasn't in Deuteronomy anywhere or Leviticus the fast of the fourth month that they asked him about in verse six and seven this is a memorial of Jerusalem being sacked and burned the feast of the fifth month or the fast of the fifth month was the city and the temple sacked and burned and then the fast of the seventh month was remembering when Gediah the governor was murdered and so these were all depressing man-made remembrances this is kind of like well remember 9-11 remember this Kennedy assassination remember you know all of these bad things that's what they were so these people come and ask Zechariah should we keep on observing these depressing fasts and sermon number one is in the latter part of verses six and seven actually begins in verse five say to the people of the land and to the priests this is Zechariah seven five through seven this is sermon number one in response to a question say to the people and to the priests when you fast and mourn in the fifth and seventh months during those seventy years did you fast for me no they weren't remembering God they weren't repenting of their sins they weren't vowing to not repeat the failures of their fathers they were focused on the judgment instead of the reason for the judgment as we have seen in recent weeks there are people doing this today focusing on the nature of judgment or the nature of God's punishment instead of looking further back at its reason what is the reason for the captivity wasn't it awful that we got judged our city was destroyed our temple was sacked our governor was murdered we are so sad God why didn't you fast and use those opportunities to get back to God why examine yourself and see if you are in the faith that's what the feast days were for to pause and remember who you are and why we are here as the covenant I know my Lord and you are saved thank you God thank you thank you thank you God thank you thank Before judgment and captivity But they refused verse 11 to heed they shrugged their shoulders They stopped their ears so that they could not hear they made their hearts like flint refusing to hear sermon number two says Examine yourselves in the light of the failure of your father's sermon number one. Look at yourself Are

you really doing what you're doing for the right reasons number two? Look at the example of your father's Here's where they went wrong How to be helpful to you Refusing to hear the the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets Anybody who wants to diminish the importance of the Old Testament? Has to diminish this right along with it because God himself tells the returned Captives that law and those prophets were given to you by my spirit it's my word and if your father's had heeded it, they would have never been judged destroyed taken captive and Decimated so Therefore it happened verse 13 that just as he proclaimed they would not hear so they called out and I would not listen Says the Lord of hosts Remember your iniquities is separated between you and your God your sins have in this face that he will not hear.

I Scattered them with a whirlwind among all nations Which they had not known the land became desolate after them so that no one passed through a returned for they made the pleasant land desolate Now God is the one that desolated it using the scourge nation of Babylon But it's their fault There was a covenant That they ignored there was the Word of God the inspired Word of God in the law and in the prophets that they refused To heed refused to pay attention to dismissed disregarded treated as a light thing That's what happened. Well, those are your first two sermons after the eight visions We're going to pause here and take our break when we come back. We're going to continue our review We'll take a look at the second two sermons and get into the first burden, which is where we are in our study of Zechariah fascinating useful Motivating book in my opinion