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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries
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Let's Begin

Haggai and Zechariah both ministered to the remnant of Jews who had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple and city after Judah's seventy years in captivity. As we saw in our lesson from Haggai, once back in their land, the people met with so much opposition, which turned to discouragement, that they had stopped working on the temple for fifteen years. Though they had willingly chosen the difficult task of returning to Judah, they had become disheartened and downtrodden. In response, God sent both Haggai and Zechariah to encourage them in their work.

Haggai was the more practical of the two prophets. He challenged the people to consider their ways and to get back to the work of rebuilding the temple. On the other

hand, Zechariah was more of a visionary. As we look at the first six chapters of his book, we will see that Zechariah receives eight visions, all on the very same night. We will not be able to deal with every verse, but as we use the outline below, we want to look at the main message of each vision. As we do, we will see how Zechariah uses his visions in the night to fill the people with hope and to encourage them in their work for the Lord. We will also see why these visions can encourage us in our work for the Lord today.

I. Introducing the Visions (1:1-6)

II. Revealing the Visions (1:7-6:9)

III. Concluding the Visions (6:10-15)

I. Introducing the Visions (1:1-6)

After dating when the word of the Lord came to him (1:1), Zechariah immediately reminds the people of the Lord's displeasure with their fathers. He says, "The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers" (1:2). Because of this, the Lord had a message for them. Zechariah tells the people, "... Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn

unto you, saith the Lord of hosts" (1:3). God wanted the people know that even with living with the consequences of their parents' sins, that they could have a right relationship with Him. Yes, their parents had grievously sinned against Him, but they did not have to follow in their parents' ways.

In verse 4 the Lord tells the people how their parents had displeased Him. He had sent

His prophets to them, and the prophets pleaded with them to repent. But they refused to listen. He then asks them in verse 5 where their fathers and the prophets were now? They were dead. But the Lord could say, "But for My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did not they take hold of your fathers?" (1:6). The people knew that everything God had said



would happen to their fathers had come true. Because of that, the people reply, "... Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us" (1:6b). With that truth, Zechariah introduces the visions in the night.

Reflection Connection

Read Psalm 111:7 and discuss why this verse lets us know we can always trust what God says and know that what He says will happen.

II. Revealing the Visions (1:7-6:9)

Beginning in verse 7 of chapter 1, God reveals to Zechariah a series of eight different visions. Again, they all come in one night. The first three are visions of comfort. In verses 8 and 9 Zechariah sees four horsemen riding different colored horses and asks what they mean. In verse 10, the man who stands among the myrtle trees tells him the Lord had sent them to walk throughout the earth. Evidently, they were God's angelic messengers sent to see what was going on in the earth. In verse 11 they report that they had "walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." This could sound like a positive report, but it was not. They were saying that the enemies of the Jews still had not received their punishment for how they had treated the Jews and Jerusalem. This is why in verse 12 we read, "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast

had indignation these threescore and ten years?"

The Lord answers the angel with "good words and comfortable words" in verse 13. Then, in verse 14, the Lord says, "... I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy." In verse 15 He continues, "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease ..." In verse 16 He says, "... I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: My house shall be built

in it ..." Look at the end of verse 17: "... and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." In this first vision God was saying that He had not forgotten His people or Jerusalem. This had to be a comfort and an encouragement to the people of Zechariah's day. They were reminded that the Lord was going to deal with the nations who were mistreating them. He had not forgotten them or Jerusalem.

The second vision of comfort begins in verse 18. Zechariah sees four horns and in verse 19 asks the angel, "... What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Horns in the Bible are often symbols of Gentile power. Here the angel was specifically talking about the Gentile nations that had come against the Jews. While Zechariah is looking at the four horns, look at what happens in verse 20: "And the Lord showed me four carpenters." A better word would be "craftsmen" or

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even “blacksmiths.” Zechariah asks, “... What come these to do?” (1:21a). The angel replies, “... These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it” (1:21b). Now God was saying that He has His ways to deal with the nations who mistreat His chosen people.

Chapter 2 gets even more interesting. Zechariah says, “I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand” (2:1). He now sees a surveyor. In verse 2 he asks him where he is going and is told that he is going to measure the city of Jerusalem. Verse 4 tells us why. Jerusalem was going to have an amazing expansion. In Zechariah’s day, this statement had to be hard to imagine.

Remember, the remnant had returned to a city left practically desolate for seventy years. Its city walls were in shambles. There was not much to measure. But God still had more to say about Jerusalem’s expansion. In verse 5 we read, “For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.” God was saying that He was going to protect Jerusalem, and He was going to live there in all His glory. The people now had the promise of protection and expansion from the Lord. Think about how encouraging this news was to them.

To further encourage and comfort the people, the Lord has Zechariah show them just how special they were to Him. Look at verse 8: “For thus saith the Lord of hosts ... he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of His eye.” God was saying that the children of Israel were special to Him. After all, they were His chosen people. When people attacked them, they were attacking Him.

This vision shows how the people were following in their parents’ sins and needed a national cleansing.

After the visions of comfort, Zechariah is given a vision of cleansing. The fourth vision begins, “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him” (3:1). Verse 2 continues, “And the Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” This vision shows how the people were following in their parents’ sins and needed a national cleansing.

In a rather graphic vision, God

shows how the cleansing would come about. As we study this, we will see this is exactly how God cleanses souls today. Joshua, the high priest, and Satan are both standing there. This reminds us that Satan has access to heaven (cp. Job 1:6-7) and is called “the accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10). But there is good news. We may have an accuser, Satan, but we also have a defense attorney and Advocate, the Lord Jesus Christ (cp. 1 Jn. 2:1). On the basis of His shed blood, we can confess our sins. When we do, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (cp. 1 Jn. 1:9). We’re like a brand plucked out of the fire.

In verses 3 and 4, Joshua is standing there with his filthy clothes, but the Lord has his filthy clothes taken away and gives him new clothes. This vision is one of the beautiful pictures of what salvation is all about. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. This is why we cannot stand in our own goodness and be acceptable to God. He is a holy and righteous God. But when we receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, the Bible says we are clothed with the righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Isaiah 61:10 depicts this truth as it says, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness ...” When we stand before the Lord, we stand in the clothing of



the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Here Zechariah is given a vision of national cleansing.

In the fifth vision Zechariah sees a vision of the golden lampstand with two olive trees by it (4:1-2). After asking the angel what the vision meant and admitting that he didn't know, Zechariah says in verse 6, "Then he answered and spake unto me saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." What was the purpose of this vision? The people needed God's power to do His work. In verse 10 Zechariah is asked, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Now Zechariah was being reminded that little is much when God is in it. These are two truths we need to remember for today. We must be empowered by the Holy Spirit to do God's work. Plus, little is always much when God is in it.

In verse 11 Zechariah returns to the two olive trees he saw in verse 3 and asks, "... What are these two olive trees?" He is given the answer in verse 14, "Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that shall stand by the Lord of the whole earth." They were God's witnesses, but there was also a future application (cp. Rev. 11:3-13). During the Tribulation period there will be two Spirit-filled witnesses who will be used mightily by the Lord. Just as the people of Zechariah's day needed the power of the Holy Spirit, these two witnesses will do their

work in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 5 shows us the sixth vision. This one is even more amazing. In verse 1 Zechariah sees a huge flying roll or scroll. In fact, in verse 2 we are told that it was twenty cubits by ten cubits (30 feet by 15 feet), the same measurements of the Holy Place in the Old Testament Tabernacle. He wants to know what it is and in verse 3 he is told, "This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth ..." This roll represented the Old Testament law and God's curse upon those who disobey it. Zechariah was being told that God is going to deal with sin. The people could be assured of it.

The people needed God's power to do His work.

The seventh vision begins in verse 6. We read, "And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah (a bushel basket) that goeth forth ..." A bushel was the largest dry measure the Jews had. So Zechariah sees this vision of a big bushel basket. In verse 7 he says, "And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead ..." A talent was the largest weight among the Jews and weighed about 100 pounds, so this big

lid on top of the bushel basket weighed about 100 pounds. He lifts off the lid only to see a woman sitting in the bushel. Zechariah is told in verse 8 that she is a symbolic representation of wickedness.

It gets even stranger. Look in verse 9: "Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came out two women ..." These two women pick up the bushel basket with the woman in it and carry it all the way to the land of Shinar (or Babylon) (cp. 5:10-11). God was showing Zechariah that one of these days all wickedness, including religious error, will be brought to a head. When we read Revelation 17 and 18 we discover that this will happen in Babylon.

The eighth vision is in chapter 6. It is a vision of four chariots that come from between two mountains. Zechariah asks about them and is told, "These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth (6:5)." In verse 7 we are told they walk to and fro throughout the earth. This time these angelic messengers were not just reporting on what was going on. They were now going out as agents of God to deal with what's going on.

Reflection Connection

Read the promise God gave Abraham in Genesis 12:3 and discuss how the messages of many of Zechariah's visions confirm this promise.



III. Concluding the Visions (6:10-15)

Zechariah summarizes his visions in the last six verses of chapter 6. As the Lord instructs him, Zechariah goes to the house of Josiah and meets three men who had returned from captivity with an offering (6:10). He makes a crown from their silver and gold and places it on the head of Joshua the high priest. Zechariah then tells Joshua, "... Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of

the Lord: Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (6:12-13). He was prophesying their coming Messiah.

Verse 13 says this Branch, the Messiah, will "... sit and rule upon His throne," but it also says, "... and He shall be a priest upon His throne." The Jews always kept the kingly and priestly offices separate. Yet, this

verse says the two offices will one day come together. Verse 13 continues, "... and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Only the Lord Jesus is qualified to be both King and Priest; one day He will reign as both!

Reflection Connection

Read Hebrews 4:14 and Revelation 19:11-16 and discuss how the New Testament also shows Jesus as both our Priest and King.

Wrap Up

Knowing that nothing encourages God's children with optimism more than the promises of hope for the future, God gave Zechariah these eight visions in the night to encourage the people during their difficult times. The climax was the vision of the reign of their Messiah, as Priest and King, in Jerusalem. The good news is that between Haggai's exhortation and Zechariah's visions, the people were given a renewed hope for the future. Let's not forget that we also have a hope for the future. Titus 2:13 tells us, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." We have the blessed hope of our Lord's return. Knowing this truth, let's also remember the admonition of Galatians 6:9, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." No matter the difficulties or discouragements we encounter, we know it will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

