

# Zechariah

For a dozen years or more, the task of rebuilding the temple stood half completed. Zechariah is commissioned by God to encourage the people in the unfinished responsibility. Rather than exhorting them to action with strong words of rebuke, Zechariah seeks to encourage them to action by reminding them of the future importance of the temple. The temple must be built, for one day Messiah's glory will inhabit it. But future blessing is contingent upon present obedience. The people are not merely building a structure; they are building the future. With that as their motivation, they can enter the building project with wholehearted zeal, for their Messiah is coming!

## INTRODUCTION

The first eight chapters frequently allude to the temple and encourage the people to complete their great work. As they built the temple, they were building their future, because that very structure will be used by the coming Messiah when He comes to bring salvation. Zechariah eloquently attests to Yahweh's covenant faithfulness toward Israel through the work of the Messiah, especially in chapters 9-14.

This book outlines God's program for His people during the Times of the Gentiles until Messiah comes to deliver them and reign upon the earth. This hope of glory was a source of reassurance to the Jewish remnant at a time when circumstances were trying. Zechariah was also written to promote spiritual revival so that the people would call upon the Lord with humble hearts and commit their ways to Him.

*Zekar-yah* means "God Remembers" or "God Has Remembered." This theme dominates the whole book: Israel will be blessed because Yahweh remembers the covenant He made.

## AUTHOR

Zechariah ("God Remembers") was a popular name shared by at least twenty-nine Old Testament characters. It may have been given out of gratitude for God's gift of a baby boy. Like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly lineage as the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo (see 1:1, 7; Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:4, 16). He was born in Babylonia and was brought by his grandfather to Palestine when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest. If he was the "young man" of chapter 2, verse 4, he was called to prophesy at an early age in 520 b.c. According to Jewish tradition, Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue that collected and preserved the canon of revealed Scripture. Matthew 23:35 indicates he was "murdered between the temple and the altar" in the same way that an earlier Zechariah was martyred (see 2 Chr. 24:20-21).

## DATE & SETTING

Zechariah was a younger contemporary of Haggai the prophet, Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest. The historical setting for chapters 1-8 (520-518 b.c.) is identical to that of Haggai. Work was resumed on the temple in 520 b.c. and the project was completed in 516 b.c. Chapters 9-14 are undated, but stylistic differences and references to Greece indicate a date of between 480 and 470 b.c. This would mean that Darius I (521-486 b.c.) had passed from the scene and had been succeeded by Xerxes (486-464 b.c.), the king who deposed Queen Vashti and made Esther queen of Persia.

It was in this context that God called His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to the same task of urging the people to complete the temple. Both books are precisely dated: Haggai 1:1, September 1, 520 b.c.; Haggai 1:15, September 24, 520 b.c.; Haggai 2:1, October 21, 520 b.c.; Zechariah 1:1, November, 520 b.c.; Haggai 2:10, 20, December 24, 520 b.c.; Zechariah 1:7, February 24, 519 b.c.; Zechariah 7:1, December 4, 518 b.c. Zechariah's prophecy commenced between Haggai's second and third messages. Thus, after fourteen years of neglect, work on the temple was resumed in 520 b.c. and was completed in 516 b.c. (Ezra 6:15).