



Prophet Prophesying Eternal Life



The Minor Prophet Holy Book Review

Written by Father Tadros Malaty

St George Church, Alexandria, Egypt

Zechariah: in Hebrew means “Jehovah remembers.” There are approximately thirty persons called Zechariah in the Holy Bible.

This name serves the aim of this Holy Book, for God always remember us, encouraging us to struggle for erecting the Holy Temple of God within our souls.

- Zechariah was probably born in Babylon, and in infancy lost his father, Berechia and returned to Jerusalem accompanied with his grandfather, Iddo. They came from the captive with the first group, under the guidance of Zerubbabel (Neh. 12:1, 4, 7). Iddo was the head of a priestly family.
- Zechariah started his prophecy in 520 B.C., the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspis, but the last date mentioned in this Holy Book is the fourth year of the reign of Darius (518 B.C.). But many scholars state that the last part of this Holy Book (Ch. 9 - 14) was written in the old days of Zechariah, i.e. 30 to 40 years after the writing of the first part (Ch. 1 - 8).

Zechariah the Prophet was the contemporary of Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high-priest, and Haggai the Prophet (Zech. 3:1; 4:6; 6:11; Ezra 5:1-2). According to the Jewish tradition Zechariah was a beloved fellow to Haggai the Prophet.

Historical Circumstances : In the year 538 B.C, Cyrus the Persian King issued a proclamation permitting the Jews to return to their own land and rebuild the Temple (2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:4). But as exiled people, they had obtained considerable wealth in the new land, preferring to stay as they felt it would be difficult starting a new life once again in their city which had been plundered by other nations. Their life in forced exile had not been easy for they had been foreigners, and had been deprived of worshipping in their Temple. Only 50,000 of the exiled Jews returned those whom God moved their hearts and they rebuilt the House of God. In the second month of the year 536 B.C., the returnees laid the foundation of the Temple (Ezra 3:11-13). The Samaritans resisted (Ezra 4:5) and the project stopped for fifteen years. In the year 521 B.C.

Darius came to the throne and the two prophets Zechariah and Haggai encouraged the disheartened to rebuild the temple under the guidance of Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high-priest. Tatnai the Persian governor of the province located at the western side of Euphrates tried to oppose the project, but the orders of King Darius went unobstructed since as king he desired to rebuild the Temple. King Darius was in great need of the support of their prayers in the Temple on his behalf and for his sons' sake (Ezra 6:6-12).

These were among the external difficulties in reconstructing the Temple; the internal obstacles were even harder. Some Jews thought that a fifteen year stopping to rebuild could be considered as a sign of God's displeasure concerning rebuilding the Temple, and that the right time had not yet arrived for accomplishing this project (Hag. 1:4). In fact those Jews intended to care only for the establishment of their own houses rather than rebuilding the House of God. The Unity of the Old Testament Holy Book:

Some scholars doubted that chapters 9 - 14 were written by Zechariah the Prophet for two reasons:

1 - The style of writing within these chapters differs from that of chapters 1 - 8. But this reason could be criticized by the fact that what has been written by Zechariah in his youth (Ch. 1 - 8) must differ from that written at his old age (9 - 14). Moreover, every part of this Holy Book has its own aim, which makes diversity of styles plausible.

2 - Chapters 9 - 14 are concerned with incidents which happened after the final return from captivity, this could be explained thus: that Zechariah did not write as a historian but as a prophet who foretold of future incidents.

Its Characteristics:

1 - This Holy Book of Zechariah is considered to be a support to the disheartened soul. It strengthens an exiled Jewish nation, providing hope for its people who suffered the tyranny of captivity for 70 years, deprived of worshipping God in the Temple, and after their return they



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were forbidden from rebuilding the Temple for about 15 years. For this reason the Book was written in a language of encouragement and not one of threatening.

- 2 - The first eight chapters contain 9 visions, and some parts of it are written in symbolic language.
- 3 - This Holy Book focused on the Messianic Age, for while it supported them to rebuild the Temple it revealed the Temple of the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, offering clear prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: His entrance to Jerusalem (9:9); His betrayal for thirty silver pieces (11:2); His wounds (13:6); piercing by a spear (12:10), His agony (13:7) and His opened Kingdom for all mankind (9:10).

Moreover, many thoughts of this Holy Book are correlated to statements in the New Testament, like the four horse riders, dimensions of the Holy City, the candlestick, the two olive trees and the scattering of the sheep.

Compare (1:7 to Rev. 6:1-8; 1:16 to Rev. 11:1-2; 4:1-3, 11-14 to Rev. 11:4-10; 13:7 to Mt. 26; 31).

McKenzie states that Messianic thought is the prevailing tone of this Holy Book of Zechariah.

- 4 - Zechariah as a priest desired eagerly to practice the priestly ministry which he and his fathers were deprived of for such a long time. His prophecy was further considered a true ritual one (Ch. 3, 5).

Divisions:

- 1 - The Nine Visions (Ch 1 – 6).
- 2 - Inquiry about Fasting (Ch 7 – 8).
- 3 - Israel & the Messianic Age (Ch 9 – 14).

A) The Nine Visions

Vision I: The Man Riding a Red Horse (Ch. 1):

- Zechariah started his Book by an invitation to repentance. It was written in a delicate style, for

he was speaking to men who were just freed from captivity (v. 1-6).

- God found the earth at rest, representing the lazy person. He sent His horses to prepare the coming of the red horse ridden by the Angel of the Lord (i.e., the prophets preceded the Lord Jesus Christ, preparing for His arrival). This red horse was hidden among the myrtle trees beside a river (i.e., behind the law), till the time was fulfilled to awaken mankind, satisfy and comfort them.

Vision II: The Four Horns (Ch. 1):

- God sent four carpenters to break down the four horns raised by the wicked nations that ruined the people of God. The devil projects his horns to ruin us, but our Lord offers His help to overcome the devil. The four horns represent the four kingdoms that treated God's people cruelly (Assyrian and Babylonian kingdom; Medes and Persian kingdom; Chaldeans, and the Roman kingdom.)
- Origen the Scholar states that these four horns refer to the love of worldly goods (4 poles of the universe), or the desires of earthly body. These bad powers are defeated by the Lord's salvation, declared through the four Holy Gospels, i.e. the four carpenters.

Vision III: Measuring the Holy City (Ch. 2):

The line used to measure Jerusalem, the holy city, (which represents the Church or the holy soul) was the Lords' Cross, through which our heart will be converted into the heavenly city of God. Its wall is set of fire inflamed by the Holy Spirit. Its numerous men and cattle symbolize the sanctification of our spiritual and bodily powers.

Vision IV: Joshua the High-Priest (Ch. 3):

Joshua represents our Lord Jesus, the High-Priest, whom Satan would resist. His garments represent our sins which He had carried to save us. He offered us instead a fair mitre (crown) of victory. Here He is called the Branch, the East, the Stone etc ... all are symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vision V: The Golden Candlestick (Ch. 5):



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In this vision the role of the Holy Spirit is shown clear, in enlightening the Church.

The golden (heavenly) candlestick with its head bowl filled with oil of love and seven lamps radiate the light of the Lord Jesus Christ through the seven Sacraments.

The mountain that became a plain represents preaching the Holy Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the nations accept and become as a mountain filling all the earth (Dan. 2:34).

The two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, who were leading the people in rebuilding the Temple.

Vision VI: The Flying Roll (Ch. 5):

Previous visions contain joyful revelations, but from this point a bitter judgment is declared. Evil is seen as a flying opened roll, for the judgment will be declared openly. The length and breadth of the roll are identical with that of the Sanctuary of God, because every sin we commit is against God's Sanctuary within us. In the Septuagint translation the roll is replaced by a sickle.

Vision VII: The Woman Sits in the Midst of the Ephah (basket):

The talent of lead was lifted up to discover the sin in front of all men. Wickedness appeared as a woman sitting in the midst of an ephah coming out...

The lead talent was blown into the mouth of the woman, because evil is mainly concentrated in the mouth. The two women coming forth in the vision represent two sins: stealing and false swearing, or despising God and man. The wind with its wings represents the evil spirit that works in the sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2). The wings resemble those of the stork and not of the dove, for the stork was considered as unclean bird (Lev 11:19), for it searches for its food among dirt and waste. The two women were going to the land of Shinar related to Babylon (Gen. 10:10), to build a house there. This means their desire was to settle in the midst of the place of old evil, Babylon, which revolted against God's Will.

Vision VIII: The Four Chariots (Ch. 6:1-8):

This vision resembles the first one, concerned with the horses prepared for the rider of the red horse who would offer salvation to all men through His precious blood. The horses here represent God's plan to punish evil doers outside Jerusalem and to support the faithful against the devil.

The four chariots came out between two mountains: Mariah and Olives, into the valley of Jehoshaphat, where all nations will be judged by the Lord (Joel 2:3). The two mountains are of bronze for nobody can escape from them. The mountains are of bronze and not of silver, for the bronze mountains were symbolic of the vain philosophers and heretics.

The red horse represents the spiritual struggle till blood shed, the black one reveals the death of devil and his angels, the white announces the new life prevailing after destroying evil, and the dappled horse indicates varieties of fruitful deeds.

Vision IX: The Crowning of Joshua (Ch. 6):

In chapter 3 of the Holy Book of Zechariah, Joshua was ordered to take off the filthy garments and wear the fine garments and fair mitre (3: 4, 5) as an announcement to our crowning with the cross. In this chapter, Joshua's name is not mentioned among those who returned from exile, but he was the first to be crowned, because the Lord Jesus Christ our High-Priest was not captured by sin, but He was crowned on our behalf.

Those who collected gold and silver to be used for making crowns set upon the head of Joshua are: Heldai (immortality), Tobijah (Jehovah is kind) and Jedaiah (Jehovah knows), for our glory in the Lord Jesus Christ is based on the eternal life (immortality) through the grace of God who is kind, bestowing upon us True knowledge.

There are many crowns; every crown we enjoy accounted as if the Lord Jesus Christ's.

More crowns are gained because the wars against Satan



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are numerous.

B. An Inquiry about Fasting (Ch. 7, 8)

In the year 518 B.C., the fourth year of the reign of Darius, the people were actively working to rebuild the Temple. Bethel sent two delegates:

Sherezzer and Regemmelech explaining from the priests of the House of God and from the prophets if they would continue fasting as they used to do during their exile asking God's pity and help for rebuilding the Temple.

In this inquiry we can observe the following points:

- 1 - They regarded fasting as abstaining from food only and not from evil doings. God considered their fasting without spirit, practiced not for His glory but for theirs (v. 5, 6).
(In exile they fasted: the tenth day of the fifth month in the memory of the burning of the House of God (Jer. 52:12, 13); the seventh month in the memory of the murder of Gedaliah the governor of Judea which led to the captivity of the remaining Jews (Jer. 41:1 - 3); the tenth month in the memory of the first siege of Jerusalem; the fourth month in the memory of the falling of Jerusalem (Jer. 39:2).
- 2 - He did not give an answer to their inquiry but declared that fasting must be accompanied with practicing repentance, saying "Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion, every man to his brother" (8:9).
- 3 - In chapter 8, God directed their inquiry to the positive side, declaring His divine love towards Jerusalem and His jealousy for Zion, for He longed to change their fasting into feasts and internal joy.

God declares His blessing to Jerusalem, saying, "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem" (8:4), that means all would be filled with (good joy) until they would become old, or it means that "wisdom" (old persons) rests

in the streets of our souls.

He says: "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls" (8:5), the boys refer to the fruits of the soul and girls refer to those of the consecrated body.

God not only blessed them, but as He said, "You shall be a blessing" (8:13), and an instrument for the salvation of many persons.

The Jewish man whose skirt is taken hold by ten men of all nations (v. 23) is the Lord Jesus Christ who is taken hold by the believers coming from all nations, who are consecrated in their bodies (5 senses) and souls (5 internal senses).

B) Israel & the Messianic Age

The last six chapters (9 - 14) deal with the prophecies touching Israel and the Gentiles, at the period from the Medes and Persian invasion to the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Summarized as follows :

Chapter 9: Macedonian Empire (Alexander the Great and Macabean family). All nations were in terror because of Alexander's victories, but he made no harm to the Jews, for he saw in a dream their high-priest in front of him. After his speech concerning Alexander's victory, Zechariah the prophet told us about the true spiritual king, the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 9-12) who offered salvation on His entrance to Jerusalem riding on an ass to offer Him as a sacrifice. Lastly he spoke about the victory of the Macabean Family against the Greek (v. 13-17).

Chapter 10: Waiting for the Messianic Kingdom. By Divine providence the Jews won Alexander's favor and gave power to the Macabean Family to win a victory against the Greek, yet they were in need of enjoying victory by our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who grants us His Holy Spirit (the late rain which changes the dry heart unto God's paradise).

They also enjoy God's own care (v. 2, 3) that provides victory, security and joy by declaring God's kingdom within their souls.



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Chapter 11: Their Refusal to the Good Shepherd during the Roman Reign. So many gifts the Jews had continuously received from God through the ages yet they refused the Messiah during the Roman reign. So the prophet lamented them (v. 1-3) regretting their own destruction (v. 36), as they deprived themselves of God's grace (v. 7-11), and for their betrayal to the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 12-14) and accepting the Anti-Christ (v. 15-17).

Chapter 12: New Jerusalem and the Evil. As the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, in turn they themselves were rejected by Him. Chapters 12-14 of the Holy Book of Zechariah tell us about the unbelievers who give no attention to God's gifts.

In this chapter, Zachariah concentrates on the prophecy of the New Jerusalem, i.e., the faithful soul that becomes the New House of Judah. By accepting the Savior, the soul will be revolted by the surrounding nations (sins) (v. 1-3), but the Lord offers her His salvation (v. 4 - 9) and the spirit of grace and supplications (v. 10 -14).

Chapter 13: The Wounded Shepherd. As God offers the spirit of grace and supplications He sanctifies the earth (v. 1-6); i.e., sanctifies our bodies with all its sensations and powers. The Lord Himself declares His wounds which He suffers on our behalf (v. 7-9), (the rejected two - third are the heathens and Jews and the one third is those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ).

Chapter 14: The Cross and Baptism in New Jerusalem. Zechariah starts this chapter by a call to repentance, hoping in the appearance of Christ, the Messiah, or the rider of the red horse. Then he tells us about his visions and prophecies to declare the salvation. Now he concludes that the New Jerusalem, i.e., the Church, enjoys salvation through the water of baptism by the power of the cross.

In (v. 1, 2) Zechariah discusses Jerusalem's exile and accompany us to the Mount of Olives where the Lord carries our sufferings (v. 3 -5), to witness the crucifixion day (v. 6- 7), as the well-known day (v. 7). He says "... not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

It is not a day because of darkness that occurred, and it is not a night because it happened at noon. Lastly he spoke about the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Church as living water (v. 8 - 11), the Spirit who destroys our old man and builds instead the new man in baptism (v. 12-21). ✚

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are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). The traditional Christian hope of the resurrection tells man that he is no orphan after all, but the personal image of the Creator God of the universe; nor is his life doomed in death, for through the resurrection he may live in the presence of God forever. "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

(Isaiah 40:31) It is this hope of a new beginning in the Lord, and living the life of Resurrection, that becomes the source of our strength. By living in the Lord Jesus Christ, may we become released from the desires of this world, respond to the call which St Peter made to "become a witness with us of His resurrection" (Acts 1:22) and allow our lives to reflect the image of our Lord and Savior, as the words of the Prophet Isaiah did many centuries before His Coming, Death and Resurrection. ✚



The Holy Book of Isaiah. Decorations consist of interlaced circles with a small cross in the center, and the letters a (alpha) and w (omega) written at top and bottom. Dated 1090 A.M. (1373 A.D.)