

## STUDIES IN ZECHARIAH

### I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### A. **The Babylonian Exile and Destruction of the Temple**

##### 1. *General Information*

##### 2. *The Importance of The House*

- a. God's Special Presence                      Psalm 132:13-14
  
- b. The Place of God's Name                      1 Kings 8
  
- c. To Help Us to Understand God and His Sanctuary
  
- d. Its Presence Helps to Sanctify Israel.    Ezekiel 37:28
  
- e. Evidence of a Covenant Relationship    Ezekiel 37:26
  
- f. Eschatological Importance                      Isaiah 2
  
- g. Being there was like being in a wonderful dream. Ps. 126:1
  
- h. It is wrong to despise its presence.      Psalm 129:5

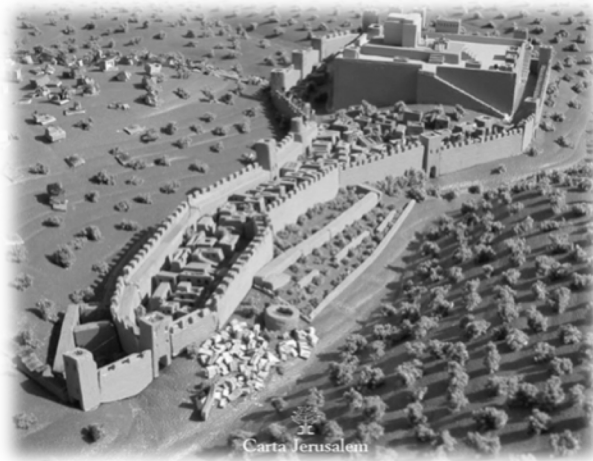
#### B. **The Rise of the Persians**

1. About 550 BCE, the Persians, led by Cyrus the Great, overthrew the Medes and established the Persian Empire.
  
2. Cyrus went on to conquer Babylonia, Syria, and all Asia Minor. — Conquered Babylon by diverting the Euphrates River and marching into the city without a battle

3. Cyrus's son Cambyses added Egypt in 525 BCE.
4. The Persians built excellent roads throughout their vast empire.
5. They divided the empire into provinces, each governed by a Persian official, a Satrapi.
6. Unlike the Assyrians, the Persians encouraged the conquered peoples to keep their own religions and traditions.

### **C. The Returnees to Israel**

1. The First Wave of Returnees 538–537 BCE  
— About 50,000 (Ezra 2)
2. The Second Wave of Returnees  
— Ezra in 458 BCE (Ezra 7-8)
3. The Increasing Importance of the Babylonian Jewish Community
4. Jerusalem in the time of Ezra / Nehemiah



## **D. A Summary of the Important Historical Data**

1. 539 BCE
2. The Cyrus Cylinder  
(2 Chronicles 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3, 5).
3. 538–537 BCE
4. Zerubbabel and Joshua
5. 536 BCE (Ezra 3:8-13).
6. Obstacles to the construction (Ezra 4:1-5, 24).
7. 529 BCE
8. Cambyses II — 530–522 BCE
9. Darius 522 BCE (Ezra 6:6-12; Haggai 1:1-2).
10. 520 BCE
11. 516/515 BCE

## **II. PERSONAL BACKGROUND — ZECHARIAH**

### **A. Zechariah — son of Berehiah and grandson of Iddo.**

1. The three names mean:
  - “The Lord remembers” (Zechariah)
  - “The Lord blesses” (Berehiah)
  - “Timely (?)”
2. Charles Feinberg: combining the three names, believes they signify that “the Lord remembers,” and “the Lord will bless” at “the set time,” which, in a sense, is the theme of the book.
3. Iddo was among the priests who returned to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Nehemiah 12:4, 16).

- B. Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was not only a prophet but also a priest.
- C. He was born in Babylonia and was among those who returned to Judah in 539–537 BCE.
- E. Though a contemporary of Haggai, Zechariah continued his ministry long after him. Considering his young age in the early period of his ministry (Zechariah 2:4, “young man”), it is possible that Zechariah continued into the reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE).

### III. THE PURPOSE OF ZECHARIAH’S BOOK

— The occasion is the same as that of the Book of Haggai.

- A. Former exiles had arrived in Jerusalem and the nearby towns in 538–537 BCE, with high hopes of resettling the land and rebuilding God’s House (Ezra 2). The people then laid the foundation of the House in the second month of the second year (536 BCE) of their return (Ezra 3:8-13).
- B. But their fervour and activity are soon met with opposition in various forms (Ezra 4:1-5; Haggai 1:6-11). So, the reconstruction of God’s House was stopped and did not begin again till 520 BCE (Ezra 4:24).
- C. The chief purpose of Zechariah and Haggai was to rebuke the people and motivate and encourage them to complete the rebuilding of the temple (Zechariah 4:9-10, Haggai 1-2).
- D. Zechariah was interested in spiritual renewal as well. In 1:3 The Lord asked Israel to return to him; then he would return to them, and his word would continue to be fulfilled.

#### IV. UNDERSTANDING ZECHARIAH

##### A. His Message

1. *The Sacred Past:*
2. *The Sacred Present:*
3. *The Sacred Future:*

##### B. His Organization

1. *Narration*
2. *Visions*
3. *Prophetic Oracles/Burdens*

##### C. A Note on Dating

1. Beginning of Zechariah's preaching (**Zech. 1:1-6**)  
October/November 520
2. Zechariah's 8 night visions (**Zech. 1:7-6:8**)  
15 February 519
3. Zechariah's final prophecy (**Zech. 9-14**)  
After 480(?)<sup>3</sup>

##### C. His Visions

- A Series of 8 Night Visions (1:7-6:8)
- Each vision "contributes to the total picture of the role of Israel in the new era about to dawn." As an encouragement to the people to persevere in the work of rebuilding the temple, God disclosed to them through his prophet his gracious purposes.

1. The Horsemen among the Hadassim (1:7-17)
2. The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen (1:18-21)
3. The Man with the Measuring Cord (2:1-13)
4. The Restoration of the Priesthood (3:1-10)
5. The Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)
6. The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)
7. The Woman in a Basket (5:5-11)
8. The Four Chariots (6:1-8)

#### **D. His Burdens**

1. ***Burden #1*** | 9:1–11:17
  - a. In the midst of judgment (9:1-7),  
Israel finds deliverance (9:8).
  - b. In the midst of blessing (9:9-10:12),  
Israel experiences sorrow (11:1-17).
  - c. When the Messianic King comes, He is rejected!
2. ***Burden #2*** | 12:1–14:21
  - a. Jerusalem is attacked, yet miraculously survives.
  - b. Jerusalem becomes the focus of the whole earth.
  - c. When the Messianic King comes, He is worshipped!

#### **E. Summary**

There is progression as the book moves from the establishment of the postexilic community, with its rebuilt temple and re-commissioned leaders and its understanding of the role of God's people among the nations (chapters 1-8) to the more eschatological perspective of chapters 9-14.

V. THE ORGANIZATION OF ZECHARIAH

I. Call for Faithfulness with Retrospection | Zechariah 1:1-6

II. The Prophetic Visions | Zechariah 1:7-6:15

III. From Jerusalem to the Nations | Zechariah 6:16-8:23

IV. Messiah's Return | Zechariah 9-14