

The Story of God: The Bible as Narrative

Act 4 – Repairing a Kingdom

Judah’s Exile – Haggai & Zechariah

- * Act 1 – Scenes 1-5 = Genesis 1-11
- * Acts 2 – Scenes 1-11 = Genesis 12-I Kings 10
- * Act 3 – Divided Kingdom
- * Act 4 – Repairing a Kingdom

Historical Review:

Persians take over Babylonians

Conquer Nineveh in 612BC

Prophesied by Isaiah that a guy named Cyrus would be emperor and would send the Jews home to rebuild

Cyrus issues a decree in 539BC for the Jews to return (II Chron. 36:23, Ezra 1:2-4)

Cyrus returns the temple treasures

Several waves of folks return, but only 50,000 (remember, over a million stay put)

Jeremiah had actually prophesied that they should make themselves comfortable as they would stay for a while

He told them to build homes, plant gardens, and settle in

They took this advice to heart and prospered well in Babylon

Almost 50 years had passed since the destruction of the Temple in 586BC

Most of the generation that were taken into exiles had died leaving only those that had been born there

Eventually, Cyrus died in battle in 530BC

He was succeeded by Cambyses ((530-522) (actually assassinated his own brother Bardiya to gain control)

Cambyses eventually takes his own life

Darius takes over

When the 50,000 arrived back home, they were met with some really tough obstacles

1. The Land was fallow and their homes were in bad shape
2. The poor farmers left behind had crossed the tribal land boundaries set-up in the Torah and had moved in (Ez. 11:3, 15)
3. The Temple rebuild (and walls) was met with harsh opposition from neighboring folks and Persian officials (Ezra 4:1-5, 5:3-5)
After the altar was set-up and the initial part of the foundation, work was halted
4. What little was rebuilt was compared with the grandeur of the old days and became a huge discouragement ((Ezra 3:12-13, Hag. 2:3, Zech 4:10)

With all this going on, what would you guess the returnees did instead of working on the Temple?

Poured all their energies into working out Land disputes and rebuilding their homes

Seems rather logical and practical doesn't it?

- Hag. 1:1-11

This went on for some time until around 520BC

God delivered two Key people to encourage His people to trust Him and press on - Haggai & Zechariah

- Ezra 5:1

Together, their message is quite simple – to encourage the people to trust God, put Him first, and rebuild the Temple

The people responded faithfully to their message and complete the Temple 4 years later in 516BC when the Temple was again rededicated

God also used Darius – can't sleep, searches the archives, finds Cyrus' decree - reissues

Haggai:

Name is derived from the Hebrew word meaning Feast or Festival

According to Jerome he was also a Priest

Quick question – why is it such a big deal to God to rebuild the Temple?

1. Sign of God's faithfulness to His promises
2. Sign of His Presence
3. Sign of His determination to bless them
4. Deeply tied to His Glory – His reputation to the world

The book is made up of 4 Oracles

Oracle # 1: Haggai 1:1-11

Date = August 29, 520BC

Probably delivered at a public gathering where they were observing the Festival of the New Moon (Num. 28:11, 10:10)

In addition to all the obstacles already mentioned, the people were also faced with:

1. failed crops
2. inflation
3. drought

Their Labor seemed to be in vein

What is Haggai's reason for their lack of success?

They have neglected the Temple

In light of their reasons, like eating, doesn't it seem reasonable what they decided?

Do you remember the Blessing and the Curses from Deut?

- Deut. 28:38-40, 23-24, 20

These are all curses for covenant disobedience

Unlike previous groups, these people actually get it

23 short days later, work started up again – September 21, 520BC

- Haggai 1:14-15

Oracle # 2: Haggai 2:1-9

Date = October 17, 520BC

- Haggai 2:1-6

Less than a month after the work on the Temple started

The month the Feast of Tabernacles takes place = 15th and last for 7 days

The 21st day then would have been the final day of the Festival

So again, this message gets delivered at a public assembly

The comparison with Solomon's temple is amazing – that dedication also took place on the Feast of Tabernacles (II Chron. 7:8-10, I Kings 8:2)

The Prophet is again trying to encourage them, especially those over 70 who would have remembered the Temple before

Oracle # 3 (2:10-19) and 4 (2:20-23) are delivered on the same date = December 18, 520BC

This is now 3 months after the work on the Temple had begun

Oracle # 3 – Message = just working on the Temple doesn't make the Temple Holy

If the people are unclean, they will make the Temple unclean

The only hope the Nation has is God's Grace and willing to cleanse

December is the middle of the growing season for many crops

Time spent away from their crops will not go unnoticed

Oracle # 4

Addressed to Zerubbabel (Governor of Judah and in the line of David)

In Jeremiah, God had described King Jehoiachin as a signet ring on His hand

A ring that would be pulled off and tossed away (Jer. 22:24-25)

Here God uses the same image, but instead as a valued ring on the hand of God leaving His Gracious imprint

Again, Prophecy is always in layers

Ultimately, Zerubbabel would not be this Davidic King, but rather would point forward to an eschatological day when God would shake the heavens and the earth

- Haggai 2:6-7, 21

(Again, notice EGYPT – STEEPED IN THE STORY and the God of History)

An Intro to the OT – Page 482-483

Zechariah:

This is the longest of all the Minor Prophets

The book breaks down really simply into 2 sections – 1-8 & 9-14

Zechariah 9-14 is the most frequently cited portion of the OT in the Passion Narratives in the Gospels

And apart from Ezekiel this book has probably influenced Revelation more than any other

Zechariah is probably a Priest that returned from the Captivity

Again, the backdrop is set against the first returnees from Exile

The series of Visions he receives are dated again to the 2nd year of Darius around 520/519BC

Essentially the first 8 chapters are addressing similar issues facing the restoration community like Haggai did

Point = to affirm that God indeed has been involved to a) cleanse and b) deliver His people

So let me ask you a very basic but difficult question

Why does the half built Temple matter so much?

This is a seriously important question to answer...as the Temple stands as a symbol of the times

Zechariah is now stuck between the past and the future

A RETURNED PEOPLE but one that is not yet FULLY REALIZING THEIR SALVATION

THE HALF BUILT TEMPLE IS THE SYMBOL OF THIS STATE

Again, the Temple is unfinished, and like Haggai Zechariah is called to encourage and speak into this

Challenge = to become the true covenant community God has intended

- Zech. 1:2-6

The restoration/return is not the end of the Story as we give testimony to it

And Zechariah has one eye on the current restored community, and the other on the future eschatological reign

Zerubbabel is a current partial Davidic answer to the Branch, but not completely

It is the Messiah that will one day ride in on a colt, and rule from “seas to sea and from the River to the end of the Earth”

We spoke early on about context. Do you remember what the 4 main contextual approaches are?

Land, Story, Culture, Literary Approach

In Zechariah 1-8, there are a series of visions - 8 in all

Vision 1 & 8 = Both portray 4 multicolored groups of horses = concern the fate of the Gentile Nations

Visions 2 & 3 and 6 & 7 also are paired but not quite as obvious

Both sets concern obstacles facing the restoration community

Visions 2 & 3 = Opposition from the Gentile Nations

Vision 6 & 7 = sin within the covenant community

Both pairs deal with God's judgment and exile

The Central pair – 4 & 5 – set within the Temple – concerned with the Leaders

Vision 4 & 5 both mention the 7 eyes of God

If you take these vision together, they form a concentric pattern moving:

Vision 1 = from the Gentile world at large to

Vision 2 = Concern with the City

Vision 3 = Concern with the City

Vision 4 = Concern over the Temple

Vision 5 = Concern over the Temple

Vision 6 = Concern with the City

Vision 7 = Concern with the City

Vision 8 = from the Gentile world at large to

Vision 1 = 1:7-17

Address the problem of unrealized prophecy

The Jews had experienced the Day of The Lord, but the Gentiles, who were promised to get their day, were at peace

- Zech. 1:11

The angel of God, acting as captain of God's army, intercedes with God for vindication of His people

- Zech. 1:17

Vision 2 = 1:18-21

4 horns (the ones that scattered Israel) and 4 craftsmen (there to conquer the 4 horns)

Many associate the 4 horns with the 4 beasts in Daniel – not sure

Point = whatever opposition has been directed towards God's people will be thwarted

Vision 3 = 2:1-13

A city without walls was completely defenseless

The first thing conquerors would do would be to either build a rampart to breach the wall or get over it
Or simply pull them down

- Zech. 2:1-5

Here God depicts Himself as a wall of fire

Fire was often the way of depicting God's Shekinah Glory

Again, God's Presence is not confined to the Temple

The whole city is God's dwelling place

Vision 4 = 3:1-10

Zechariah sees a judicial scene

The angel of God is seated as Judge

And the Prosecutor ("Satan" or the "Accuser") is there to bring charges against the High Priest

The Priest is standing there in filthy garments

More than likely the setting is the Day of Atonement (standing in God's Presence)

- Zech. 3:1-10

When God cleans his garments, He removes any chance of him being accused

(Romans 8:31-33)

The High Priest represents the Nation

Vision 5 = 4:1-14

Zechariah sees a Lampstand with a single basin, 7 lamps with 7 wicks = 49 flames

Oil comes from Olive Trees and clusters of fruit in the background

Pipes go directly from the trees to the lamp

The Priests used to tend the Lampstands twice a day, morning and evening

They would trim the wicks as well and refill the oil

This Lampstand needed no human intervention

[Any idea what the point is?](#)

Remember what the purpose of the Book is

Point = The Temple was God's work and HE would do it

- Zech. 4:6

Visions 6 & 7 = 5:1-11

2 Acts of a single play

The flying scroll = appears to summarize the 10 commandments

The first 4 commandments were offenses against God = represented by swearing falsely in God's name

Last 6 were offenses against others = represented by stealing

[What was the point of the Exile?](#)

Purify Israel by purging it

But the Law (the scroll) identifies sin in the restoration community

Zechariah then sees a basket containing a figure representing sin

This sin gets taken to Babylon (Shinar) back to the place of judgment

In Visions 2 & 3 – the obstacles to obtaining their goal are from without

Here, they are from within the community

Vision 8 = 6:1-8

Again reuses the image of horses like # 1

Point = God would avenge Himself by Punishing the Nations

The rest of the first half of the Book through 8 are reports of Historical events

Some Exiles visit Jerusalem bringing gifts for the Temple and the people

Actually take the gold and make a crown for the High Priest – normally just for the King

Sees this shift here moving forward where the office of authority is always twofold now

Leads perfectly up to Jesus

During the Exile, the people had observed 4 fasts in remembrance of the destruction of Jerusalem
Now that Exile is over they cannot figure out if they should continue
Zechariah simply uses their question to give a series of sermons about legalism, and being hypocritical

- Zech. 8:20-23

The return should be seen as a new exodus

But this is not the final one

A fuller redemption was still ahead...that is largely what 9-14 are about

The Return and Partial Restoration of the Community of Israel fulfilled many of God's promises thru the prophets

That is in large part what chapters 1-8 are about – finish the Temple and MOVE IN

Recognize God's hand thru all of it and purpose

The return was A NEW EXODUS – they were supposed to see it that way, and we should

That was the purpose of 1-8

a) to encourage the returned exiles to go on believing that God was at work in the community

b) that God really was fulfilling the promises He made by the Prophets

The Prophecies should also serve as warning for not walking with God

But as we keep saying, Prophecy is in layers

A yet FULLER REMPTION lays ahead – this is what chapters 9-14 are about

* King vs. High Priest -> 1 equal footing now -> Zerubbabel -> partial fulfillment

The Restoration from Exile and Captivity was but a token compared to the final redemption

2 Section in 9-14

Chapters 9-11 = A Coming King and Salvation for Israel & Judah

Chapters 12-14 = Battle for Jerusalem & Pilgrimage of the Nations

Chapters 9-11 = A Coming King and Salvation for Israel & Judah

Starts out with Oracles Against Nations as usual for the end of Prophetic books

Then we have this picture of a victorious King

But He is strangely humble – shades of II Isaiah and the Suffering Servant

- Zech. 9:8-10

The lens turns back again to oracles against their enemies

But this time it is Greece

Greece is already growing in power and would eventually, as predicted by Daniel, conquer Persia

They were the Power starting in the late 400s – more on this during the 2 weeks of the Intertestamental period

In chapter 10 the theme continues with God collecting His people who are exiled

- Zech. 10:8-12

* Shades of The Exodus all over again

Then in chapter 11 there is this strange play again where God asks Zechariah to act out

God is totally done with the lousy Shepherd Leaders of His people

Sounds like there is a time in the future where the people will be shepherded by 3 leaders

They all fall in one month

Taking this literally, some think the three shepherds mean the three Maccabees, Judas, Jonathan, and Simon; others, the three wicked high priests, Jason, Alcimus, and Menelaus; others, the three last princes of the Asmonean race, Alexander, Hyrcanus, and Antigonus.

Perhaps three orders may be intended:

1. The priesthood.
2. The dictatorship, including the Scribes, Pharisees, etc.
3. The magistracy, the great Sanhedrin, and the smaller councils.

These were all annihilated by the Roman conquest.

The people are called the flock – they are simply being fattened up for slaughter

God has Zechariah make 2 staves and names them FAVOR and UNION to show how He has treated them

He then breaks them apart breaking His covenant and the Union of Israel and Judah

He then asks for wages for His part as Shepherd and they offer 30 shekels = equivalent of a slave

Takes the money and throws it into the Treasury

IT IS AN ORACLE OF JUDGEMENT

Chapters 12-14 = Battle for Jerusalem & Pilgrimage of the Nations

Then shifts back to the ultimate victory of Israel

- Zech 12:10

John later would apply this to Jesus

But again in layers, Zechariah may be referring to himself or someone in his life

But ultimately, we know who will completely fulfill this

Many believe this to be at the end, during the Millennium, during the final “week” of the 70 weeks which stopped at “week” 69 when Jesus was cut-off

Judah is finally completely repentant

The final chapter is just freak’n crazy wild

A final war of all wars, where Judah and Jerusalem are being pummeled

But they have the final victory

A lot like the final war Ezekiel talks about in chapters 38-39 with Gog and Magog

Ultimately again like Ezekiel, God wins on behalf of His people

God splits the Mount of Olives in 2 like the Red Sea and His people escape

The river like Ezekiel flows out of Jerusalem and make the Dead Sea come alive

It all culminates with the celebration (ONCE AGAIN) of the Feast of Tabernacles

- Zech 14:20-21

New Testament Parallels

Zech 9:9-10	Matt. 21:4-5, John 12:15
Zech 11:12-13	Matt. 26:15, 27:9
Zech 12:3	Matt 21:44
Zech 12:10	John 19:37
Zech 13:7	Matt 26:31, Mark 14:27