



ZECHARIAH

RETURN TO ME
& I WILL RETURN TO YOU

BIBLE STUDIES FOR ASHFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The book of Zechariah takes us into the time when the remnant of God's people had returned to Jerusalem, as promised, from exile. In it, God spoke to people who had received some of the promises as told by earlier prophets, but who had not yet experienced all that they hoped for. After 70 years of exile, they were back in God's land, but they were struggling with conditions that were nowhere near as glorious as they expected. They needed reassurance that God could be trusted to keep his promises. Through the prophet Haggai (who wrote at the same time as Zechariah), God said this about the time after the return from exile:

"... You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." (Haggai 1:6)

What a sad picture of life in God's promised land!

We too live in a 'now but not yet' time, in the gap between Jesus' first coming and his return. The return from exile happened in 539 BC, more than 2500 years ago, but what God said to his people through the prophet Zechariah is fresh for us today. We are still waiting for Jesus to return in glory, and we need encouragement to continue living in faithful obedience to God.

There is much in Zechariah's visions and messages that is difficult to understand. But as we work through these studies we will see connections with earlier prophets, like Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, as well as many connections with the life and death of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, and this will help us understand the message of the book.

God will return, and he will be worshipped by his people and the nations. And this is our encouragement to persevere.

These studies are based on a series written for Mitchelton Presbyterian Church, Queensland.

ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

RETURN TO ME, AND I WILL RETURN TO YOU

In what sorts of circumstances do you find yourself making choices to listen to God and to trust him? When are you most likely to listen to him and to trust him?

Read Zechariah 1:1-6

1. What are God's first words to his people in this book (1:3)?
2. What does God promise (1:3, and compare with Deuteronomy 30:1-4)?
3. How does God describe the ancestors' relationship with him, and their fate?
4. How would Israel's history before the exile serve as a warning, and encouragement, for the people who returned to the land?

What does this say about our own need to turn back to God (see also Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10)?

Before we go further into Zechariah, it will help us to have a bird's-eye picture of the whole book. There are good resources available for this! Spend some time exploring these resources by yourself, or in your home group.

- The Bible Project people provide a general overview of the book here: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-zechariah/>
- Their video illustrating the whole book can be watched here: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/zechariah/>
- There's also a poster that you can download, print out and keep in your Bible while you read (see page 5) – <https://bibleproject.com/view-resource/246/>
- For timelines that show Israel's history and where Zechariah fits, see these resources from Mark Barry's VisualUnit website:
<https://visualunit.me/2020/05/31/gods-big-story/>
<https://visualunit.me/2010/03/18/bible-timeline/>

Write down the questions you want to see answered as we work through the rest of the studies, and pray the Holy Spirit will help us as we read together.

ZECHARIAH 1:7-21: THE GREAT REVERSAL

1. What evidence do you see of God's work in the world today?
2. What evidence do you see of his work in your own life?

Read Zechariah 1:7-17

3. What does Zechariah's first vision (the horses and the man among the myrtle trees) tell us about the state of the world? What sort of peace is described (compare 1:11 with 1:12)?
4. What does this vision tell us about God (1:14-15)?



5. What do we learn about the connection between God's saving work and his work of judgment (1:15)?
6. What does God promise to do for his people (see 1:16-17)?

Read Zechariah 1:18-21

7. What does Zechariah's second vision tell us about how God will fulfil this promise?
8. God will rebuild his house, and through "the craftsmen" he will throw down the nations who scattered his people. How do we see this worked out in the Gospels? See Mark 6:3; John 1:14; John 2:18-21



9. What comfort does Zechariah 1 give us while we wait for Jesus' return?

10. Look back at your answers to the first questions in this study. Has Zechariah 1 changed your answers, and how?

Pray

ZECHARIAH 2: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

1. How big is the kingdom of God?

Read Zechariah 2

2. What is the young man in the Zechariah's third vision trying to do (2:2)?
3. What will the young man learn (2:4-5)?
4. What have Zechariah's first three visions shown us about God's attitude towards his people ("the apple of his eye") and about his attitude toward the nations? See especially 1:14-15; 1:21; 2:7-9.



Look back at Zechariah 1:16-17 and look ahead to Revelation 21:1-11, 22-27.

5. After returning from exile, God's people have been building a physical temple, but what is the bigger "building project" that we are waiting for God to complete?

Read 1 Kings 8:10-11 and Ezekiel 10:18-19.

6. How does Zechariah 2 connect with the events record in 1 Kings and the Ezekiel's vision of what was lost?
7. How does Jesus restore what was lost (see John 1:14)?
8. Why is it important for Christians to hold onto the hope that they will one day see God's glory?

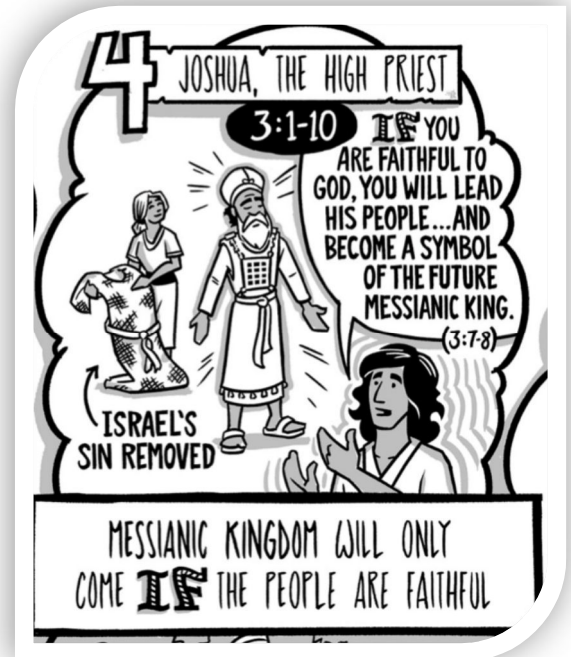
Pray.

ZECHARIAH 3: RIGHT OF ACCESS

1. What is the difference between being accused and being condemned?

Read Zechariah 3:1-10

2. In Zechariah's fourth vision what is the high priest's problem? (See Leviticus 16, especially vv 3-5 to refresh our memory about what the high priest had to do before representing the people before God.)



3. The Lord sees Joshua's uncleanness, but who does he rebuke (3:1-2)
4. What does the Lord do for Joshua (3:3-5)? What are the similarities with Leviticus 16:3-5, and what is the difference?
5. What does the Lord then expect of Joshua (3:6-7)?
6. What does this vision show us about how, and why, God makes us clean from our sins?
7. Joshua is told that he is "symbolic of things to come" (3:8) and also that another servant of the Lord will come, who will be known as the "Branch". This is a messianic title for a righteous king raised up to save his people (see also Isaiah 4:2-4; 11:1-3; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16). Who is this righteous king (Matt 1:21)?

Look back to Leviticus 16, and forward to Matthew 27 (or parallels in the other Gospels) and Romans 8:1-2 and Hebrews 7:27.

8. Zechariah's vision includes a promise from God that he will "remove the sin of this land in a single day" (3:9). What is the significant difference between the Day of Atonement and Jesus' crucifixion?
9. What will be changed for Israel on that day? (Compare Haggai 1:6 with Zechariah 3:10)

10. What has changed for us because of God's mercy to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus? And what is our future (see Revelation 7:9-12)?

Pray through Romans 8:1-2:

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death."

ZECHARIAH 4-6: GOD WILL DO IT

Now we turn to Zechariah's fifth vision. **Read Zechariah 4.**

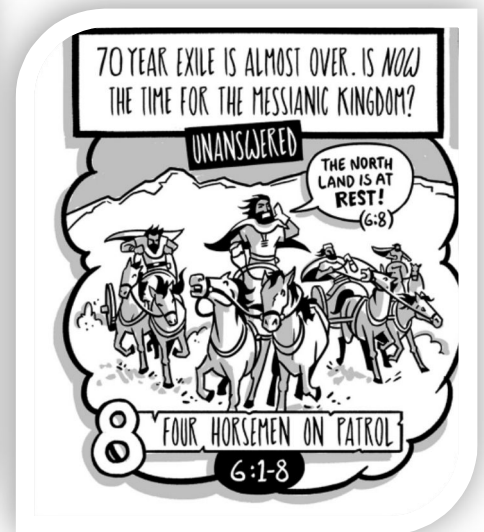
1. Who was Zerubbabel (See Ezra 2:2, 3:2; Nehemiah 7:7; Haggai 1:12ff to identify him, and Matt 1:12,13 and Luke 3:27 to see his importance for future events).
2. Zechariah doesn't understand his of vision of the gold lampstand, the bowl, the lights and the olive trees. How does the angel answer his question "what are these?" (4:6ff) Why would it be important for an important man to hear this answer?
3. How does Psalm 127 expand on the point made in the vision: "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain ..."
4. What is the Lord building? (See 1 Peter 2:4-10) What is our part in this?
5. What do you think is meant by "the day of small things" (see Haggai 2:3), and why would this be part of Zechariah's vision about Zerubbabel (4:10)? What might it say to us about ministry?
6. Humans achieve small things and ministry is difficult. We are not to be proud of our own achievements, but welcome small steps and small successes as part of God's work in the world.

Read Zechariah 5 and 6.

The first five visions provide a message of renewed hope and blessing for Israel, and for us. In Chapters 5 and 6 we find the final three visions, and a different message.



7. Briefly describe the three visions:



Zechariah 5:1-4

Zechariah 5:5-11

Zechariah 6:1-8

8. What is the overall message of these three visions?
9. What does God's Spirit find in the north? What has happened in the chapters we've read so far that would give God's Spirit a reason to rest?
10. How does knowing that God's work is effectively completed make a difference to how we live while we wait for Jesus' return? (See Hebrews 10:11-14 and 10:19-25)
11. At the end of Zechariah 6 there is a message for Zechariah, with instructions that he must place a king's crown on the head of the High Priest. Why would this be an unusual thing to do, and difficult for the nation of Israel to hear? (See Zechariah 4:14; 1 Samuel 13:8-15; 2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Why is it significant?
12. Read again Hebrews 10:11-14. How does Jesus fulfill God's plan to put a king's crown on a High Priest? What response does this lead us to?

Pray.

ZECHARIAH 7-8: GOD WITH US

1. What motivates your ministry and acts of service?

Read Zechariah 7

2. How much time has passed since the Lord first spoke to Zechariah (compare 1:1 with 7:1)?
3. What question do the people of Bethel have for the Lord (7:3)?
4. Why might they ask this?
5. What is the point of the Lord's answer (7:4-7)? See also 1:4-5.
6. The people want to offer their 'religious acts' to God. What does he really desire from them (7:8-10)? See also Micah 6:6-8.

Read Zechariah 8

7. In this chapter, there are 10 messages from God, telling of his plan for his people. Complete the table.

Verses	Message	God's plan for his people
8:1-2		
8:3		
8:4-5		
8:6		
8:7-8		
8:9-11		
8:12-13		
8:14-17		
8:18-19		
8:20-23		

8. What must God's people do (8:9,13,15-17)?
9. How are these promises ultimately fulfilled? See, for example, Matt 28:16-20; Acts 13:46-49; Rev 7:9.
10. God warns against practising false religion - religious acts with ungodly motives. Look again at your answer to the first question in this study – where do you need to seek the Holy Spirit's help to deal with ungodly motives?
11. Where might our church need the Spirit's help to deal with false religion?
12. What is the 'antidote' to false religion?

Pray through Micah 6:6-8:

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

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ZECHARIAH 9–11: THE SHEPHERD AND THAT DAY

1. What are the characteristics of a good leader? What about a poor leader?

In these chapters of Zechariah's book there's a change in the genre, or style, of the writing. Now we encounter "oracles" – these are announcements that don't follow a strict chronological pattern, but instead repeat the message over and over again, each time from a different angle.

The central issue is leadership – the oracles speak about the way Israel's leaders have oppressed God's people, and also about the perfect leadership that God will ultimately give to them.

Read Zechariah 9:1-17

2. What do we learn about God in these verses?

9:1-2	
9:3-4	
9:5-7	
9:8	
9:13-15	

3. How is Israel's King described (9:9-10)? How does this contrast with the images in the other verses in the chapter, and how does it explain them?
4. When this King comes to his people, what will the Lord do for them "on that day" (9:14-17)

Read Matthew 21:1-11 (or Mark 11:1-11 or Luke 19:28-40)

5. What are the similarities between the King in Zechariah 9, and Jesus in the Gospel accounts of his entry into Jerusalem? What do they tell us about the way God's promises in Zechariah will be fulfilled?
6. What encouragement does this give to the church today?

Read Zechariah 10:1 – 11:3

7. What do we learn about the leaders of Israel and the impact of their leadership on the people (10:1-2)?
8. What does God think about this, and what will he do to the leaders (10:3-5; 11:1-3)?
9. What will the Lord do for his people (10:6-12)?

Read Zechariah 11:4-17

In these verses God has more to say about his people (“the flock marked for slaughter”) and their leaders (the shepherds “who sell them” to their enemies). There are two scenes played out. In the first (11:4-14), Zechariah plays the part of the over-shepherd, who must deal with the behaviour of the bad under-shepherds, and also care for the flock who are suffering because of bad leadership AND their prior rejection of God. In the second (11:15-17), the worthless under-shepherds are condemned.

Compare Zechariah 11:4-6 with Jeremiah 12:1-4

10. God is speaking about Israel’s past behaviour. Why were his people – the flock – “marked for slaughter”?
11. Still looking at the past, who were the “three shepherds” removed from leadership over God’s people? It helps here to compare Zechariah 11:8 with Jeremiah 2:26, 4:9 and 8:1.

The removal of these shepherds from office, just prior to the exile of God’s people, marked the end of royal rule, the end of the prophetic office and the end of the priesthood (see Michael Stead, *Zechariah: The Lord Returns.*) God’s people must now learn to follow a new shepherd.

Read John 9:35-10:21

12. How does Jesus describe himself? And what proof has he given that he is speaking truthfully about himself?
13. Look again at your answer to the first question in this study. After thinking about what God has to say to sheep and shepherds, what warnings are there in these chapters for us? What challenges? What encouragements and hope?

Pray.

ZECHARIAH 12–14: KING OVER ALL THE EARTH

In the last study we learned some of what God will do for his people “on that day” when the King will come. In these chapters we see more of God’s glorious plan, and we find hope for the future.

1. What things are you hoping for right now?

Read Zechariah 12:1-9

2. “On that day”, what will God do for his people? And what will he do to their enemies?

Read Zechariah 12:10-13:9

3. Who will be pierced “on that day” (12:10)? Who did the piercing, and who will mourn (12:10,11)?
4. Compare these verses with Isaiah’s prophecy, and with the Gospels. What can we say about the reason why God would be pierced by his own people?

Zech 12:10-14	Isaiah 53:4-6	John 19:33-37; Luke 23:48
Zech 13:1		John 13:3-17
Zech 13:7		Matthew 26:31-35

5. How will those who are “refined” and “tested” respond (13:9)?
6. What does God promise for those who call on his name (compare Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21; 10:43; Romans 10:8-15)?

What implications does this have for Christian ministry and mission?

7. Before we read chapter 14, when is “that day”? Has it already happened, or is it still to come?

Read Zechariah 14

8. This final chapter describes frightening cataclysmic events connected with “that day” (1-2 and 4-5a), but also tells of great blessings that the King will bring. What are those blessings?

14:3	
14:5b	
14:6-7 (compare with Rev 22:5, 22-25)	
14:8 (compare with Ezek 47:1-12; John 7:37-39; Rev 22:1-5)	
14:9	
14:10-11 (compare Rev 21:1-2, 10-27)	
14:14 (compare with Isaiah 23:18; Rev 21:26)	

9. When the King comes, what will his people and all the nations do (compare with Isaiah 2:1-5)?
10. How do the final verses, Zechariah 14:16-21, describe the holiness of God’s kingdom “on that day”?
11. Has “that day” already come, or are we still waiting for it?
12. Look again at your answers to the first questions in our first study (*In what sorts of circumstances do you find yourself making choices to listen to God and to trust him? When are you most likely to listen to him and to trust him?*). Now that we’ve reached the end of the book, have your answers changed?
13. What are three things that God has shown you about living in anticipation of Jesus’ return “on that day”?

Pray for strength from God, and the help of his Holy Spirit to persevere in Christian living while we wait for the return of Jesus.