



MONDAY 23 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 5:1-4

Plug In...

The scroll, with its curse, will enter a house of evildoers and destroy them. This animated vision is playing out the logic of God's covenant. That is, how God dealings with humanity works. [The language of blessing and curse is the language of God's covenant in the establishing books of the Bible (Genesis-Deuteronomy.)]

A helpful way to understand the logic of the covenant is: 'Torah & Temple'.

- Obey the Torah (God's laws) and you get Temple (God dwelling with you and all the blessings of life that flow from that)
- Disobey the Torah and you get Exile (the removal of God's presence and all the curses of death that flow from that).

All the visions so far have this logic running through them. But there's more to be said. The covenant requires obedience to receive the blessing, but because all humans are sinners, it will only be by God's grace that there will be any covenant blessing for people. We've already seen God come back to a people and change their high priest's clothes from filthy to splendid – God's grace works atonement and forgiveness. God doesn't stop working through His covenant, but works out way where the covenant will allow blessing to come to sinners. That this happens is shown in Zechariah 3 with Joshua's filthy clothes made splendid. How it actually

occurs is not spelt out here. Yet the vision of the flying scroll shows that God's covenant curses will come upon the house of the person who does not find themselves a forgiven sinner.

Chew It Over...

Think about how this vision helps us understand the way God works and the impact of His covenant for humanity. While Torah, Temple, Exile are probably completely unfamiliar terms or images to the person you speak about the gospel to, think of what analogies, animations, language you can use that explains God's covenant and His grace through Jesus. God kept translating His covenant way of working to the Jews in Zechariah's day. Profile the people you really want to share the gospel with, then think about how you can do the work of translating the gospel clearly to them.

Prayer Suggestion

Father God, please enable us to explain clearly why the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is *good* news. Many people feel the beginning of the destruction of their houses in many ways, prevent this from comprehensively happening to the people we love. Enable them to see that the gospel of Jesus Christ can mend their alienation from you and ultimately its symptoms.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 24 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 5:5-11

Plug In...

If you recall the tower of Babel story, *Shinar* is the old word for Babel. Different Bible translations will use Babel, Shinar, or Babylon/Babylonia. They are all the same place. The first time in the Bible Babel/Babylon is mentioned is when humanity attempt in vain to storm heaven (Gen. 11:1-9). The goal was to set themselves up as God. This is idolatry, the de-godding of God. Idolatry is worshipping something else in creation other than the Creator God.

Reading different translations you can see that the woman in the basket seems to be a woman made of lead. I.e., an idol. The idol is flown away from Jerusalem to its own temple back in Babel. In Ezekiel we read of God leaving His temple because of idolatry (Ezekiel 8-10). The visions of Zechariah shows God coming back to His temple. So, for God to come back entails any idolatrous impostor must be removed.

Chew It Over...

Again this vision bears out the covenant dynamic. You cannot serve to masters. Jesus said the same (Matt. 6:24). Take stock now of what we love, and put our efforts into. These things are pointers to the path we are heading down. These visions have shown the outcome of those tracks. Wouldn't it be great if you could trace a direct line from the way you do everything (be it family activities, job tasks, conversations, sleep, eating) through to worshiping God?

Prayer Suggestion

Petition God to orbit you around serving the Lord Jesus. Commit to Him those areas that have lost their rotation around the King; asking that He will send idolatry away from you, your family, and pray that idolatry will stay far from our part of the temple-church The Lakes.



The Lakes

WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 6:1-8 & Matthew 11:20-30

Plug In...

The previous vision showed God sending an imposter idol away from Israel. The idol was flown to northern place Shinar and installed there. With just that vision we could be mistaken that there are two equal kingdoms. One in Israel under God, and then another in Shinar. This next vision in 6:1-8 shows this is not the case. The fate of the kingdom of Shinar ("Land of the North") is that they will confront God's chariots. The chariots rush out to war with the end result of God's Spirit at *rest* in the Land of the North.

In the Bible, there is a repeated cycle where the storyline ends in rest. First a chaotic disruption occurs due to sin and evil, then, God deals with it and what follows is a time of rest. Remember, the creation is described as *formless* (word means 'turbulent') and then at the end of the creation sequence God *rests* (Genesis 1). Recall, due to humanity's evilness there is a chaotic de-creation which occurs through the Flood. This is followed by the man Noah [NB: Noah is the Hebrew word for 'rest'] coming to *rest* in a new creation through the safety of God's ark (Genesis 8). Further, the Israelites celebrate all these *rest*-based festivals (Sabbaths). The Israelites were free from the evil Egyptians and the chaotic plagues; they are now blessed with *rest* in the Promised Land (Leviticus 25).

Finally, Jesus says, "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Chew It Over...

You may feel that you are not at rest yet. The Bible teaches us that the story of the world is such that it has taken a horrible nose dive into unrest. We sure do feel this turbulence. Jesus' promise to provide rest comes immediately after he has forecasted an unbearable judgement. Our current restless experience stands between unbearable judgement and a promised rest. This final vision of Zechariah graphically displays the same promise Jesus gives. Like the situation for the people first receiving Zechariah's vision, we do not yet experience the rest the vision displays. Their similar question emerges for us: 'how long until you give rest?' (*cf.* Zechariah 1:12). In terms of timing, Christians begin to start this rest now in that they know they will be at rest. This is not to say we should expect complete rest right now! But to say, there is a psychological rest that begins in our hearts as we learn and accept the hard-core fact: before God we have no outstanding judgement yet to take place.

So often, our feelings bubble forth from the story we believe about ourselves. The more we grasp *this* story with its facts, the more we experience this rest now. However, the feelings of peace of mind are not what assurance is built on. For many, psychological rest keeps evading them, this can be one of the awful things about being located between unbearable judgement and a rest to come. Assurance of rest comes from God's Spirit resting within in us, a down payment guaranteeing our rest (Ephesians 1:13-14). Again, this is not the *feeling* that God's Spirit is resting within us, but the objective fact that He does (you may or may not *feel* it). To the person who feels so restless, the way forward is to keep trusting in that objective fact despite what you feel. God's facts (what His word says) is the truth, not what we may or may not feel.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for a person you know who is very restless. Place them with God. Ask that He will protect them, hold them, and enlarge their faith, especially as they may feel so contrary. Request that God will give you words shaped by the truth that rest begins for the person who trusts God's word. Pray you will step forward and encourage, bolster them with this.



The Lakes

THURSDAY 26 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 6:9-14 & 2 Timothy 3:10-17

Plug In...

The current High Priest in Zechariah's time was Joshua. A crown is made for him. This does not make him king, but is a provocative sign. Remember Joshua was told that he was *symbolic* of a future figure called the Branch? (Zechariah 3:8 – using an Old Testament image for a future king). After this act of putting a crown on a priest's head, Zechariah is told to paint a picture in Joshua's mind. A picture of a king-priest on a throne.

[NB: Some translations do not include the original word "Look" which begins the speech of the LORD of Hosts in v.12. This is because the word occurs repeatedly throughout these visions and can feel redundant to keep reading. However, it is still an important word as it is a pointing word. The word is meant to make you sit up and look at something. The English translations that keep it, usually writing 'behold', make clearer that Zechariah has been told to get Joshua to look at this picture of a priest-king he's about to describe.]

The act of giving Joshua as priest a crown is symbolic of a future priest wearing a crown. I.e., what is normally two individual roles from different ancestry lines are merged into one.

Chew It Over...

Why bother reading the Old Testament? Is it just to be wowed that predictions from the past have come true? God's word sure is spectacular in that way, and it is certainly true of this part of Zechariah. But it is not just that. Although being dubbed the 'old' part of the Bible, it is the 'old' part which gives high-definition detail to the 'new'. The New Testament makes many assumptions in its statements about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. E.g., Jesus was born under law for us, freed us from the law; was an atoning sacrifice; his people are a fragrant offering; his resurrection is a firstfruit; he is a king, a priest, a prophet, a wisdom teacher. It could be put this way, the New Testament shows Jesus in black and white, and the Old Testament gives it colour.

We've seen in practice that Zechariah's visions would be completely obscure to us unless we are across the Old Testament material which comes before. While Jesus is the fullest and grandest revelation of God, the answer to 'with what regard is he the fullest revelation?' comes from the Old Testament.

This may be a good time to start planning to join a PTC unit on the Old Testament, or the next *How The Bible Hangs Together* classes from The Lakes. You could buy a helpful book like: *According to Plan* (Grahame Goldsworthy), or *The Faith of Israel* (William Dumbrell).

A first step is to make it your practice when reading your Bible to always go back into the Old Testament when you see it quoted in the New. Read a block of material in and around where the quote comes from. In the New should you read a term like 'covenant' or 'Torah' or 'Temple' and the New Testament writing speaks in a way that assumes you'll understand what it means, then go chase it down in the Old Testament. You will see your Lord Jesus in all spectacular detail.

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for every part of His word given to us which make us wise to salvation through Jesus Christ. Ask God to motivate you to be trained in understanding His thinking and ways from every part of Scripture.



The Lakes

FRIDAY 27 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Zechariah 6:15

Plug In...

You can block the book of Zechariah in two halves. This verse marks the end of the first half. In the first half we've seen a series of visions that were directed at the Jews. These show that their return from exile is an example that God has returned to them and will be with them to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. The visions, while pertaining in the first instance to the people of Zechariah's day keep showing us this is how God works and in that begin to point to how He will work with His end time kingdom. A much bigger; bigger than the patch of land in Palestine. The next half, chapters 7-14, will really focus on these end time kingdom dynamics.

Before we leave the first half, notice who is involved in the rebuild of the LORD's temple. People who are 'far off'. People from every nation. We will see in time both halves of the book of Zechariah have a climax with God's temple being rebuilt and it is a temple for people of every nation to come and be with God.

Chew It Over...

This reality of all nations being invited and involved in God's temple means that to find ourselves as a Christian here on the Central Coast means we are recipients of missionary work. Missionaries captured by this truth in Zechariah brought the gospel to Australia. Do you find the reality is we rarely think of our missionaries, or pray for other nations? Why would this be the case? Are there ways you can keep our missionaries included in your prayers more often?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray today for The Lakes' missionaries: The Turvey's in East China; The Wrights in Fiji.



The Lakes

WEEKEND 28-29 MAY 2016

SERIES: ZECHARIAH

Read: Revelation chaps. 5-6

Plug In...

The visions we've seen in Zechariah have shown how God works. We've seen that God deals with us through a covenant. Obedience = life (the presence of God); disobedience = death (the removal of God's presence). These things are vividly shown through the images of curse, exile, destruction of houses, flying scrolls. Yet, because God is a merciful God He shows us these things before they fully come to pass so. This is in order that we might repent and find forgiveness through Him as He moves to place us sinners in the position of covenant-keepers. (He supremely does this through Jesus Christ).

Many of these images from Zechariah are re-used in the book of Revelation to warn of the looming day of judgement while motivating people to repent and trust in Jesus. Trusting in Jesus now to find rest from that later judgement.

Chew It Over...

Television, music, movies, books, etc. mirror what we consider most pressing and most urgent. Sometimes it is love to gain, a disease to outrun, opposition invaders to thwart. When we spend time watching the animated visions from Zechariah, we should come away with an overwhelming sense that life-to-the-full hangs on having the presence of God. We need God with us.

Prayer Suggestion

Praise God that the one-day punishment listed on the scrolls for sinners (of which we are), He has brought forward and placed upon Jesus Christ so that we might escape destruction. Ask that He will grow you into following Him in every way while we wait for the resurrected life-to-the-fullest!