

## Zechariah 1:1-6 – Return to Me

God, by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet, told the people of Judah that they would be exiled to Babylon and that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC. In time, Babylon was also judged and overthrown by the Medes and Persians as God predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. In about 538 BC, Cyrus the Great decreed that the Jewish exiles should return to Judah and Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest led a group of about 50,000 people back to Judah. Within two years of returning to Judah, they had rebuilt the altar in Jerusalem and had laid the foundation for the temple. Opposition arose and they stopped rebuilding the temple. For about 16 years, no work was done on the temple. God was not pleased with this building delay. God chose the prophets Zechariah and Haggai to deliver his message which was “build my house!”

### **Read Zechariah 1:1-6.**

Who was Darius the king? Who was Zechariah? See Ezra 5:1-2, 6:14. Ezra says Zechariah was the son of Iddo while verse 1 says that Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. Sometimes a generation in someone’s genealogy was skipped for various reasons. This was not unusual. Nehemiah 12:16 mentions a priest named Zechariah who was “of Iddo”. Zechariah was the name of a number of people in the Old Testament as well as the name of the father of John the Baptist. It is difficult to determine who the Zechariah was in Luke 11:51. Zechariah means “Yahweh remembers”. (1:1)

When did Zechariah’s first recorded declaration occur? Haggai’s first recorded declaration occurred in the same year but was 2 months earlier than Zechariah’s first recorded message. Zechariah 1:1 occurred a little over a month after the people had restarted work on the second temple. Unlike Haggai, not all of Zechariah’s utterances were given a date. There are three dates in Zechariah. The second half of the book, which contains two oracles, does not include dates, so it is difficult to say when these oracles occurred. (1:1)

God’s first recorded words to Zechariah were “Yahweh was very angry with you fathers”. Which “fathers” was God talking about? (1:2)

Here is the basic structure of Zechariah.

1. Introduction 1:1-6
2. 8 Visions 1:7-6:8
3. The Branch 6:9-15
4. Response to Questions from Bethel Delegation 7:1-8:23
5. First Oracle 9:1-11:17
6. Second Oracle 12:1-14:21

In verses 3-4, what did God exhort the people to do? This is also what God, through Jeremiah and others, exhorted their “fathers” to do before the exile. Did their fathers listen to God and obey? (1:3-4)

What happened to their fathers as a result of ignoring God’s word? Why did God ask if the prophets live forever? (1:5)

What happened to God’s words and statutes which God spoke through his prophets? (1:6)

How did the people respond to God’s initial message given through Zechariah the prophet? (1:6)

How did the people respond to the prophet Haggai?

Haggai and Zechariah were both prophets during the building of the second temple. God gave each prophet a unique ministry. God, through Haggai, gave short and direct messages to move the people to build the temple. The main focus was the people’s obedience to God which was measured by whether or not they built the temple.

Zechariah is much longer and contains visions and oracles. The message is not always direct and easy to understand. Zechariah dealt with the immediate need to build the temple but there are also a number of prophecies which dealt with the future, and specifically the coming Messiah.

Here are 4 passages from Zechariah which are quoted in the New Testament. They all involve Passion Week.

- 1) Zechariah 9:9, Messiah will come riding on a donkey. Quoted in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15.
- 2) Zechariah 11:12-13, thirty pieces of silver. Quoted in Matthew 27:9-10.
- 3) Zechariah 12:10, look on the one they pierced. Quoted in John 19:37.
- 4) Zechariah 13:7, strike the shepherd and the sheep will scatter. Quoted in Matthew 26:31 and Mark 14:27.