

I. Introduction

1. The Identity of Zechariah

a. Grandson of Iddo and Son of Berechiah

Zechariah was the grandson of Iddo and the son of Berechiah. (Zechariah 1:1)

- In Hebrew, the name Iddo means “at an appointed time” ;
- Berechiah means “Jehovah will bless” ;
- and Zechariah means “Jehovah will remember.”

Combined, the meaning of these three names is: At an appointed time, Jehovah will bless, and Jehovah will remember.

b. Born into a Priestly Family During the Captivity, Returning to Judah as a Prophet

Zechariah was born into a priestly family during the Babylonian captivity. (Nehemiah 12:1, 4, 12, 16) He was first a priest and then became a prophet. In the days of the prophet Haggai (around 520 B.C.), he returned to Judah together with Zerubbabel. Zechariah and Haggai encouraged God’ s people to rebuild the house of God under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua.

Joshua the high priest represented the priestly office, while Zerubbabel, a descendant of the royal line and governor of Judah, represented the kingly office. Thus the priestly office and the kingly office worked side by side to build God’ s temple.

Even today, in the building up of the church—the Body of Christ—we still need both the priestly office and the kingly office.

c. The Time and Place of Zechariah’ s Ministry

Zechariah began his ministry in the second year of Darius Hystaspis, around 520 B.C. (This Darius is different from the Darius mentioned in Daniel 9:1, Daniel

11:1, and Nehemiah 12:22.) The place of his ministry was the land of Judah. (Zechariah 7:3 - 4)

2. The Opening Word

The opening words of the Book of Zechariah exhort the children of Israel to turn back to Jehovah, with the promise that Jehovah will turn back to them. (Zechariah 1:2 - 6) Though they had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon, most of them had not turned their hearts to the Lord. Verse 3 declares: “Turn to Me, declares Jehovah of hosts, and I will turn to you, says Jehovah of hosts.” Here we see a spiritual principle: we must first turn to the Lord, and then the Lord will turn to us.

3. The Theme of Zechariah’ s Prophecy

The theme of Zechariah’ s prophecy is Jehovah’ s earnest comfort and promises to His chastened elect through the redemption of Christ; Christ, in humiliation, became their fellow sufferer in the captivity.

4. The Central Thought of Zechariah’ s Prophecy

The central thought of Zechariah’ s prophecy is this: Jehovah remembers His chastened people and sympathizes with their sufferings caused by the excessive reaction of the nations in executing God’ s chastisement upon them. Because they endured affliction under God’ s discipline, God sent Christ as His Messenger to dwell among them and pass through the days of captivity together with them. This Christ accomplished a perfect redemption to bring them salvation. At the same time, Jehovah raised up “craftsmen” to deal with the nations that had overstepped their bounds. Through Zechariah, this prophet of revival, God spoke words of tender comfort and sure promise: He would gather the scattered children of Israel back to their own land and grant them the hope of restoration and prosperity.

This central thought embraces several crucial elements: God’ s sympathy, redemption, salvation, the Savior, the Redeemer, and the Deliverer. Moved by sympathy, God came to comfort His chastened people. In this work of comfort, Christ

was sent to accomplish redemption that they might obtain salvation; thereby Christ became their Savior and Redeemer. In God' s redemptive work for man' s salvation, Christ is the very center.

Christ' s first coming was to redeem God' s elect through crucifixion and the shedding of His blood. His second coming will not be for redemption, but to deliver God' s elect out of the hand of Antichrist and usher in an era of restoration and prosperity. In this sense, Christ is also the Deliverer, bringing forth the universal spread of Himself.

We see that in the universe, Christ is the center established on the cross; and from this center, He expands Himself outward to reach the circumference—this is the universal extension of Christ. The Epistle to the Ephesians reveals that this redeeming Christ, who produces the Body (the church), is the One who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22 - 23) He is truly both the Center and the Universality in God' s eternal plan and redemptive work.