

# Introduction Zechariah

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Date: 24 January 2017

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[ 0 : 01 ] Let's turn in our Bibles to Zechariah chapter 1. We start at the back of the Old Testament and work backwards.

! Second to the last book of the Old Testament. God has written for our prophet these words.

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. The Lord was very angry with your forefathers.

Therefore tell the people, this is what the Lord Almighty says. Return to me, declares the Lord Almighty, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty.

Do not be like your forefathers, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed, this is what the Lord Almighty says. Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.

[ 1 : 10 ] But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the Lord. Where are your forefathers now? And the prophets, do they live forever?

But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants, the prophets, overtake your forefathers? Then they repented and said, the Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.

On the 24th day of the 11th month, the month of Shabbat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.

During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man riding a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown, and white horses.

I asked, what are these, my Lord? The angel who was talking with me answered, I will show you what they are. Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, they are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth.

[ 2 : 24 ] And they reported to the angel of the Lord, who was standing among the myrtle trees, we have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.

Then the angel of the Lord said, Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these 70 years?

So the Lord spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. Then the angel who was speaking to me said, proclaim this word. This is what the Lord Almighty says.

I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, but I am very angry with the nations that feel secure. I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity.

Therefore, this is what the Lord says. I will return to Jerusalem with mercy and there my house will be rebuilt and the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem, declares the Lord Almighty.

[ 3 : 30 ] Proclaim further. This is what the Lord Almighty says. My towns will again overflow with prosperity and the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.

Then I looked up and there before me were four horns. I asked the angel who was speaking to me, what are these? He answered me, these are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.

Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. I asked, what are these coming to do? He answered, these are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head.

But the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.

Well, this is our God. Let's hear his word opened and explained. Stuck. Stuck.

[ 4 : 34 ] Trapped. Weighed down. You want to get out of your life somehow, but you can't.

So kids, have you seen the movie Up? And, because I want to talk about Up for a minute. Carl and Ellie Fredrickson, since they were very little, they wanted to go to Paradise Falls.

And, they eventually got married and they decided that that's where they're going to go. And they saved their money in their jar. And their tire goes out and they have to break their jar.

And so they start putting money in their jar again to go to Paradise Falls. And Carl breaks his leg. And so they break their jar. And they start putting money in their jar again.

And then a tree falls on their house. And they break their jar. And again and again it goes. And they get older and older until Paradise Falls is just out of the question.

[ 5 : 47 ] And then Ellie dies. And Carl is left alone. Grouchy. Cynical. Selfish.

And stuck. So, this whole life they wanted to do something extraordinary. They wanted to have an adventure. And they never could. Because life kept on happening to them.

And they were just stuck with things. So, do you know what I'm talking about? Do you have something in your life, some Paradise Falls, that you would like to do? And you can't get to it.

And whatever that Paradise Falls is, we all experience some degree of being stuck in our lives, stuck in our circumstances. Maybe it's your career. You made decisions when you were too young to be making decisions.

And now you've made these decisions. And now you can't go back in time and unmake them. And so you're stuck in your career, your job. Or maybe it's your marriage, even feeling that way. You thought they would be different now.

[ 6 : 51 ] You thought you would be different now. Maybe it's stuck with your past. Not just bad decisions that you've made. Maybe sin.

Shameful sin. Disgraceful sin. Dirty sins. And yes, you know they are forgiven. But they are those sins that Satan so easily can call up and call to mind.

And you're going through your life, and you bump into things, or you bump into people, and you remember you did that. So you could be stuck there.

Maybe it's stuck in your parents' sins. Or people's sins against you. And you want to move past them. But sometimes that can be the worst mud of all.

What people did to you. Or stuck in ministry. Or in your life at the church, you wish you could do more. You want to do more. But it seems like you can never rise above you.

[ 7 : 54 ] And your gifts, and your graces, and you feel stuck. Well, we all have our own mixing bowls. We all have some of the same ingredients. But your recipe isn't my recipe.

But we all have some of the same ingredients. The past, our sin, circumstances, weakness, just the way God has made us. And so we can feel stuck in our lives.

Like we're not making progress. We're not going anywhere. We're not rising above what we wish we could rise above. And the worst thing of all, and what really makes that whole situation so bitter, is when we think that God doesn't seem to be doing anything about any of it.

If God was doing something about it, if we were making some sort of progress, then it would be different.

It would be okay if He was helping us make some progress. Then I could have hope. But it doesn't seem like God is doing anything.

[ 9 : 05 ] And then when we get that into our minds, then we lose hope. And when we lose hope, that's when we fall in on ourselves.

And like Carl Fredrickson, we can become very grouchy and cynical. And we quit trying. We quit wanting more. We quit thinking God as someone who can help us or as someone who wants to encourage us.

And we start thinking of Him as being done with us. Like we're past our prime. That He's done what He's going to do and that's the end of the story and now He's putting us on the shelf.

Well, if that's how you feel, stuck, discouraged, then the book of Zechariah is for you. Because stuck is exactly how God's people felt when Zechariah began ministering to them.

And here's some good news. Here's some really good news, I think. Zechariah is actually one of those rare birds. He was actually a successful prophet.

[ 10 : 12 ] What I mean by that is people heard him and God used him and they repented and they changed and they grew and they got unstuck. And so they were discouraged, but God used Zechariah to encourage them.

So God sent His people encouragement. Heartwarming. Soul building. Arms strengthening. Leg strengthening. Encouragement. And it took them out of their stuckness and it got them moving forward again.

And so at the beginning of Zechariah, we find one thing and as we read our histories, we see something different at the end of Zechariah's ministry. So even though Zechariah is dead and gone and all the people that he talked to are dead and gone, God's Word is alive and well.

We are like grass, but the Word of our God is forever. And so it comes down to us and it reaches to us in those circumstances that we are very much like God's people back then.

It comes down to us and it comes to you to encourage you, to get you hoping again, to get you moving again. And you might not even think that's possible because stuck people a lot of times don't think it's possible.

[ 11 : 30 ] But my prayer is that God will prove us wrong and will show that His Word is powerful and living and active and can get us going.

So this evening, I want to introduce Zechariah to you. And to do that, we have to first talk about Zechariah's world. So what was going on? Who was He talking to?

And really, the question is, why did God's people feel so discouraged? Why were they just so weighed down and not moving?

Why did God's people feel so discouraged? Well, I don't like giving history lessons, but we need to have one, a quick one. And now some of us love history and it sticks in our minds and we have those coat hangers and we can put all sorts of dates up there and I understand some of us don't and we put history in and it just flows through our head and we are no better off for hearing it.

And so if that's you, just take heart, bear with me, we're going to have a little history lesson just to get the frame of reference for where we're at because Zechariah is ministering to in a time period when we're not very familiar with.

[12:42] We don't know exactly a lot of the dates. It's not a time period that we talk about a lot. So we need to get our picture oriented.

And so let's start just, we're going to go way back first, we're going to start 600 years before Zechariah. In 930 BC, before Christ, King Solomon died and you remember the kingdom of Israel and then the kingdom of Judah, they divided.

They split in half. The north and the south. Israel now is the north and Judah is the south. And 200 years later, the Assyrians came all the way from northern Iraq and they took away the Israelites in the north, in Samaria.

And for 150 years, Judah plotted along and if anything, they plotted further and further away from God. They were close to him in some ways in their mouths but far away from him in their hearts.

and they ignored God's prophets. We read about that. They didn't listen to the earlier prophets. They persecuted the prophets. Even Jesus said that.

[13:52] They abused the poor. They oppressed their slaves. They didn't trust God. They went from one God to another God from one nation. Can Egypt help us? No. Can Babylon help us?

No. And back and forth they went and the whole time all those things have in common is they're not believing and trusting in the Lord. And finally, in 586, the Babylonians came and they burned Jerusalem and hauled everyone away in Jerusalem except for the poorest of the poor.

And they had already been taking away people. But 586 was the last straw. So Israel's no more. Judah's no more.

There are people scattered. And so for 50 years that's how it went and it didn't seem like anything was going to change because Babylon was strong and Babylon was cruel.

They certainly didn't care about the Jews. And so here the Jews are really a people that are dying out. They're going to be assimilated. into that great empire of the world.

[15:07] But then something happened. A new power started to rise. Persia started to rise. And they grew strong and their king was King Cyrus.

And you can read about him and Isaiah and Ezra and Nehemiah. And King Cyrus, he first made a deal with some people called the Medes and then he swallowed them up. And then the next meal meal on the menu was Babylon.

And he swallowed them up. And things began to be very hopeful for God's people. Because in King Cyrus' first year as this great emperor, he said, okay, everyone can go back to their lands and you can build your temples.

And that's exactly what Jeremiah had said. He said, 70 years from now, there's going to be a king and he's going to tell you to come back. And the word of the Lord came true and Jeremiah came true.

And so, everyone's hope is rising. And so, some people say, we're going back. Now, some of the other people said, we have it pretty good here. We don't want to go back, but here's some money.

[16:13] And so, the Jews are coming back. And in 538 B.C., so about 50 years after the sack of Babylon, but 70 years after the deportations, after the exile began, they laid out the foundation for the temple.

Remember, the temple had been burned to the ground and there was nothing left. And so, they laid out the foundation of the temple and some people cried for joy. And you remember, some of the older men, they cried because they saw how small it was.

But they were just mostly the older people. But most of them, the young people, they're hopeful. They're hopeful. They're excited.

Could God's words finally start happening? Remember, they had all these, the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah and Ezekiel and the other prophets that said, after the exile, I'm going to do great and magnificent and wonderful things.

And so, they're thinking, maybe, this is the beginning. This is the great, we're on the edge of the great victory. So, it was this real time of excitement and hope.

[17:30] Now, what is the worst time to be disappointed? When you are the most excited. So, I don't know, if you thought you won that Powerball thing and then you realize your numbers are wrong, that hurts a lot worse than never thinking you had a chance at all.

But, so the people are the most excited and then their leader, Shesbazar, dies. And then, the governors and the politicians and the bureaucrats and the lawyers from Samaria start making trouble and they start interfering with what's going on in Jerusalem and they have to quit.

They have to quit the temple. And that's a real punch in the gut because if God was in this, then how could these petty bureaucrats and governors be stopping you?

Stopping us? And then there were economic problems. Haggai, who was Zechariah's prophet partner, you're going to see that later, he talks about it.

He says, when anyone came to a heap of wheat for 20 measures, there was only 10. And when anyone went to a wine vat to draw 50 measures, there were only 20.

[18:57] Does your checkbook ever feel that way? You look down and it's not there. They faced drought and they faced famine. And they didn't have beautiful, huge fields like us.

They're subsistence farmers now. And they're poor and they're getting poorer. And there's no investment coming in.

So imagine a town in like West Virginia or a small town even in Indiana where there's no industry. People aren't moving in. They're just mom and pop shops and some farmers and that's it.

Well, that's what it was like for them. And they're just scratching out a living. And then there were social problems. Sometimes people get grumpy when, you know, a whole new group of people move into the neighborhood.

Well, that's nothing new. That's exactly what was happening here. Imagine it. All the people that were in the land that had been living there for 40 or 50 years, now all of a sudden all these other people come back and say, hey, we want some of that land.

[20:08] We want some of your land. And so there were tensions. There were tensions between the old and the new. There were tensions between the Jews and the Samaritans. There were the political problems that we talked about, the Samaritan politicians frustrating them at every turn.

And so under all the weight of all these problems of everyday ordinary life and struggles and persecution and difficulties, the work on the temple dragged to a halt and it stayed there and the people just did nothing.

And they got stuck. So they're stuck with their little temple foundation. They're stuck trying to make ends meet. They're stuck with hostile political forces trying to stop them.

They're stuck with neighbors who don't like them. And worst of all, it seemed like God was done with them. There's no movement. It's as if the curse on their parents was just going to live on them and never leave them.

And so it went for 20 years. They were stuck in their ways. And then God, who is the great encourager, he sent two prophets prophets to help them.

[ 21 : 20 ] Haggai and Zechariah. So if you have your Bibles open to Zechariah, it should be right across the page or just one page back.

I want you to look at the first verse of Haggai. Haggai. And it says this, in the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

So, now look again at the first verse of Zechariah. In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah.

So, one right after the other, two months apart. So, Haggai and Zechariah, they knew each other, they taught together, they were both in Jerusalem, they were both preaching to God's people, two months apart, in the second year of King Darius.

Now, here's what happened, and this is why, I mean, what happened in the second year of King Darius that God now said, it's time to get moving, it's time to go forward, it's time to get my people unstuck.

[ 22 : 45 ] Well, discouragement was at an all-time high. And the reason is because, remember how we were talking about how they were looking out at the nations and thinking, well, maybe now is the time for us to come to the head of the nations.

Now, maybe it's our time for freedom. Well, the first two years when King Darius became the emperor, the king, the Persian empire was in turmoil.

There were people pretending to be king, there were people fighting, there was invasions, there was all sorts of problems, trying to break away, civil war, and so it seemed like the power, the human powers that were holding God's people in, it was beginning to shake.

The grip was loosening. And so you can imagine how God's people are starting to feel. They're starting to feel hope again after 20 years. Maybe it's now it's time.

Maybe God's finally going to crush the nations. Maybe all those things that he promised are going to happen. So you can imagine them reading the paper and watching TV, looking at the news, seeing maybe this is it.

[ 23 : 58 ] Freedom. Glory. It's about to happen. Well, hope is at all-time high again. And then Darius flexed his muscles.

And he killed those who were opposing him. He put down and crushed revolts. And this great beast that had been convulsing and spasming again tightened its grip, pulled itself together, and that iron grip on that little tiny province of Judah is just firm as can be now.

So now it's the low of the low. So when you had hopes and then punched in the gut and then hopes again and then punched again and so now when it doesn't seem like it's ever going to get any better, God raised of Haggai and Zechariah.

And we're going to look at Zechariah. So what do we know about him? Well, just from other things we know he was probably a priest and he was probably fairly young. And then we also know that God blessed his ministry.

Ezra says this, so the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah, they finished the temple according to the command of the God of Israel.

[ 25 : 22 ] So they built, they prospered, they grew, they got unstuck under Zechariah's preaching. So God's people were revived and they were renewed and they had hope again, they were moving, they rose above their circumstances, they rose above their sin, they left their parents' sins behind and they found new faith and they prospered.

And so my question is, and this is how we want to end, is what did Zechariah say to them that encouraged them? And what does Zechariah say to us? Because I'm a lot like them and I'm sure you are too.

Where you get discouraged and you don't feel like you're going anywhere. Well, what did God say? Well, just, I think we're going to cover four things.

Here, the first place, he reminded them of really who was the great one. Who was really great? He reminded them that he, that God, was the one who was the king of all.

Fifty-two times in the book of Zechariah, he is called the Lord Almighty, the Lord of hosts, the Lord of angel armies.

[ 26 : 43 ] And so, see, they were stuck too much down here. They had their eyes too much focused on King Darius and we are weak and we get pushed around and Darius is strong and the Samaritan governors have it out for us.

And so, they're feeling all the pressure of human authority and God says, now, remember, I am the Lord Sabaoth. I am the Lord Almighty, the Lord of hosts.

And we need to remember that. You need to remember that. I need to remember that. Because as I'm looking at our political situation, it just sure doesn't seem like anyone who would be sympathetic toward Christ and his church has much chance of being elected anymore.

power. And I'm looking at the Supreme Court and the Congress and it doesn't seem like there's much we can do about it.

Satan has won the hearts of the people and this is a democracy. So we're way out numbered. And that's why I need Zechariah. That's why you need Zechariah's message.

[ 28 : 01 ] Because Zechariah's message is the same message that Elisha's servant needed to learn that we heard about in Sunday school. Do you remember? They were trapped.

They were stuck in that town. And Gehazi was so discouraged. Elisha's servant was so discouraged. But Elisha wasn't worried.

Elisha wasn't concerned. Because he saw by faith that those who were with us are more than those who are against us. And he opened, the Lord opened Gehazi's eyes and what did he see?

He saw the army of the Lord flaming chariots all around the city. He saw the Lord of hosts with his army. And as we read Zechariah and as we look at it, don't miss this.

That it's not just anybody who's telling us what's going to happen. It's not just anybody who's saying this is what I'm going to do. Because it is a major theme.

[ 29 : 09 ] It's the Lord Almighty who's going to do it. Yes, Darius seems strong. Yes, Persia seems so strong. The nation seems so strong. And they are compared to us. But the Lord of angel armies, the Lord who is exalted over all, who is sitting on the throne, who looks down and the people of the earth are like grasshoppers, he is saying this is what I'm going to do.

I bring princes to nothing, I bring rulers of the nations to nothing. And I'm the one who's going to be doing this. I'm going to be building my kingdom. And so are you stuck? Well, if you are, you need what Zachariah's people needed.

You need a new look at our big God. You need to think about that. Because nothing will pull you out of the mud and out of your own mind and out of your own life like that.

Well, how does Zachariah get them out? Well, he gives them a new way to see. Not only does he show them their big God who's exalted over all, he gives them a new pair of glasses.

Or at least he gives them a way to see heavenly things. He gives them a heavenly vision of God's plan. Now, Zechariah is the book that is most like the book of Revelation in the Old Testament.

[ 30 : 27 ] Zechariah is saying the same thing that Revelation says. It's saying you've been looking too much through those human glasses that just see the surface of things.

Your own personal human small earthly glasses. And when you look through those, when you just look on the surface of things, you get discouraged.

discouraged. Don't you? If all you do is watch CNN all day long and watch the news and all that, you will get discouraged. But Zechariah says, here, look it through these.

See what I'm showing you. And when you see that, you see God doing great things. So, as we go through Zechariah, we have to get ready to use our imagination.

We have to get ready to picture things. To get pulled out of the ordinary and into the heavenly. And so we see it in pictures. And the wonderful thing about these pictures are when those pictures get inside of you, they can change you.

[ 31 : 39 ] They can make you excited. Paul uses words. Paul uses arguments. Paul has a lot of therefore and because of this.

And when those things get inside of us, they change us. And Jesus, for the most part, or a lot, used stories, didn't he? And when those stories get inside of us, they change us.

And when Zechariah, when his pictures get inside of us, they can do the same thing. The thing that they all have in common, whether it's Paul or Jesus or Zechariah, it's God's word to us.

It's God's word to us. And when they get into us, they change us. They get us out of ourselves and they get us to God. And Zechariah is going to get us to God.

And the big scheme of things is going to show us God coming and sin leaving. And that's what Zechariah is about. now, the third thing that Zechariah shows us that helps us get unstuck is it shows us that God is intent on building his kingdom.

[ 32 : 49 ] And when we pray your kingdom come, that is a getting out of yourself prayer, isn't it? you're saying, okay, Lord, you're going to be the king. I'm not going to be the king. It's, I want your way. I want things that you want in my life.

And I want you to be involved. I want you to be ruling. I want you to be reigning. I want you to be directing. I'm giving myself over to you. So, your kingdom come is a getting out of yourself.

It's a getting unstuck prayer. And Zechariah shows us God building his kingdom. And that's how Zechariah ends. If you go all the way to the last chapter, it ends with God ruling his kingdom built.

So, that's the other thing. Zechariah is going to show us, you know what? Maybe the reason you're so stuck is because you've been living for some smaller kingdom. And now you need to live for God's kingdom.

[ 33 : 57 ] Now, the fourth thing that Zechariah shows them, he shows them Jesus. He shows them Jesus. He shows them Jesus as a gentle king coming, riding to them, not on a war horse, but on a donkey.

And he shows them Jesus as a shepherd. He shows them Jesus suffering. He shows them Jesus getting scorned. He shows them Jesus cleansing them.

Because what is more sticky than sin? Sin, if left unwashed, will stick to you forever and ever.

It doesn't even go away when you die. Sin, if left unwashed, will stick with you through death and through judgment. It will stick with you for endless ages and you, if unwashed, will never get unstuck from your sin.

It will cleave to you forever. So there's nothing stickier than sin. And you can forget about it and you can hide it and you can cover it, but it's there and it stays there.

[ 35 : 16 ] There's nothing you can do. It needs washed. washed. My son has a favorite sweatshirt that he loves. He plays in it all the time.

And this week he came to me and it had some sort of stain on it. And he's scraping it off and it's not coming off and he wanted to play with it but he didn't want it stained.

He didn't want to see that stain. So being the dad and being very typically man, I turned that sweatshirt inside out and I put it on him and there was no more stain.

And he was happy. And guess what? Yesterday I saw him wearing that inside out t-shirt. He's happy inside out sweatshirt. No more stain.

But Zechariah shows us something better. He shows us a man wearing absolutely filthy clothes.

[ 36 : 16 ] And then the Lord says, take his clothes off of him and now put on these glorious garments. Robes of righteousness. And then we ask, well how can you do that?

How can you just get rid of that? How can you just forgive those sins? How can you forgive this people God? And then a few chapters after that the Lord says, a fountain will be opened up for sin and impurity.

A fountain that washes away sin. And so you're saying I'm stuck in sin and God plunges you into that fountain and that fountain washes you clean.

But then again, how can you have a fountain like that? Yeah. Where's the fountain come that will get me out of my sin and wash me and make me new?

And Zachariah says, then we hear this, awake, oh sword, against my shepherd, against the man close to me, strike the shepherd.

[ 37 : 31 ] sword. And the sword comes down on the shepherd and the sheep are scattered. So you know what Old Testament book, when the Gospels are trying to explain the last few days and the last week of Jesus' life, when they're trying to explain his death, they go to the book of Zachariah more than any other.

So how do we get unstuck? Well, you look at what Zachariah is showing you. You look at a big God. You look at him doing great things that is not visible to the human eye but is visible by faith.

You look at him building his kingdom and you say, you know what, I'm going to be a part of that kingdom and you begin to pray, your kingdom come. And then the fourth thing, you look at Jesus.

You fasten your eyes on him, you see him dying, you see him being the gentle king, you see him being the great shepherd, you see him opening that fountain and when the people of Zachariah's day looked at Jesus, they believed and it revived them and it renewed them and it got them moving again and we are no different.

It can change us, it can renew us. And so that's my prayer for us as we go through Zachariah that we will see Jesus and the same thing that happened to them will happen to us.

[ 39 : 02 ] We will be encouraged and revived and we'll be moving forward again by God's grace. That's where we're going and so next week we'll start by opening up those first six verses.

The first step of getting out of your sin is repent. Repent. God's grace. And they did. And they began to move forward. Well let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for this book.

Thank you for the Lord Jesus. Thank you for the word of repentance that you have commanded us to repent. So if any of us here are stuck in our lives and stuck in our circumstances and feeling frustrated and discouraged, give us the grace that we might look to you, look to your kingdom, and look to your son.

And I pray for those who are still dirty in their sin, that you by the spirit would effectually and powerfully call them to that fountain where they can be washed.

washed clean and bring them to Jesus Christ. Do that for the glory of our Savior. That a new believer might come and see and appreciate the beauty of our Lord and how perfect he is and appreciate his sacrifice.

[ 40:39 ] I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.