

Chronological Bible Study

Week 34:

Return to the Promised Land

Job 22:1-42:17

Ezra 1:1-5:1

Haggai 1:1-2:23

Zechariah 1:1-6:15

Opening Prayer

Dear Lord, as we open Your Word today, enlighten our minds and stir our hearts. Help us to understand the scriptures and apply them to our lives. May Your Holy Spirit guide our study and deepen our faith as we seek to know You better. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.





Introductions

How do you plan to celebrate Independence Day?

Did you have any Independence Day traditions in your family when you were growing up?

Questions?

Comments?

Summary of This Week's Readings

- Job
- Ezra: Restoring Worship in Jerusalem
- Haggai: A Call to Build the Temple
- Zechariah: Zechariah's Dreams

Job

- The friends accuse Job and Job searches for wisdom through “the fear of the Lord.”
- Job makes a final defense of himself and challenges God to say what Job has done to deserve such suffering.
- God must remain silent or Satan’s claim that Job only cares about God because he gets support from God would be made true.
- Job was ready for God to speak, but Elihu steps in to claim he has the answer
- God finally speaks and answers the question of relationship with God – not why is Job suffering.
- Key message: Job, as a human, has insufficient knowledge of God
- Job is a book about Job’s relationship with God...it is the book about God and humanity.



The friends have either turned their accusations into real indictments of immoral conduct (Eliphaz), reduced Job as a person to something less than human (Bildad), or altogether given up on him (Zophar). Job, on the other hand, contends that if he could only find God, God would listen and acquit him, and Job would “come forth as gold”

None of Job’s friends has comprehended wisdom. Job, in a poem in Ch 28, asks the question: “Where can wisdom be found?” (vv. [12](#), [20](#)). The poem says that: (1) the human search has not discovered wisdom (vv. [1–11](#)); (2) human wealth cannot buy wisdom (vv. [13–19](#)); (3) only God knows the way to wisdom (vv. [21–28](#)). When the poet finally provides the classical definition of wisdom: “The fear of the Lord is wisdom” (v. [28](#)), it comes as no surprise that Job is its representative ([1:1](#)). Yet something of the mystery of wisdom is still hidden from Job. In this way the poem points away from itself to God’s speeches.

In Job’s second monologue, God has still not appeared or answered Job’s challenge to God. Job continues to defend himself, never addressing his friends directly. He reflects on the good of the past, laments his present plight, and swears to his innocence. Then he challenges God to write out his indictment against Job. God is silent – he cannot intervene because this would prove Satan’s claim – Job must receive no support from God. It is important that Elihu’s speeches separate Job’s speech from that of God, suggesting that God does not respond directly to Job’s plea. Job was ready for God to speak ([31:35](#)), but

Elihu steps in to claim he has the answer, only to rehash the friends' arguments and add little new to the debate. He is the only one of the participants to use Job's name, perhaps suggesting his youthful, yet artless, demeanor. Though his claims fall short, he believes he has contributed to the argument of the dialogue. Indeed, his contribution that suffering is sometimes *disciplinary* is of significance to the larger discussion regarding suffering: God uses suffering to discipline and correct a wayward individual ([33:14–30](#); [36:8–11](#), [15–17](#); [37:13](#)); but Eliphaz had already suggested this argument in his first speech ([5:17–18](#)). Yet Elihu, unlike the reader, had no notion of the reason for Job's suffering. The prologue spells out that Job's suffering was to show what an exemplary man Job was, that he served God with no ulterior motives, phrased in Satan's famous question, "Does Job fear God for nothing?" ([1:9](#)).

If the meaning of the book of Job is framed as *suffering and divine justice*, then God's speeches ([38:1–40:2](#); [40:6–41:34](#)) do not provide an answer. The Lord nowhere explains generally why the innocent suffer or specifically why Job suffers. Rather, the Lord challenges Job to stand up and answer some compelling questions about Job's human status as opposed to God's divine power and glory. The Lord's questions are not rhetorical—the Lord demands an answer of Job. But if the meaning of the book is framed as *relationship with God*, which is precisely the way the prologue lays it out ([1:8](#); [2:3](#)), then God's speeches certainly provide an answer.

Job confesses his unworthiness and inability to answer God's challenge—he is human, not divine. Second ([42:1–6](#)), Job confesses that he has spoken out of insufficient knowledge of God, and his former experience (dialogue) compared with his latter experience (God's speaking) is the difference between "hearing" and "seeing" ([42:5](#)), thus suggesting the progress he has made in his relationship with God. His repentance, therefore, is not repentance of sins as demanded by his friends, but repentance of insufficient knowledge of God. That is precisely the challenge the Lord poses to Job in [38:2](#): "Who is this that obscures my plans *with words without knowledge?*" (emphasis added).

while his humanness manifests itself in the diatribes of the dialogue, Job never curses God, as Satan claimed he would ([1:11](#); [2:5](#)) and as his wife advised him to do ([2:9](#)). Again he has passed the test of faith as administered by Satan. In God's speeches, however, Job is exposed to the overwhelming power and glory of the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and Job's demand for answers and his caricature of God come under the scrutiny of the Lord who also makes demands ([38:3](#)).

Since God presented his servant Job to Satan's scrutiny and pleasure, why should he object when his servant Job, in the dialogue, presented *him* to the readers' scrutiny and pleasure? In a sense, Job turned the tables on God, yet God affirms Job again in the epilogue, giving balance to the book. So the book is about Job's relationship with God. It is the book about God and humanity.

Leviathan

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZGVBd-wWF8>





Discussion

What does the believer's apparent freedom to question or argue with God say about the character of God? Does questioning God mean you are lacking in faith or exercising faith?

Ezra

[Video Link](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkETkRv9tG8&t>



We will be reading these books this week, next week and the following week.

The Book of Ezra

- Originally Ezra and Nehemiah were one book
- Tradition holds that Ezra authored the book
- Covers two distinct periods separated by 58 years.
- Buddha, Confucius, and Socrates were contemporaries of Ezra.
- The book was written for the Jews who had recently returned from Persia
- Written in Aramaic and Hebrew
- The restoration era allows the Abrahamic covenant to be fulfilled. God does not give up on his people.
- While the covenant is unbreakable, the people will enjoy its blessings only when they love and obey God.

Big Ideas in EZRA

God's people rebuild the temple

God reigns with supreme control even over pagan kings

God controls history and orchestrates events for his own purposes

God keeps his promises

God's people are allowed to return to Israel after years in exile

The book of Ezra was composed by Ezra in roughly 450 BC. The book covers two distinct periods separated by 58 years. Ezra 1–6 relates the story of Zerubbabel (538-516 BC) while Ezra 7–10 is mostly an autobiographical account of Ezra that begins six decades later (458-457 BC). During the period covered by the Book of Ezra three other prominent non-biblical leaders lived: Gautama Buddha in India (ca. 560-480 BC), Confucius in China (551-479 BC), and Socrates in Greece (470-399 BC).

Ezra records the first events following the Babylonian Exile, but only in a selective sense as a 58 year gap separates chapters 1–6 and 7–10. The book of Esther, which we read next week, occurs during this gap.

Ezra's readers were Jews who had recently returned to Israel from Persia who were the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who returned from Babylon a century earlier. It is mostly written in narrative style, recounting Israel's history and showing how God does not give up on his people. While a book of history that includes experiences of the returned exiles and their interactions with the living God from a number of different perspectives. The archival parts, while less immediately attractive than the personal reminiscences, offer glimpses of real people involved in great events. The reminiscences display more clearly the significance of these events, and powerfully presents a theology that has emerged from the fires of exile. The chastened group of exiles who return after

the punishment of the exile need to remember that while the covenant is unbreakable, they will enjoy its blessings only when they love and obey God. God's word must be central to the life of the people, requiring wholehearted allegiance to God and all his ways.

The story of Ezra opens with the decree of Cyrus in 539 BC. That decree allowed exiles of all religions to return and rebuild their temples and thus permitted the Jewish exiles to return and start the slow and painful process of rebuilding the temple, completed in 516 BC (chs. [1–6](#)). They were led by Sheshbazzar. Then in 458 BC Ezra himself returned (chs. [7–10](#)), sent by Artaxerxes I (reigned 465–424 BC). In 444 BC, Nehemiah came to Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls. Thus, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah cover approximately 100 years. Our reading this week covered the first Jews to come back.

Ezra is one of the few books of Scripture originally written in two languages (Daniel is the other). Almost one fourth (67 of 280 verses) is written in Aramaic with the majority in Hebrew. This material (4:8–6:18; 7:12–26) is Aramaic because it mainly comprises official correspondence for which Aramaic was the standard language of the day

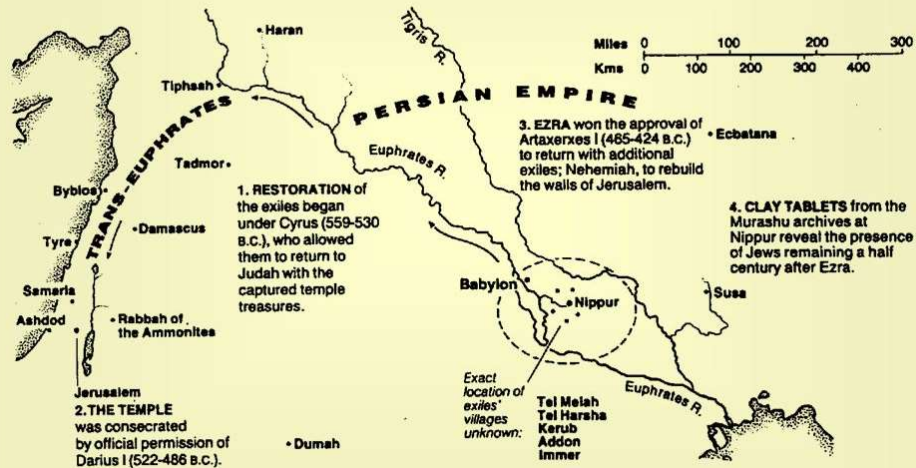
God used Zerubbabel to return almost 50,000 exiles to rebuild the temple to worship him. The first return showed God as faithful to fulfill his promise of restoration. Cyrus of Persia supported all Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem, which showed God fulfilling his promise of restoration – even through a pagan king. The list of returning exiles is provided and these people gave freewill offerings for the temple reconstruction.

God restored temple worship despite opposition and the idolatry that caused the exile. Temple rebuilding began by rebuilding the altar and foundation and resuming sacrifices as God's help to worship at the temple – not in the high places which were associated with idolatry. Enemies halted the temple rebuilding for 16 years until Zechariah and Haggai exhorted the Jews to continue until God moved the key enemy to assure their success. During this 16 year period where rebuilding was stopped (536–520 BC) Jews intermarried with pagans and worshipped other Gods. Zechariah and Haggai will successfully encourage the Jews to keep rebuilding the temple despite opposition.

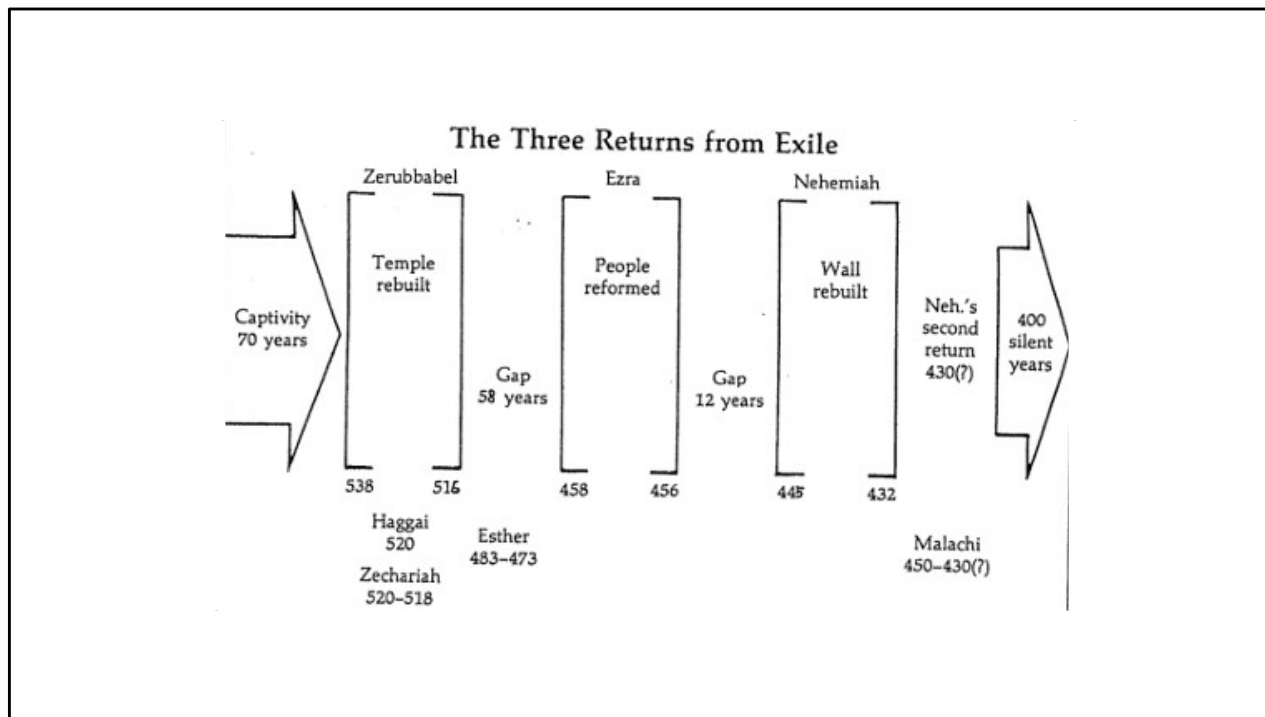
The restoration era is important in that without a return to the land, the Abrahamic Covenant could never be fulfilled. God promised Abraham that his descendants would occupy the land from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18), yet Israel in Babylon was living outside of these boundaries. The nation needed to return to the land for the land promises to be fulfilled. Jeremiah 25:11–12 also promised a restoration to the land. Also, The Messiah had already been prophesied to be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). In God's own prophetic timetable as seen in Daniel 9:25–26, the nation needed to return to the land for this seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant to be fulfilled by the prophesied time of Christ's birth. Also, Jesus offered the kingdom during his earthly ministry, which would not have been possible apart from a return to the land.

Return from Exile

The Bible Visual Resource Book, 95



The book of Ezra begins a very significant part of the ongoing story of God's people as they return from exile. At first the reader may see a change of subjection from the superpower of Babylon to the superpower of Persia. The people were indeed back in the land, but no Davidic king sat on the throne, the desert was not blossoming like the rose, nor were the nations coming to Zion to worship the Lord. Yet this book and its companion, Nehemiah, deal with big issues such as how the covenant-keeping God upholds his promises and preserves the place of the temple. Ezra is a vital link between the exile and the returned remnant to whom and from whom the Messiah would come.

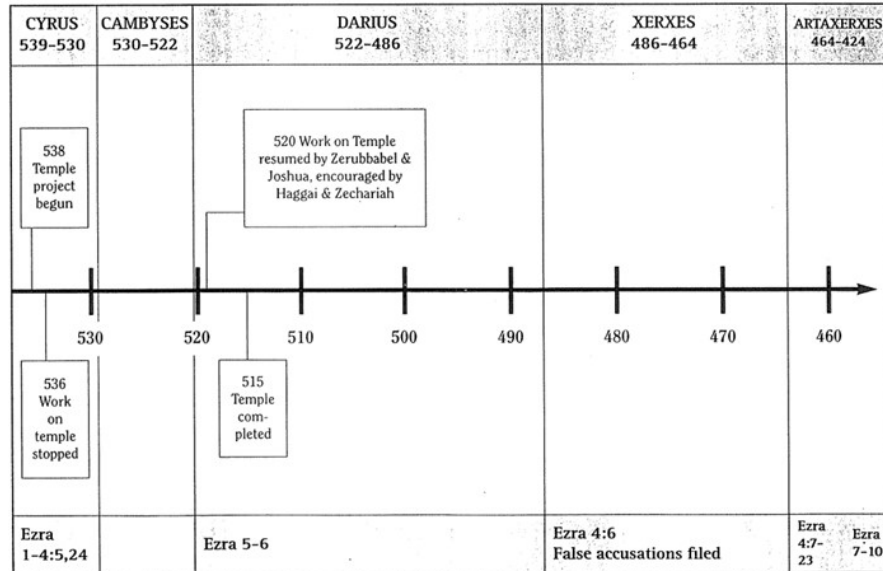


The first return is described in Ezra 1-6 and was led by Sheshbazzr, Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Cyrus was the king of Persia. As many as wished to could return. It is estimated that about 42,360 Jews, plus 7,337 servants returned (about 50,000 total). The temple could be rebuilt and was partially financed by the royal treasury. Vessels taken from the first temple were returned. During this period, the temple was begun, sacrifices were made and the feast of tabernacles was celebrated. Samaritans made trouble with the returning Jews and work ceased until 520 BC. The temple was completed in 516 BC.

The second return began in 458 BC and is described in Ezra 7-10 (future reading). Ezra is the leader of the returning Jews and Artaxerxes and Longimanus were the Persian emperors. Again, as many of the Jews who wished to could return and about 1500 men, 38 Levites and 220 helpers (1758 + women and children) returned. The Persian decree included finances provided by the royal treasury and the Jews were allowed to have their own civil magistrates. Problems with intermarriage will be addressed in this reading.

The third return is described in Nehemiah (future reading) and began in 444 BC. Artaxerxes and Longimanus were emperors in Persia. The decree allowed the Jews to rebuild their wall. The number returning from this exile is unknown. The wall was rebuilt in 52 days, despite opposition. The walls were dedicated and the Law read.

Chronological Sequence in the Book of Ezra
 John H. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of the OT*, 2d ed., 36



Our reading in Ezra this week covers only the first period (EZ 1-4). We will be reading the remainder of Ezra in future weeks.

Zarubbabel

- Grandson of King Jehoiachin, a descendant of David born c 587-539 BC) in Babylon.
- Governor of Judah after the exile.
- Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries of Zerubbabel.
- Began rebuilding the temple about 14 months after settling in Jerusalem, but only completed foundation. People disappointed the temple would be so small compared to the first temple.
- Haggai, through the metaphor of a signet ring, prophesied that through Zerubbabel God would reverse the curse God made on Jehoiachin.
- Identified with the coming Messiah by Haggai and Zechariah. The Jewish people saw Zerubbabel as their great hope for reviving the Davidic kingship.



Zerubbabel was the grandson of [King Jehoiachin](#) of Judah ([1 Chronicles 3:17](#)) and thus a descendant of David. Born in Babylon during the exile (between 587 and 539 BC), Zerubbabel traveled to Judah after King Cyrus II allowed the Judean captives to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple ([Ezra 1:1–4](#); [6:3–5](#), [8–10](#)). The prophet Haggai identifies Zerubbabel as the governor of Judah after the exile ([Haggai 1:1](#); [2:2](#), [21](#)).

Zerubbabel is a Babylonian name meaning “offspring of Babylon.” As governor of Judah, Zerubbabel was appointed as one of the initial leaders who supervised the reconstruction of the Jerusalem temple with the help of [Joshua, the high priest](#) ([Ezra 3:2–3](#), [8](#)). After a season of about fourteen months to get settled, the Jewish people began to rebuild in earnest. It wasn’t long before opposition arose from surrounding adversaries, and, eventually, the work was brought to a standstill by order of King Artaxerxes ([Ezra 4:1–24](#)). Only the foundation of the temple had been completed.

The foundation showed that this new temple was going to be much smaller than [Solomon’s original](#), to the disappointment of those who remembered the former structure. After a seventeen-year delay, under the next king of Persia, Darius, the Jews were granted permission to continue rebuilding. Within three and a half years after the second effort began, the [temple](#) was completed in 516 BC.

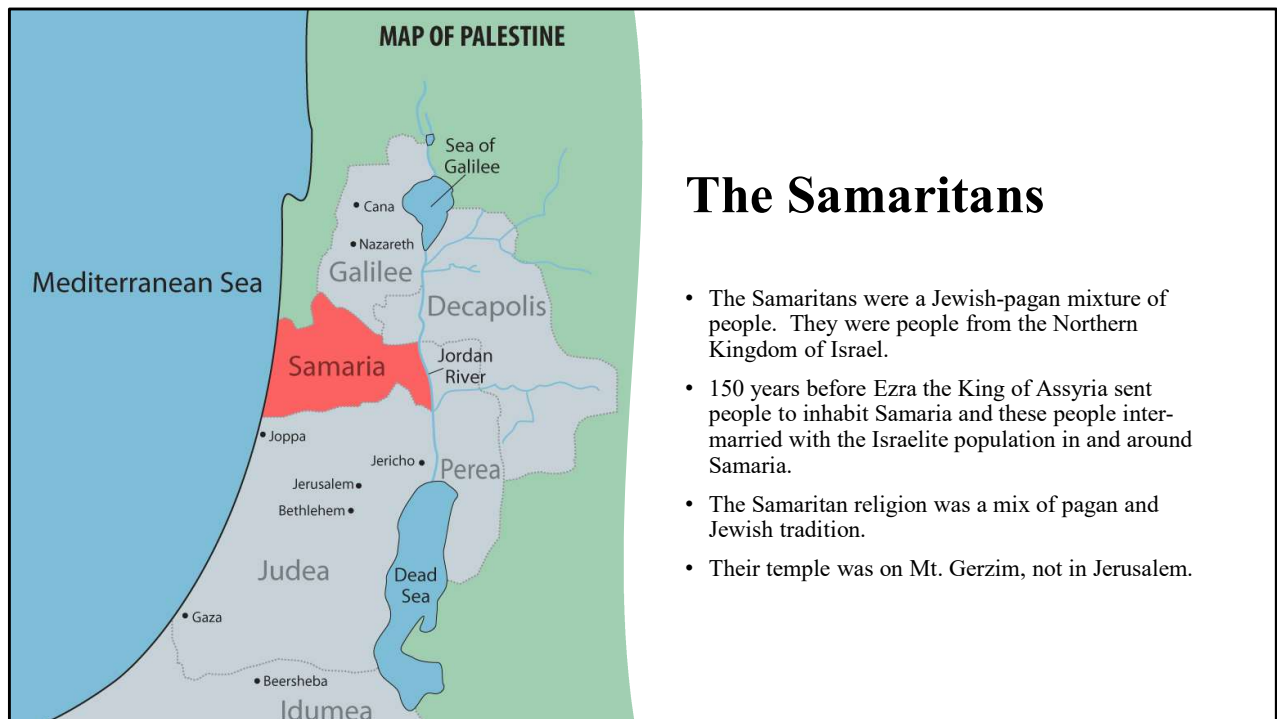
As a descendant of King David, Zerubbabel was identified with the coming Messiah by his contemporary prophets, [Haggai](#) and [Zechariah](#). The Jewish people began to see Zerubbabel as their great hope for reviving the Davidic kingship and for liberation from the Persians.

As a seal of royal authority, the “[signet ring](#)” is a messianic metaphor. In [Jeremiah 22:24–25](#), God said if Jehoiachin (Zerubbabel’s grandfather) were His signet ring, He would cast him off. Haggai was saying that through Zerubbabel God would reverse the curse He had pronounced on Jehoiachin. God would place the wicked king’s grandson like a signet ring on His finger. Likewise, the words “on that day” point to a future messianic fulfillment of Haggai’s message. The signet ring symbolized a ring worn on the hand of Yahweh, showing that a king held divine favour. Thus, Haggai is implicitly, but not explicitly, saying that Zerubbabel would preside over a restored Davidic kingdom.

Although Zerubbabel’s temple was smaller than Solomon’s had been, God promised a greater glory: “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,” said the Lord ([Haggai 2:9](#)). The glory bestowed on Zerubbabel’s temple came centuries later when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the temple courts. Solomon’s temple never received a visit from the Messiah, but Zerubbabel’s did.

Curiously, even before the temple was completed and dedicated, Zerubbabel’s name disappears from the biblical record. It’s possible that Zerubbabel may have returned to Babylon soon after finishing his work on the temple, or it could be that the Persians feared a Jewish uprising and had Zerubbabel removed or executed. Regardless, Zerubbabel is revered as one of the Bible’s great heroes, laboring to reconstruct the Lord’s house of worship and shining like a beacon toward the coming Messiah.

While the temple Zerubbabel helped rebuild paled in comparison to the size and grandeur of Solomon’s, it far outlasted it. In fact, Zerubbabel’s temple was still standing 500 years later when the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, graced its courts.



The Samaritans

- The Samaritans were a Jewish-pagan mixture of people. They were people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.
- 150 years before Ezra the King of Assyria sent people to inhabit Samaria and these people intermarried with the Israelite population in and around Samaria.
- The Samaritan religion was a mix of pagan and Jewish tradition.
- Their temple was on Mt. Gerzim, not in Jerusalem.

In 721 B.C., the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians. Many of the people of Israel were led off to Assyria as captives, but some remained in the land and intermarried with foreigners planted there by the Assyrians. These half-Jewish, half-Gentile people became known as the Samaritans.

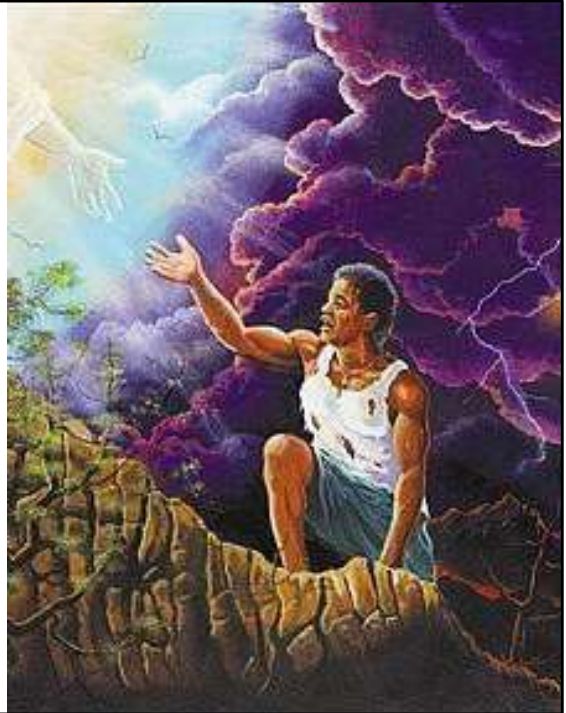
The Samaritans lived in what had been the Northern Kingdom of Israel, occupying the country formerly belonging to the tribe of Ephraim and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Samaria, the name of that kingdom's capital, was located between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. Samaria had been a large and splendid city. When the ten tribes were carried away into captivity to Assyria, the king of Assyria sent people from Cutha, Ava, Hamath, and Sepharvaim to inhabit Samaria ([2 Kings 17:24](#); [Ezra 4:2-11](#)). These foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was still in and around Samaria. These "Samaritans" at first worshiped the idols of their own nations, but being troubled with lions, they supposed it was because they had not honored the God of that territory. A Jewish priest was therefore sent to them from Assyria to instruct them in the Jewish religion. They were instructed from the books of Moses, but still retained many of their idolatrous customs. The Samaritans embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry ([2 Kings 17:26-28](#)). Because the Israelite inhabitants of Samaria had intermarried with the foreigners and adopted their idolatrous religion, Samaritans were universally despised by the Jews.

These Samaritan locals claimed to worship the true God of creation as Israel did, but although they worshiped Yahweh, their religion was not mainstream Judaism. They accepted only the first five books of the Bible as canonical, and their temple was on Mount Gerazim instead of on Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Samaria became a place of refuge for all the outlaws of Judea (Joshua 20 and 21). They willingly received Jewish criminals and refugees from justice. Because of their imperfect adherence to Judaism, their partly pagan ancestry, and harboring Jewish criminals, the Samaritans were despised by ordinary Jews.

These Samaritan locals paid their own money to oppose Ezra's building of a new temple. They were able to delay the temple construction for sixteen years. With Daniel dead, there were no powerful Jews left to counter the propaganda tactics of the Samaritans. The Israelites grew bored and frustrated with the temple construction plan. Eventually, they placed more interest in their personal affairs. God raised up Haggai the prophet to bring Israel out of this stupor.

The Ongoing Purpose of God

- God never abandons his purpose
- God never gives up on his people
- God still guides his people



1. *God never abandons his purpose.* Granted, this book is low-key, unlike glowing prophecies such as [Isa 2](#) and [Mic 4](#) that would be fulfilled when the Messiah came. Yet this return to Jerusalem, this rebuilding of the temple, was a vital partial fulfillment that guaranteed God's ancient purposes would one day be a reality. God wants people to know him and accept his offer of salvation by being in relationship with him and doing good works. God plan is for people to be called out of darkness into God's light, with each person having a part to play in his eternal plan and purpose.

2. *God never gives up on his people.* The return from exile is a new exodus. In spite of opposition from hostile officials and internal discouragement, God's people return to Zion. This great event looks back to the youth of the nation and forward to the final gathering of God's people in the new Jerusalem.

3. *God still guides his people.* The Scripture of the past is guidance for the present and future.



Discussion

What are the challenges facing those who return to Jerusalem? What factors found in this week's reading were needed to overcome these challenges?

Strong leaders

Knowledge of God's purposes

Discernment (Samaritan story)

Faith and hope in God's love and commitment to fulfilling his promises

Holy Spirit / guidance from God

Haggai

[Video Link](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juPvv_xcX-U&t



Isaiah 53:5

Book of Haggai

- Haggai is considered to be the author of the book.
- Haggai prophesized began in 520 BC, 20 years after the first exiles returned.
- This was a time of great hardship for God's people. Haggai encourages the people to have faith in and follow God.
- Key themes:
 - Haggai calls the people back into covenant with God
 - Rebuilding the temple will play a key role in the restoration of God's people so must be a priority in the lives of the people
 - God's covenant with David provides hope for a future king (Messiah)
- Four Prophecies
 - A call to build the temple
 - The promised glory of the new house
 - Blessings for a defiled people
 - Zerubbabel, the Lord's signet ring

Big Ideas in HAGGAI



Haggai is remembered outside his book for the vital role he played as a prophet, along with Zechariah, in rebuilding the temple after the Babylonians destroyed it almost 70 years earlier. He is considered the author of the Book of Haggai.

Haggai's prophetic ministry began in 520 BC, almost 20 years after the first exiles returned. At this time, Darius I Hystaspes (cf. [1:1](#)) was the Persian king who had just consolidated his rule after a series of rebellions following the death of the previous king, Cambyses (reigned 530–522 BC). Darius brought a measure of peace to the region and supported the temple rebuilding ([Ezra 5:3–6](#); [6:6–12](#)).

This period proved to be a time of great hardship for God's people (e.g., [1:6](#), [10–11](#); [Zech 8:10](#)). Earlier prophets had promised a glorious restoration after exile (e.g., [Zeph 3:20](#)). For those in Jerusalem the reality fell far short of this hope. Haggai understands that the temple is central to God's restoration purposes and speaks God's word of rebuke, challenge, and comfort to get its construction back on track. He also speaks of a future work of God to "shake the heavens and the earth" ([2:6](#), [21](#)) and establish his kingdom, moving from disappointment to hope. The book continues to encourage God's people about this coming kingdom and to challenge all readers about whether their priorities in life line up with God's. Haggai's message is filled with an urgency for the people to proceed with the rebuilding of the [second Jerusalem temple](#). Haggai attributes a

recent drought to the people's refusal to rebuild the temple, which he sees as key to [Jerusalem](#)'s glory. The book ends with the prediction of the downfall of kingdoms, with one [Zerubbabel](#), governor of [Judah](#), as the Lord's chosen leader.

Themes

1. *Covenant*. The book of Haggai must be read against the background of the Mosaic covenant; otherwise, there is a real danger of distorting its message into one that seeks to manipulate God by human-centered religion (i.e., build the temple to win God's blessing), a distortion that denies God's grace and twists the message into a "prosperity gospel." In Exodus, God saved his people by grace and gave them the law to show them how to live as his saved people. At the end of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, Moses spells out not only the blessings that will continue if God's people obey but also the curses that will come should his people disobey, the ultimate curse being exile from the promised land (e.g., [Deut 28:63–68](#)). Even then, God promises restoration and blessing when they repent ("return") and "obey" ([Deut 30:1–3](#)). In Deuteronomy, this repentance is ultimately a work of God ([Deut 30:6](#)), highlighting his grace. Haggai does not say, "Give to the temple, and God will make you rich." Rather, he calls the people back to covenant obedience and promises the blessings of the covenant. Furthermore, when the people heed the call to obey, Haggai explains this as God working in their midst by his Spirit through his powerful word ([1:12–14](#); [2:4–5](#)). This response in Haggai's day anticipates the new covenant (cf. [Jer 24:7](#); [31:33](#); [Ezek 11:19–20](#); [2 Cor 3:3](#); [Heb 8:10](#)).

2. *Temple*. The temple is a central theme in Haggai and one that traverses the Bible. God's intention since creation was to dwell in the midst of his people. Indeed, Eden is portrayed as a garden sanctuary (see note on [Gen 2:8](#); see also "Temple"). After the exodus, God established the tabernacle as the visible representation of his presence and rule ([Exod 25–31](#); [35–40](#); see note on [Exod 25:1–40:38](#)), and he promised that the goal of the Israelites' journey from Egypt would be his "sanctuary" ([Exod 15:17](#)). After King David built his house of cedar in Jerusalem, he desired to build a permanent house for God ([2 Sam 7:2](#)). This temple was built by David's son Solomon ([1 Kgs 5–8](#)). When God later judged his people by the Babylonians in 586 BC, the temple was destroyed ([2 Kgs 25:8–17](#)). Yet the prophets promised a key role for the temple in the restoration of God's people (e.g., [Isa 2:2–3](#); [44:28](#); [Ezek 40–48](#); [Joel 3:18](#); [Mic 4:1–2](#)). Hence, when the people returned to the land, rebuilding the temple was to be their priority, and Haggai reminds the people of this. God's ultimate purposes for the temple find their fulfillment in Jesus (e.g., [John 2:19–21](#)), the people of the church (e.g., [1 Cor 3:16–17](#); [Eph 2:21](#); [1 Pet 2:4–5](#)), and the new creation (e.g., [Rev 21–22](#)).

3. *Messiah*. Along with God's purposes for the temple, Haggai also confirms that God's covenant with David and the hope for a future king (Messiah) still stand ([2:23](#)).



Haggai

- A Hebrew prophet during the building of the second temple in Jerusalem.
- Contemporary with Zechariah
- No biographical details given on Haggai
- Began prophecy about 16 years after the Jews return to Judah (c520 BC).
- Work resumed on the temple following the stoppage under Zarubbabel.

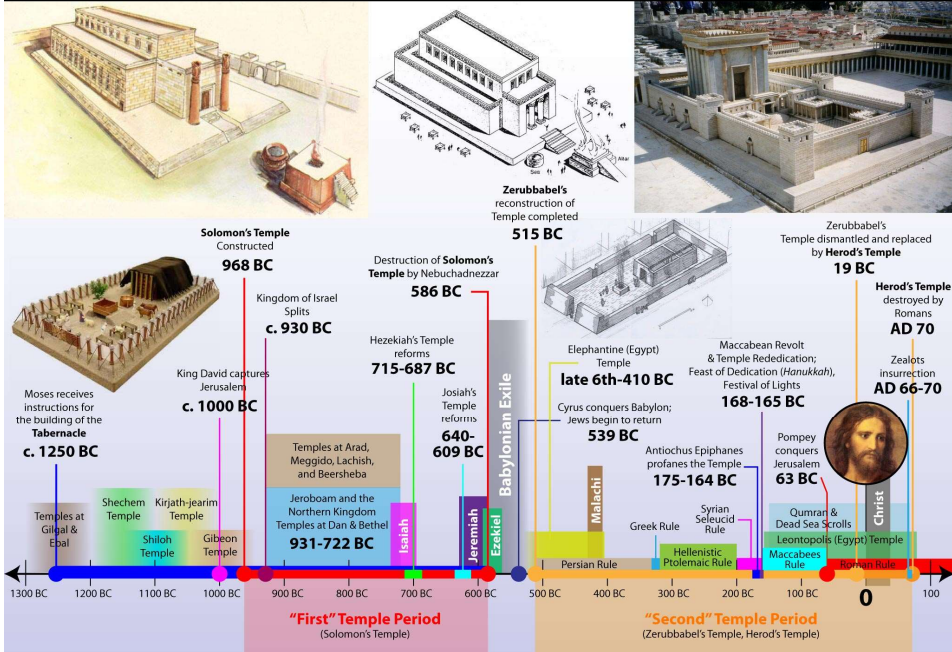
Haggai was a Hebrew prophet during the building of the second temple in Jerusalem, one of 12 minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and author of the Book of Haggai. He is known for his prophecy in 520 BCE, commanding the Jews to rebuild the Temple. He was the first of three post-exile prophets from the Neo-Babylonian Exile of the House of Judah (with [Zechariah](#), his contemporary, and [Malachi](#), who lived about one hundred years later), who belonged to the period of [Jewish history](#) which began after the return from [captivity](#) in [Babylon](#).

Scarcely anything is known of his personal history, with the book of Haggai offering no biographical details about his ancestry or anything else in his life outside the prophecies of 520 BCE. Haggai is only mentioned in one other book of the Bible, the book of Ezra. He may have been one of the [captives taken to Babylon](#) by [Nebuchadnezzar](#). Some commenters suggest he may have been an old man, and seen the previous temple before its destruction due to what he says about the former glory of the Temple in Haggai 2:3. He began God's prophecy about sixteen years after the [return of the Jews to Judah](#) (ca. 520 BCE). The work of rebuilding the [temple](#) had been put to a stop through the intrigues of the [Samaritans](#). After having been suspended for eighteen years, the work was resumed through the efforts of Haggai and Zechariah. They exhorted the people, which roused them from their lethargy, and induced them to take advantage of a

change in the policy of the Persian government under [Darius I](#).

Haggai supported the officials of his time, specifically [Zerubbabel](#), the governor, and [Joshua the High Priest](#). In the Book of Haggai, God refers to Zerubbabel as "my servant" as King David was, and says he will make him as a "signet ring," as King Jehoiachin was. The Persian Empire was growing weak, and Haggai saw time as an opportunity to restore the Davidic Kingdom. He believed that the Kingdom of David was able to rise and take back their part in Jewish issues. Haggai's message was directed to the nobles and [Zerubbabel](#), as he would be the first Davidic monarch restored. He saw this as important because the Kingdom would be an end to Jewish idol worship.

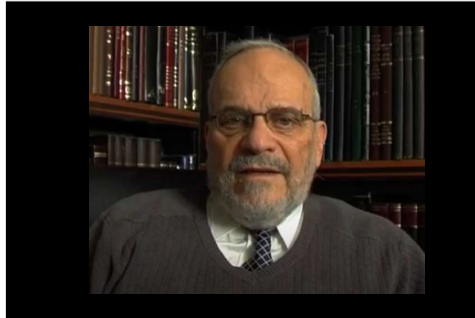
ANCIENT ISRAELITE TEMPLES TIMELINE (1300 BC—AD 100)



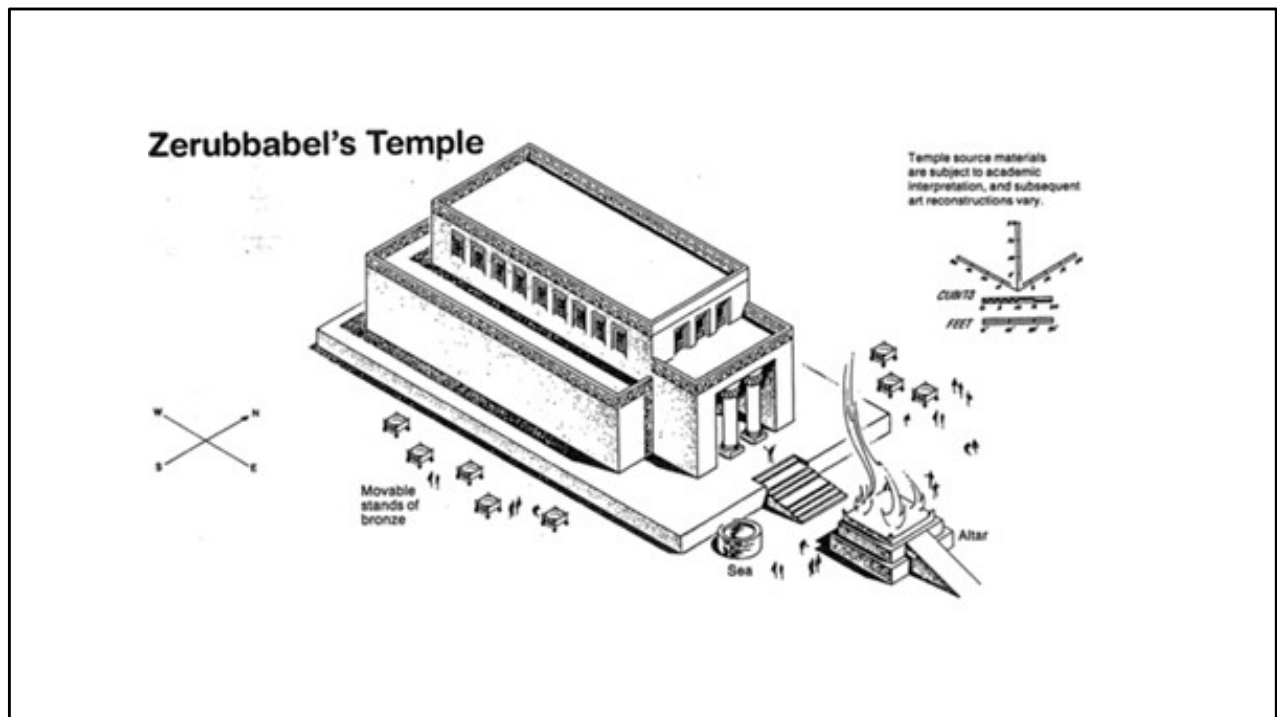
Differences Between the First and Second Temples

[Video Link](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=D1drBoNgdIM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1drBoNgdIM)



Isaiah 53:5



Construction of the second temple started in 536 BC on the Solomonic foundations level a half-century earlier by the Babylonians. People who remembered the earlier temple wept at the comparison (EZ 3:12). Not until 516 BC, the 6th year of the Persian emperor Darius I (522-486 BC). Was the temple finally completed at the urging of Haggai and Zechariah (EZ 6:13-15).

Archelological evidence confirms that the Persian period in Israel was comparatively impoverished one in terms of material culture. Later Aramaic documents from Elephantine in Upper Egypt illustrate the official process of gaining permission to construct a Jewish place of worship, and the opposition by the presence of various foes during this period.

Of the temple and construction little is known. Among the few contemporary buildings, the Persian palace at Lacish and the Tobiad monument at Iraq-el-Amir may be compared in terms of technique.

Unlike th emore famous structures razed in 586 BC and AD 70, the temple begun by Zerubbabel suffered no major hostile destruction, but was gradually repaired and reconstructed over a long period. Eventually it was replaced entirely by Herod's magnificent edifice.



Discussion

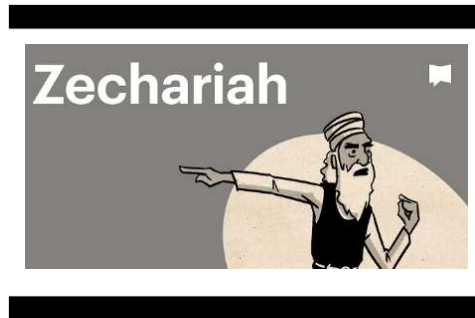
What is the importance of rebuilding the temple?

Rebuild community
Provide way to praise and honor God

Zechariah

[Video Link](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=_106lfO6Kc0&t](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_106lfO6Kc0&t)



Isaiah 53:5

Book of Zechariah

- Written by Zechariah, who played a key role with Haggai in rebuilding the temple, c518 BC
- The community faced many financial challenges and were challenged by outside enemies and low morale.
- Themes:
 - God returns to his people after the judgment of exile. God's people are to rebuild the temple and obey God's covenant requirements.
 - God's rule is sovereign
 - A future Davidic king (Messiah) will cleanse sin and reverse its consequence.
- Zechariah challenges the church not to despise the day of small things, but help build an eternal kingdom



The book of Zechariah looks to the coming kingdom of God. Zechariah deals in the first instance with the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem and the temple after they were destroyed by the Babylonians almost 70 years earlier. The high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel, along with the prophets, have important roles to play in this project. The book also looks beyond this reconstruction to the return of God, so that a cleansed Jerusalem will become the center of worship for all nations. Central to this latter project is a future Davidic king.

The prophet Zechariah is known outside his book for the key role he played, along with Haggai, in rebuilding the temple ([Ezra 5:1](#); [6:14](#)). His genealogy places him in a priestly family ([Zech 1:1, 7](#); [Neh 12:4, 16](#)). If he is the “Zechariah son of Berekiah” of [Matt 23:35](#), then he was later “murdered between the temple and the altar.” Some scholars since the 17th century question whether or not Zechariah wrote the book, how ever there is no evidence that he did not.

There are three dates in the book ([1:1](#), [7](#); [7:1](#)). They correspond to the years 520, 519, and 518 BC, some 20 years after Cyrus decreed (in 539 BC) that the Jewish exiles could return from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, which was completed in 515 or possibly 516 BC.

Zechariah's prophetic ministry, like Haggai's, began some 20 years after some Jews returned from exile in Babylon. The earlier prophets had promised that after the exile there would be a glorious restoration (e.g., [Isa 51:11](#)). For the exiles who returned to Jerusalem in Zechariah's day, the reality fell far short of the earlier prophetic hope. The community faced many challenges: financial hardship ([Hag 1:6](#)), opposition from outside enemies ([Ezra 4:1-3](#)), and low morale ([Hag 1:14](#)). There were also social problems ([Zech 8:10](#)), possibly on account of disputes between those who returned and those who remained in the land. It was a time of disappointment, disillusionment, despondency, and guilt. Zechariah calls the people to trust and obey God's word. He calls on them to get on with and complete the rebuilding of the temple in anticipation of God's return to establish his kingdom, a kingdom in which God will throw down all opposition by the nations and bring forgiveness and cleansing through his Messiah. In proclaiming this message, Zechariah maintains that the restoration hopes of the earlier prophets still stand, and he calls God's people to live in light of these promises.

A key theme of Zechariah is God's return to his people after the judgment of exile. Ezekiel depicts God's glory departing from the temple and Jerusalem on account of sin ([Ezek 8-11](#)), but it also anticipates God's return to the temple after the exile ([Ezek 43:1-5](#)) accompanied by covenant restoration and blessing. Zechariah says that God has now turned from judgment to mercy ([1:16](#); [8:3](#) and notes) and will return to dwell among his people ([1:3](#); [2:5](#), [10-11](#); [4:9-10](#); [8:3](#); [9:8](#); [14:5](#)). In view of God's return, God's people are to rebuild the temple and obey God's covenant requirements.

Other important themes of Zechariah include the sovereign rule of God (the book consistently calls him the "LORD Almighty"). As king over all the earth ([14:9](#)), he will judge enemy nations ([1:21](#); [2:9](#); [6:7-8](#); [9:1-14:21](#)) and save his people (Jerusalem/Zion) and those from the nations who seek him ([2:11](#); [8:20](#); [9:7](#); [14:16](#)). While God's people have an important role to play in the restoration, it is ultimately God's work (e.g., [4:6](#); [9:16](#); [12:7-9](#)). The restoration of covenant relationship with all of its ensuing blessings also underlies much of Zechariah's hope (e.g., [8:8](#); [13:9](#)).

Closely associated with God's return is a future Davidic king (Messiah) who will serve as a priest ([6:13](#)) by cleansing sin and reversing its consequences ([3:9](#); [13:1](#)). The NT identifies this king as Jesus, who fulfills the hopes for God's return (e.g., [John 1:14](#)). After the Psalms, Zechariah is the most quoted part of the OT in the passion narratives of the Gospels. Zechariah understood, like Isaiah before him, that God's kingdom would come only with the atoning death of God's Messiah ([12:10](#); [13:7](#); cf. [Luke 24:25-27](#)). Zechariah anticipates the coming of Jesus, who won the victory over the enemies of God's people through his death on the cross and who will fully realize this victory when he returns, when those from all nations will join God's chosen people to worship and to feast in his presence. The book of Revelation richly mines Zechariah's treasures.

Zechariah describes his time as a "day of small things" ([Zech 4:10](#)), yet this "day" is significant in that it anticipates a much greater day. Zechariah contains a vital message for the church today living in similar circumstances. The restoration has been inaugurated: God's Messiah,

Jesus, has come and established God's kingdom, and yet those who acknowledge Jesus are a minority and often face opposition in this age. The progress in the work of God's kingdom is often slow and discouraging. Yet God has promised that he is building an eternal kingdom. Zechariah challenges the church not to despise the day of small things; rather, "Let your hands be strong" ([8:9](#), [13](#)). Get on with Jesus' commission to build his church. Be people who reflect God's character, for his glorious kingdom is coming.

The Eight Visions of Zechariah

Vision	Passage	Description	Meaning
1	1:7-17	Man among the Myrtle Trees	God Promises Prosperity to Israel
2	1:18-21	Four Horns and Four Craftsmen	God Judges the Nations that attacked Israel
3	2:1-13	Man with a Measuring Line	God Rebuilds Jerusalem
4	3:1-10	Cleansing of the High Priest	God Purifies both High Priest and People
5	4:1-14	Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees	God Rebuilds the Temple
6	5:1-4	Flying Scroll	God Removes Imparted Sin/Idolatry
7	5:5-11	Woman in a Basket	God Removes the System of False Religion
8	6:1-8	Four Chariots	God Brings Peace and Rest to Israel
Appendix	6:9-15	Coronation of the High Priest	Messiah assumes of the office of both King and Priest

“The word of the LORD” (v. [7](#)) comes to Zechariah as a vision or a series of visions during the night. A vision is distinct from a dream in that the recipient is awake. These visions portray God returning to his people and establishing his kingdom. This is significant given God’s earlier abandonment of the Jerusalem temple, his palace. Having given Jerusalem over to the Babylonians, God will reestablish his control over the city.

The Man Among the Myrtle Trees: Proclaims the end of the exile, God’s coming judgment of nations and his return to Jerusalem. The function of the horses is explained by the Man in the Myrtle Tree: They “go throughout the earth” (v. [10](#)) to patrol or provide surveillance for God and express his sovereign rule. God has turned back to his people with mercy; the judgment of exile is over. God promises a rebuilt temple (his “house”) and city. Prosperity to Israel is promised.

Four Horns and Four Craftsmen: Connects the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple (v. [16](#)) with the judgment of the nations. Animal horns were a common image of military and political power. The number “four” elsewhere symbolizes north, south, east, and west (cf. [2:6](#); [6:1](#), [5-6](#)). Hence, the “four horns” (v. [18](#)) represent all the surrounding nations that “scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem” (v. [19](#)), primarily Assyria and Babylon, but also Egypt, Edom, Ammon, and Philistia. “Scattered” (v. [19](#)) refers to the exiles of the northern and southern kingdoms (cf. vv. [5-6](#), [15](#)). Craftsmen helped construct and repair the

tabernacle and temple. There are four to match the horns. the craftsmen are best understood as temple workers, who by their rebuilding will bring about the reversal promised in the first vision as God returns to judge the nations (an element of the third vision).

A Man with a Measuring Line: The man surveys Jerusalem for its rebuilding. God will judge the nations that have touched his people and his judgment will be like how the Israelites plundered the Egyptians. God will come and live with his people, presumably once the temple is built. The people are to be still or silent, anticipating God's return. The return of God's glory came with Jesus, who "made his dwelling among us" ([John 1:14](#)) and brought salvation for Israel and the nations (cf. [Acts 1:8](#); [Eph 2:13–18](#)). John's vision of the new Jerusalem in [Rev 21–22](#) draws on many aspects of Zechariah's vision.

Cleansing of the High Priest: The fourth vision pictures a heavenly court scene (cf. [Job 1–2](#)) where the high priest Joshua is cleansed for service in the new temple (vv. [1–5](#)). This priestly service anticipates the day of the Branch (Messiah), a day of forgiveness and prosperity (vv. [8–10](#)). God has delivered Joshua from the judgment of exile, but the image implies that he is charred and unclean. Joshua is cleansed by God's grace and clothed with clean garments so that he might serve God. If Joshua, now cleansed and clothed, obeys God in covenant faithfulness (cf. [Deut 11:1](#); [28:9](#)), then God will give him the privilege of governing his temple ("house"), guarding the purity of his temple "courts," and being admitted to his presence ("a place among these standing here"), the high priest's privilege on the Day of Atonement (cf. [Lev 16](#)). The branch (or shoot) (vv 3.8) is a future Davidic king of humble origins who is associated with the coming kingdom of God, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees: The fifth vision (vv. [1–5](#), [11–14](#)) centers on a message to Zerubbabel (vv. [6–10](#)) that he will build the temple by the power of God's Spirit.

Flying Scroll: After envisioning God's return in visions 1–5, visions 6–7 picture God judging the wicked and driving iniquity and wickedness far from the land. The Hebrew indicates that crimes have gone unpunished ("been acquitted" rather than "banished"), and hence there has been a corruption of justice. God has sent the scroll to put things right and ensure that the guilty will not be acquitted, an action consistent with his character (cf. [Exod 20:7](#); [34:7](#)).

Woman in a Basket: The seventh vision pictures wickedness being removed from the land and transported to Babylon. The woman in the basket represents wickedness, which in Hebrew is a near anagram for "Asherah," a foreign god worshiped up until the Babylonian exile. She is restrained in the basket and cannot escape.

Four Chariots: In the final vision, God's heavenly army subdues the nations and gives his Spirit rest. Recalls the horses in the first vision. "Four" may represent the scope of their mission to "the whole world" (v. [5](#); cf. [1:19–20](#)). Whereas the horses in the first vision did surveillance, these subdue the nations as God's heavenly army.

Coronation of the High Priest: Zechariah is to perform a symbolic action that looks beyond Zerubbabel's temple to the coming Branch and the temple that he will build. In the exile, the Davidic king was removed from the throne and his crown was defiled in the dust ([Ps 89:39](#); [Jer 22:24–30](#); [Ezek 21:26–27](#)). The crown is possibly placed on the high priest to sanctify it in preparation for a king to wear it again. Zechariah is to speak to Joshua, who represents the future "Branch" (or "Shoot") in this symbolic action. Exiles (cf. [2:6](#)) will come to help complete Zerubbabel's temple and thereby authenticate Zechariah's message. The challenge is to "obey."

Angel of the Lord

[Video Link](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i51qsJHiO_8)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i51qsJHiO_8

“Who is the angel of the Lord?”

The angel features in seven of the eight visions and explains the important features of the visions. Just who is The Angel of the Lord?



Discussion

How does God's glory and blessing come into your life? Does it come more in day-to-day work (Zerubbabel) or in worship (Joshua)? Into whose life do you bring blessing and renewal?



Indifference Brings Faithless Ritual

Zecariah 7:1-8:23
Ezra 5:2-6:22; 4:6-23
Daniel 6:1-28
1 Chronicles 1:1-9:34
Esther 1:1-10:3
Malachi 1:1-4:6

Closing Hymn

[Video Link](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rYw41Tkk_c&t

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; *
he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty savior, *
born of the house of his servant David.

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

As Job endures suffering by finding hope in the Lord, he continues in his complaints to God about evil, injustice and God’s presence in the world. Job is ultimately restored and rewarded for his faithfulness. Bad things do happen to good people. God does allow his children to undergo testing. But the Book of Job reminds us that God is still in control and gives us strength in bad times. As the remnant return to Jerusalem we are again reminded that God is in control of earthly events – after 70 years of exile and captivity, the Israelites return to their promised land, the temple is started and the Israelites are reminded to keep their priorities on God.. Zechariah moves the Israelites to action when they realize that God’s glory will only return to Jerusalem if the temple is complete. The future holds no fear when we remain obedient.

Weekly Reading Plan

Day 1: JOB 22:1-25:6
 Day 2: JOB 26:1-31:40
 Day 3: JOB 32:1-37:24
 Day 4: JOB 38:1-41:34
 Day 5: JOB 42:1-17; EZR 1:1-2:70
 Day 6: EZR 3:1-5:1; HAG 1:2-23
 Day 7: ZEC 1:1-6:15

Outline

Job’s Trials and God’s Faithfulness [Days 1-5]
 The Exiles Return [Day 5]
 Restoring Worship in Jerusalem [Day 6]
 Opposition to the Temple [Day 6]
 Haggai [Day 6]
 Zechariah [Day 7]

Key Characters

Job	Eliphaz
Bildad	Elihu
Cyrus	Exiles
Ezra	Joshua
Zerubbabel	Darius
Haggai	Zechariah

Key Locations

Uz
 Jerusalem
 Persia

Key Terms

Evil/Good	Covenant
Injustice/Justice	Community
Judgment	Redemption
Restoration	Rebuilding
Defiled	
Temple	
Blessings	

Key Verses

The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding. [JOB 28:28]

This is what Cyrus, king of Persia says: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. [EZR 1:2]

He is good; his love toward Israel endures forever. [EZR 3:11]

Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house; and I will be pleased with it and be glorified, says the Lord. [HAG 1:8]

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. [ZEC 1:3]

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Job22: Eliphaz said, "Is not your wickedness great? You withheld bread from the hungry. Is not God high? Submit to him and be at peace."

Job23: Job said, "If only I knew where to find God! When he has tested me, I shall come forth as gold. But he does whatever he pleases."

Job24: "The wounded cry out, but God charges no one with wrong. Some rebel against the light; they are exalted a while, and then are gone."

Job25: Bildad said, "Dominion and awe belong to God. Who can be righteous before him? Even the stars are not pure in his sight!"

Job26: Job said, "How you have helped the weak! Sheol is naked to God. The pillars of heaven tremble. These are the fringes of his ways!"

Job27: "My heart does not reproach me. Let my enemy be as the wicked! His many sons are for the sword. The wind sweeps him from his place."

Job28: "There is a mine for silver, but where is wisdom found? It is hidden from the eyes of all living. The fear of the Lord is wisdom!"

Job29: "Oh, for the days when God watched over me! When I took my seat in the square. I was father to the needy and comforted the mourners."

Job30: "But now younger men mock me. They do not hesitate to spit at me. God has cast me into the mire. When I expected good, evil came."

Job31: "Does God not see my ways? Have I lied? Have I refused to help the poor? Have I put my trust in money? Let the Almighty answer me!"

Job32: Elihu was angry with Job and his three friends. He said, "I am young, but it is not only the old who are wise. I will have my say."

Job33: "Job, please listen to my words. God does speak, perhaps in a dream or through pain. He does this to deliver a person from the pit."

Job34: "It is unthinkable that God would do wrong. Can one who hates justice govern? God shows no partiality. Job speaks like the wicked!"

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Job35: "Even if you are righteous, what do you give to God? He does not answer because of the pride of evil men. You must wait for him!"

Job36: "I have more to say on God's behalf. He is mighty but does not despise any. Who is a teacher like him? Remember to extol his work!"

Job37: "God thunders with his voice. By the breath of God, ice is made. Do you know his wondrous works? He is great in power and justice!"

Job38: Then the LORD said, "I will question you. Where were you when I founded the earth? Who enclosed the sea? Can you bind the Pleiades?"

Job39: "Do you mark when the deer is born? Will the wild ox serve you? Do you give the horse his might? Does the hawk fly by your wisdom?"

Job40: Job said, "I have no answer." The LORD said, "Will you condemn me? Behold now, Behemoth, which I made. Can anyone pierce his nose?"

Job41: "Can you catch Leviathan with a hook? Everything under heaven is mine. His breath sets coals ablaze. He is king over all the proud."

Job42: Job said, "I repent in ashes." The LORD said to Eliphaz, "You have not spoken rightly of me, as Job has." He restored Job's fortunes.

Ezr1: Cyrus said, "Let the LORD's people go up to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple." He gave the articles from the temple to Sheshbazzar.

Ezr2: The exiles returned to Judah with Zerubbabel. A total of 42,360 people returned. The heads of families gave offerings for the temple.

Ezr3: The Israelites made regular offerings. When the builders laid the foundation of the temple, the Levites sang praise to the LORD.

Ezr4: Enemies hindered the work in Judah. Rehum wrote to Artaxerxes: "Jerusalem is a rebellious city." So Artaxerxes stopped the building.

Ezr5: Zerubbabel began to build the temple. Tattenai wrote to Darius: "The elders say that Cyrus issued a decree to rebuild this temple."

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

Chapter Summaries (from @biblesummary)

Hag1: The LORD says: "Consider your ways! You never have enough because the temple lies in ruins." So the people worked on the temple.

Hag2: The LORD says: "The latter glory of this temple shall be greater than the former. This nation is unclean. But now I will bless you."

Zec1: The LORD said, "Return to me." So the people repented. I saw a man on a red horse. The LORD said, "I will return to Zion with mercy."

Zec2: I saw a man going to measure Jerusalem. The LORD says, "I will be her glory." He sent me to the nations. The LORD will inherit Judah.

Zec3: Joshua stood before the angel. The LORD rebuked Satan. They put new clothes on Joshua. The LORD says, "I will bring forth my servant."

Zec4: I saw a lampstand. I asked the angel about it. "Not by might but by my Spirit," says the LORD. "Zerubbabel will complete the temple."

Zec5: I saw a flying scroll. He said, "This is the curse on thieves and liars." I saw a woman in a basket. He said, "This is Wickedness."

Zec6: I saw four chariots with red, black, white and dappled horses. The LORD said, "Make a crown for Joshua. He shall build the temple."

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

Teachings About God

- God's glory is served even when evil is permitted. Christ's death is God's ultimate answer to the problem of evil.
- God was at work through pagan kings such as Cyrus and Artaxerxes to bring about the return from the exile and rebuilding the temple.
- God may require his people to forsake family ties for the sake of following his will.
- Because God is righteous he acts on behalf of his people. He keeps a faithful remnant.
- God desires to be honored by his people.
- God is Lord of Hosts and Lord of Armies
- Zechariah emphasizes God's mercy

Teachings About Humanity

- Human beings who live uprightly before God may experience suffering that they will never understand in this life.
- Ezra reestablished Israelite community under Mosaic law. People work together to accomplish God's objectives.
- Name lists show that each individual is important in God's purpose.
- Personal trust in God is expressed through participation in the right sacrifices and obeying God's law.
- The people rebuild God's temple

Teachings About Salvation

- The people who returned from exile were cured of idolatry.
- Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Reflections of Christ/Holy Spirit

- The creative work of God's spirit is evident in Job 33:4.
- Jesus announced part of his agenda was to proclaim release to captives – much as Ezra led the people back to Judea.
- The 2nd temple, the Jewish community, and a stable Jerusalem were important contexts for the coming of Jesus 500 years later.
- Jesus was a direct descendant of Zerubbabel
- The Gospels incorporate many passages from Zechariah.

Literary Genres/Techniques

- Job is wisdom literature written as Hebrew poetry with a narrative prologue and epilogue.
- Job written as "speculative wisdom," which explores the great questions of human existence.
- Ezra and Nehemia were originally one book.
- Ezra is comprised of court documents, lists, and narratives written in Hebrew with some Aramaic sections.
- Haggai is written in Hebrew prose.
- Zechariah includes prophecies, including visions and words from God, written mostly in Hebrew prose with some Hebrew poetry.

Author/Date of Writing/Audience

- Events in Job likely took place during the time of the Patriarchs (2000-1500 BC) and was perhaps written in Solomon's time (c950 BC).
- Ezra occurred from Cyrus's decree permitting the return through Ezra's initial ministry (c538-457 BC). It was written c430 BC by Ezra to those who returned to Jerusalem from exile.
- Haggai was a 6th century prophet who returned to Judah from Babylon.
- Haggai was written between August and December 520 BC in the 2nd year of Darius
- Zechariah was written c 518 BC to the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem.

Return to the Promised Land

JOB 22-42; EZR 1-2, 4-5; HAG 1-2; ZEC 1-6

June 25 – July 1 2024

What did I learn about God?

- In Job 23, Job can't sense God in his life. Why does God sometimes choose to "hide"? What can you do to make God reveal himself? Is he hiding from you or are you hiding from him? How does God take the initiative in finding you?
- When you look at the condition of the world today, do you ever wonder whether God is in control? Explain? Why do evil people prosper? Why does poverty and social injustice persist? What satisfaction do you derive from God's justice?
- What does the believer's apparent freedom to question or argue with God say about the character of God? Does questioning God mean you are lacking in faith or exercising faith?
- In history (c. 333BC) God used Alexander the Great to deal convincingly with those who opposed his will. Thus was the oracle in ZEC 9 fulfilled. What lessons does that teach you about God's love and holiness? About the authority of God's word spoken through prophets?

What did I learn about human nature?

- What does it mean to be basically good or evil?
- What would you say is the primary theme of Job: Suffering? Justice? Patience?
- What is the importance of rebuilding the temple?
- Why do the foreign leaders want the temple rebuilding to fail? What do they fear?

What did I learn about my life/relationship with God?

- Looking to the future, what right do we have to expect only good things from God? Doesn't God always give us "the desires of our heart"? What does God promise that we can expect? What doesn't he promise?
- How can the events of your life be used by God for reasons you might not be aware of? From what perspective can you say "the pain is worth the gain?" Are we each being tested like Job depending on what God knows we can handle?
- Do you agree with Elihu that God speaks to us through suffering? In what ways have times of suffering changed you? How did it affect your relationship with God? Were you ultimately a "better person" for it or were you devastated by it?
- How does God's glory and blessing come into your life? Does it come more in day-to-day work (Zerubbabel) or in worship (Joshua)? Into whose life do you bring blessing and renewal? What do your heart felt actions of justice and mercy say to God? To the world?