

ZECHARIAH

The Man: Apparently a member of a priestly family, he allowed his priestly role to dominate his prophetic. A contemporary of Haggai, who joined him in urging the rebuilding of the Temple, Zechariah's prophecies date from 520-518 B.C.

The Times: Those returning from the Exile struggled to restore the practice of Judaism. Jerusalem and surrounding villages were in ruins. Zechariah stressed the need for the people to undertake the work at hand, while holding fast to their messianic dreams.

The Message: The first 8 chapters of the book set forth 8 apocalyptic visions, in which Zechariah foresees the fulfillment of the Lord's promises, thus encouraging the people to undergo a moral conversion and to persevere in the work of restoration. The first priority is rebuilding the Temple, the symbol of God's presence among His people. The Lord's presence demands purity, so the people must reform their lives and adhere to Judaism's moral codes. Angels and demons act as mediators between God and man in Zechariah's prophecies. Several of Zechariah's images appear in the New Testament's Book of Revelation – the Four Horsemen (1:7ff; Rev 6:1-8), the measuring of the holy city (1:16; Rev 11:1-2), the two olive trees and lampstands (4:1-3, 11-14; Rev 11:4-10).

Chapters 9-14 (commonly referred to as Deutero-Zechariah) are of later composition (most likely between 300 and 180 B.C.) and have quite different characteristics than the first section. They present messianic visions of victory and freely use earlier writings. No dates are given, nor clear historical allusions. There is no mention of the rebuilding of the Temple, nor of royal house. Chapter 14 is one of the Bible's most intensely apocalyptic sections. The contents of Chapters 9-14 were frequently referred to by New Testament writers, including: the king meek and riding an ass (9:9), the good shepherd priced at 30 pieces of silver (11:12), the pierced one (12:10ff), the scattering of the sheep (13:7ff), and the Lord's triumph as king of the whole world (14:9).

Prophetic Themes in Zechariah

Authority: Thus says the Lord of hosts ...: [1:3,4,14,17]
The word of the Lord came to Zechariah: [1:1]

Call to Repentance: Return to the Lord, who will return to you; be truthful, judge honestly, don't plot evil against one another: [1:3-4; 8:16-17]

Remnant: I will bring them back to Jerusalem – they shall be my people and I will be their God: [8:4-8]

Day of the Lord = Salvation: The Lord will comfort Zion; He will dwell in Jerusalem, giving her glory; the remnant shall prosper; the messianic restoration will be accomplished and the Lord will fight the nations on Jerusalem's behalf: [1:17; 2:8-9,14-17; 8:2-15,20-23; Chs. 9, 10, 12-14]

Readings at Mass

9:9-10 – Rejoice, Zion, your king shall come to you, proclaiming peace. [Year A, 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time; In Time of War and Civil Disturbances]

12:10-11 – They shall look on him whom they have thrust through and shall mourn for him. [Year C, 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time]

2:5-9,14-15 – The Lord is coming to dwell in your midst, to be your glory. [Year I, Saturday – 25th Week in Ordinary Time]

8:1-8 – The Lord will dwell in Jerusalem, rescuing His people, and will be their God. [Year I, Monday – 26th Week in Ordinary Time]

8:20-23 – Many nations will seek the Lord in Jerusalem. [Year I, Tuesday – 26th Week in Ordinary Time; For the Spread of the Gospel]

2:14-17 – The Lord will dwell within you and possess Judah as his own. [Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Outside Easter]