

God Remembers

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Zechariah / Repentance / Zechariah 1:1-6

Introduction

Please turn in your Bibles to [Zechariah 1](#). If you don't know where Zechariah is, find the book of Matthew (first book in the New Testament), and just flip back two books.

Why Zechariah? This may seem like an unusual choice for our next study.

Some may think: Zechariah is a great book!

Others: What is Zechariah?

Or others: I do not understand Zechariah.

That is all understandable. This is an ancient book - written over 2,500 years ago. To many it is considered one of the most difficult books to study in all the Bible - right next to the book of Revelation. It is called, "The Apocalypse of the Old Testament."

Despite its' antiquity and difficulty, if you understand Zechariah you have a complete summation the entire Old Testament, a proper foundation for the New Testament, an informed expectation of your place in redemptive history, and a future hope for the return of Christ.

As it pertains to us here at Grace Bible Church, Zechariah is the lynchpin for the studies we have done this past year and that we will do this next year, Lord willing.

In Grace Equip we have just finished series on Pneumatology (study of the Holy Spirit) and Eschatology (study of last things). We have just begun a study in Christology (study of Christ).

During these Sunday morning services we have completed a series in Philippians and [Romans 8](#). In 2026 we are looking to start the gospel of Matthew.

But really if we want a proper understanding of who Christ is and what He came to do in the Gospels, if you want to know your place as a believer in God's plans, if you desire a greater grasp of what happens in the end days, you need to know the book of Zechariah.

Zechariah is part of a section of the Old Testament called the "12 minor prophets". You may be familiar with the four "major" prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. Maybe at some point or another you have read portions of these major prophets like Daniel in the lion's den or Isaiah's throne room scene.

But a lot of people neglect the minor prophets all together - the main reason being they just don't know what's going on or that it's just not as important. They are the "minor" prophets after all.

Don't mistake this - they are not called "major" and "minor" prophets because some are more important and others are less important. That simply is not true, although a lot of times we treat them that way. They are simply called major and minor because of their size, not their importance.

Zechariah doesn't fit that mold at all - it is a massive piece of literature both in size and significance. And it is one of the final revelatory words from God before there would be 400 years of silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

About 400-500 years after Zechariah another prophet would enter the scene who would prepare the way for the Lord Jesus Christ - a prophet named John the Baptist. John's first recorded words that he preached were:

Matthew 3:2 ESV

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Before that moment, there were 400 years of silence where there is no written inspired revelation from God.

What is the message God will convey in Zechariah? What did God’s people need to hear before the Messiah would appear hundred of years later?

[Zechariah 1:1-6](#) lays out the foundation of that message, and it is the same message that would kickoff the New Testament: *Repentance*.

As God so often does, He calls His people to repent. He calls them to repent in Zechariah and 400 years later He calls them to repent through John the Baptist.

John the Baptist preaches,

Matthew 3:2 ESV

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Jesus declares:

Luke 5:32 ESV

I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Paul in [Acts 20:21](#) was:

Acts 20:21 ESV

testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter writes in:

2 Peter 3:9 ESV

The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

A life that follows after the Savior is a life that repents away from sin.

Saving faith is like a two-sided coin. On the one side is REPENTANCE. It is a complete TURNING AWAY from sin. Flip the coin and on the other side is FAITH - TRUSTING in the Savior over sin.

On one side, repentance includes sorrow and conviction over sin. Saving faith mourns and is in misery over one's own sinfulness in light of who God is. It also does not stay in that place. It doesn't just feel bad for doing something wrong and return right back to doing it like a dog returning to its own vomit.

The Greek word for repentance literally means, "change of mind," but some have brushed it aside as a mere intellectual exercise. However what we see in Scripture is that biblical repentance is more than a change of mind - it is a change of heart that bears fruit in one's life. It is a change in the entire soul that turns from sin and turns TO the Savior in submission to His Word and His Lordship.

The Apostle Paul discusses this in [2 Corinthians 7:9-11](#) with a godly sorrow and a worldly sorrow.

A worldly sorrow mourns over sin, but is self-centered - be it their lust went unfulfilled, they feel guilty, a fear of getting caught, etc. They have regret, they may be remorseful, but they feel so bad for THEMSELVES that they despair. This is a sorrow of the world that leads to death - spiritual, physical, and eternal.

A godly sorrow mourns over sin, but is Christ-centered. It sorrows over sin BECAUSE of who GOD is. Its' desire is to be in right relationship with God, so it trusts in God for that salvation. This sorrow is according to God and produces a repentance without regret - a true life change in the very core of the believer.

It pursues life in Christ. It vigorously seeks after righteousness, is infuriated over sin, and comes to such an end of self that it does not care about protecting itself.

No matter the cost to one's image or reputation, it desires to make things right for God and His purity.

This is what genuine repentance is - not a 360 degree turn back to the same way of life, but a 180 degree turn to Christ and life in Christ. It is in Christ where hope, life, and salvation is found.

This is the message of Zechariah! It is a message of hope and comfort for the people that God REMEMBERS. He REMEMBERS His people and REMEMBERS His promises.

There may be times when everything seems lost. There may be no motivation to keep going. It all may seem pointless. But God REMEMBERS. There is hope in the coming Savior.

- › To experience the blessing of comfort and salvation from God, sinners must first genuinely REPENT of their sin.

This is God's decree in the opening 6 verses of Zechariah where believers are reminded of the very nature of godly repentance.

What does genuine repentance look like for God's people?

In [Zechariah 1:1-6](#), believers are reminded of 4 components to godly repentance:

1. The Right Messenger of Repentance (1)
2. The Right Motive of Repentance (2)
3. The Right Message of Repentance (3)
4. The Right Model of Repentance (4-6)
 - a. Lacking in Submission (4)
 - b. Legacy of Sinfulness (5)
 - c. Learn from the Sovereign (6)

Zechariah's message is this: God Remembers. Therefore, Repent.

Today we will just be looking at verses 1-3 and next time we will finish this section by studying verses 4-6.

Let's look at the nature of godly repentance beginning in verse 1:

1. The Right Messenger of Repentance (1)

Zechariah 1:1 ESV

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius.

Stop right there. We will be spending a lot of our time this morning in just verse 1.

- › Isn't it amazing that Scripture is not in a historical vacuum? God is the God over all time and history. Scripture IS true and the Bible is actual history.

The world often treats the Bible as PART of history. Some may even concede that it plays a SIGNIFICANT part in history.

But it is more than just a PART of history. It outlines ALL of redemptive history.

As you study Zechariah what you will learn, and what I was reminded of recently, is that:

Theology drives history and history facilitates theology.

Those who go to a Christian university may use the term "bubble". They find themselves in a campus bubble where you can easily be isolated from the rest of the world if you let yourself.

- › Friends, the Bible is not in a bubble. And it is not just a PART of history.

Theology drives history and history facilitates theology.

God is accomplishing His purposes throughout world history and what we see unfold throughout the globe throughout time is the unfolding of theology. We see this in just these opening words.

- › **Do not skip over them! The Lord is giving you these details in these God-breathed words for a reason:**

Zechariah 1:1 ESV

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius.

Yahweh has big promises for the nation of Israel. From [Genesis 3:15](#) to the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants, God is keeping up His end of the bargain to bless the nation. God will always accomplish what He will set out to do.

The problem is Israel keeps disobeying God. In the Mosaic Covenant, there was promise for Israel that there would be blessing for obedience and curses for disobedience.

[Deuteronomy 28-29](#) and [Leviticus 27](#) detail how if they disobey God, He will punish them through Exile - a physical and spiritual exile. Blessing was available to them if they simply repented and obeyed.

But Israel kept doing what was right in their own eyes, so God was faithful to His promises. The nation divided between the 10 northern tribes, which would be called "Israel", and the 2 southern tribes (Judah and Benjamin), which would be called "Judah."

In 722 BC the 10 northern tribes would go into captivity under the Assyrians. Then in three different military campaigns (605, 597, and 586 BC) King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon took the people of Judah into exile for 70 years.

Jeremiah first prophesied of this in:

Jeremiah 25:11 ESV

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Why 70 years? One layer of Judah's disobedience was that God required every seventh year for the land to receive a sabbath rest ([Lev. 25:1-7](#)). If not, there would be judgment ([Lev. 26:27-46](#)).

For 490 years, from the time of Eli in [1 Samuel 1-4](#) to the Babylonian captivity, Israel disobeyed that command 70 times. Through a 70 year Exile, the land would receive the sabbath rest God demanded. The Babylonian Exile began in 605 BC. God's glory had departed the temple ([Ezekiel 10-11](#)) and Jerusalem was destroyed.

- › Remember: Theology drives history and history facilitates theology.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that Exile would not last forever. He continues in:

Jeremiah 25:12 ESV

Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

That is exactly what happened. King Cyrus the Great of the Medo-Persian empire conquered Babylon and King Nebuchadnezzar in 539 BC. One year later Cyrus makes a decree that we see recorded in [2 Chronicles 36](#) and [Ezra 1](#). Cyrus (with the prophet Daniel perhaps as his influence) decreed for the exiles to return to Jerusalem and rebuild Solomon's temple.

- › Just a note here about when you read your Bible, we often think so linearly don't we? We assume that the order the books of the Bible are in must be the order of how things happen.

- › As you start piecing this puzzle together we realize that several of the Old Testament books occur in the same span of history even in different parts of the world.

[Ezra 1-2](#) and the book of Nehemiah, for example, record how just over 42,000 Jews returned to the land, led by Zerubbabel (their governor) and Jeshuah (the High Priest). It was during this time that two men - the prophets Haggai and Zechariah - entered the land.

Zerubbabel and Jeshuah led the way in rebuilding the temple altar and reinstating festival sacrifices. However their progress was halted when King Cyrus died, his son takes over, then HE dies.

At this time there was great political unrest. Enemies were opposing the rebuilding of the temple. What may have seemed hopeful now seemed lost.

- › Think about these folks situation.

The nation was exiled for SEVENTY YEARS. That is 3 generations in Exile! Some returned that never saw the temple - they were born in Babylon. Some returned with little memory of it - perhaps returning to the land quite old.

Many did not return for one reason or another - perhaps they didn't see it worth the risk to travel 900 miles from Babylon to Jerusalem. Perhaps some desired to return but couldn't because they couldn't make the trip whether with too young of children or too elderly or sickly to make the journey.

Even those who wanted to be there, when they finally arrive they look around and say, "This is it? There's nothing here! There is no temple, everything is in ruins, our homes are destroyed!"

Once they finally get some traction and start rebuilding, their enemies oppose them from without and within. They start building their own houses instead of God's house - was there really a point to build the temple?

Sixteen years pass when God raises up King Darius to retake the throne in Persia who encourages the Jews to keep rebuilding the temple.

The fact that Zechariah identifies Israel with the Persian king indicates what Daniel prophesied and what Jesus calls in [Luke 21:24](#) - “the time of the Gentiles”:

Luke 21:24 ESV

...Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The Apostle Paul writes about the present condition of the nation of Israel in:

Romans 11:25 ESV

I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

This is a key moment in redemptive history. The 70 year Exile was not a simple slap on the wrist for the nation of Israel - just because they are back in the land doesn't mean they will be handed all the promises of blessing.

No, they didn't need to just return physically - they needed to also return SPIRITUALLY. They needed to repent.

But as Paul writes in:

Romans 10:14 ESV

And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

God would raise up two men - two prophets - two speak on behalf of God. The prophets were those who revealed and taught the truth. They spoke the word of the LORD in both present and future circumstances. These weren't just any men - they were the right men that embodied the right message.

On August 29, 520 BC God raises up an older man by the name of Haggai. You can find the book of Haggai just a page before this book. Haggai's messages are short and sweet - and he rebukes the people to rebuild the temple.

God used Haggai to get the people up, but He would use another prophet to keep them going:

Zechariah 1:1 *ESV*

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying,

In the eighth month in the second year of Darius would have been just two months after Haggai's first message in [Haggai 1](#) - about October-November 520 BC.

Who is Zechariah? Chapter 2 describes him as a young man when he writes this prophecy. He was most likely born in Babylon and never had seen Jerusalem or the temple, but he was one of the first to return to the land.

Like Haggai, Zechariah's message to those returning to the land was to rebuild the temple. The two prophets had similar messages, but also had many differences:

- Haggai was most likely older. Zechariah most likely younger.
- Haggai's ministry was a short season. Zechariah's ministry spanned decades throughout the rebuilding of the temple.
- Haggai's message was a practical rebuke. Zechariah's message was a theological hope.
- Haggai told the people what to do. Zechariah told them why to do it.

The temple is significant for Israel and what God is accomplishing in history because it signifies God's promise of His presence with His people in His place for His praise, which is the entire story line of the Bible.

Many of the prophets prophesy about the temple not only because it was the center for Israel's worship, not only because of its significance when Jesus arrives on the scene and for HIS ministry, not only because it indicated obedience of God's people, not only because God's dwelling and glory would be among the people, but also because it pointed to the future hope that God's glory would fill the entire earth.

Zechariah's message to rebuild the temple would have been significant not only because he was a prophet, but also because he was a priest ([Nehemiah 12:1, 4](#)).

Verse 1 says Zechariah is the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. Other places in Scripture mention Zechariah as the son of Iddo as well. Most believe that Zechariah's father, Berechiah, most likely died young when Zechariah himself was young, and was raised by his priestly grandfather, Iddo.

The Lord carefully orchestrates Zechariah's lineage to prepare the Right Messenger for the Right Message.

Zechariah's name means, "Yahweh remembers."

Berechiah's name means, "Yahweh blesses."

Iddo's name means, "in its time."

And that again is the message of Zechariah - Yahweh remembers and blesses in His time.

That is a message of great hope, but ultimately was not received well by the people.

The Lord Jesus Christ directly references the prophet Zechariah as one of the last martyrs of the Old Testament. In [Matthew 23:35](#) Jesus confronts the people that they murdered Zechariah between the sanctuary and the altar.

The very temple Zechariah spent his whole life preaching about and pointing the people to would be the very place where he was murdered by his own people.

You'll notice in verse 1 that Zechariah WAS The Right Messenger - and he was just that - a MESSENGER.

Zechariah was not on his own proclaiming his own message. Verse 1 says,

Zechariah 1:1 ESV

the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah...saying...

When you see LORD as capital "LORD" in your Bibles that is the Hebrew name of God - Yahweh. Literally the word of Yahweh came to Zechariah speaking to him with a message.

If you do a quick word study on "the word of the LORD" or "the word of Yahweh" in Scripture you will notice that these aren't just "words" that came to Zechariah's mind. The word of Yahweh:

- Is revealed and actually comes to speak revelation from God (e.g. Abraham and David in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants ([Gen. 15](#), [2 Sam. 7](#)))
- Is feared ([Ex. 9:20](#))
- Is rebelled against ([1 Kings 13:21](#))
- Is equated with God Himself ([2 Samuel 22:31](#))

In [John 1](#) we know that that the Word became what? FLESH. And DWELT among us.

Zechariah's message was not simply WHAT he came to preach but WHO he came to preach.

The word of Yahweh IS the Messiah, coming to proclaim the coming Messiah.

What is the word of Yahweh proclaiming through Zechariah? In verse 2 we see a second component to godly repentance:

2. The Right Motive of Repentance (2)

The word of Yahweh says:

Zechariah 1:2 ESV

“The LORD was very angry with your fathers.

You and I may have fits of sinful anger. The root of anger is when you don't get what you want, so you quickly react in selfish ambition. Some clam up, some blow up, some people clam up then blow up. Jesus equates the severity of sinful anger with the guilt of murder in [Matthew 5](#).

This is not the type of anger God has. This is not sinful anger that revolves around the flesh's desires. There is no sin found in God. God does not quickly react.

This is a holy, righteous, patient, and pure wrath against sin. [Hebrews 12:29](#) describes God as a consuming fire. God never has nor ever will sin.

- › You may hear critics of the Bible pit God against Himself saying how the God of the Old Testament is wrathful but the God of the New Testament is loving.

However those of you who have read your Bibles at all know how silly that idea is. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God IS love in both the Old and New Testaments. God is also wrathful against sin both in the Old and New Testaments.

You may hear this phrase “very angry” and think of a parent saying to a child, “I am very angry with you.”

That is NOT the sense here. We could literally understand this as,

“Yahweh was furious against your fathers with FURY.” This is tremendous wrath against the sinner.

Yahweh remembers. Although the people may have forgotten the wickedness of the previous generations, God does not forget. And He was angry.

In [Deuteronomy 29:22](#), we see this display of God's intense wrath against the nation. Even other nations will ask, "Why does God have such anger against this land?"

Moses goes on to share the reason - because they forsook their God and served and worshipped other gods.

Therefore, in His anger, fury, and great wrath, Deuteronomy says, He brought every curse against the land and sent His people into exile.

- › Have you forgotten God today and instead have worshipped and served other gods? It may not be a little statue or running off to another religion, but perhaps it is an idol in your own heart. Is there anything that you love and serve more than God?

God's great fury and wrath comes against sin.

- › You may have heard the phrase, "Hate the sin, love the sinner."
- › What does God say here?

Zechariah 1:2 ESV

"The LORD was very angry with **your fathers**.

God wasn't just angry at their sin, His anger was against THEM. This was God's reminder and motivation for them to begin Zechariah's prophecy.

- › This may be hard for you to hear, but God doesn't just hate wickedness, He hates the WICKED ([Psalm 11:5](#)). Sinners are His enemies.
- › You might be saying, "Wait! I thought this was supposed to be a book of comfort and hope!"

Yes! Because knowing how angry God was against sinners demonstrates God's grace to the sinner all the more.

God doesn't stand for the nation to remain in exile. He doesn't continue to blame the previous generation's sin on this generation. THEY now have the opportunity to be in right relationship with their God.

The motivation to repent was looking to the past generation and seeing where their sin led. Sin always, ALWAYS, leads to curse. Sin always destroys. There is nothing ever good about turning from the Lord.

In verse 3, God offers:

3. The Message of Repentance (3)

Zechariah 1:3 ESV

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

Three times in this verse God declares Himself as יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת : Yahweh of Hosts. He is the LORD of the armies.

We've seen this morning how God is in control of history, isn't He? He raises up rulers, moves armies, conquers nations, according to HIS sovereign will.

THAT Sovereign God who has the authority to take Israel out of the land to bring them back has the same authority to say, "Return to Me, and I will return to You."

I imagine an Israelite at this time might think, "I've returned to the land, I've returned to start rebuilding the temple, I've returned in participating in some sacrifices - isn't that enough?"

A return to their works did not mean a return to their worship.

For God, this is personal, and it always has been. He has never been after external offerings for worship, but the internal heart of worship. The Lord desires relationship with His people in communion with Him.

- › That's true for you and me as well. If you have wavered in some way with your walk with the Lord, returning to church, returning to serving, returning to owning a Bible, or whatever the case - that may all be good and needed. But you ultimately need to return to GOD Himself.

This showed there was still a spiritual separation between Israel and the Lord. This was Zechariah's own people, but in verse 2 He calls them "YOUR fathers" not OUR fathers. This was more than an ethnic relationship that needed repair - it was a spiritual one.

God commands for them to, "RETURN to me." That is what repentance is - a TURNING. You are going in one direction, but you shift to go in the opposite direction.

Before we moved to Northern Virginia I took a student ministry to visit Washington DC. We were over by the Lincoln Memorial but our driver, bless his heart, could not get over to where we were. So he kept circling and circling and circling around DC. He saw where he needed to be, but he just kept circling.

We can do that spiritually can't we? We know where we need to be, but we keep circling around the same sinful cycles.

This is where God says, "Return to ME." Repentance is more than walking your own way and just looking over at the right thing to do. It's more than knowing what's true, it's turning to the One who IS the way, the truth, and the life.

Sin always leads to curse, but repentance and obedience always leads to blessing.

- › What a display of God's love and patience toward His people! He is a just God that punishes sin, but also that offers salvation even through judgment.

There is a promise for the nation of Israel that if they return to Yahweh, He will return to them. I believe for Zechariah's audience, they would have understood this as a return of God's presence among them, particularly His dwelling in the rebuilt temple.

This is the prophecy that Haggai gave just weeks before in [Haggai 2](#) - and now Zechariah affirms that message saying, “Yes, God will return. But you must repent and return to Him.”

For Israel, to experience the spiritual blessing they needed to meet the spiritual condition. And ultimately as history unfolds what we see is that God’s glory still has not returned to that temple. In fact, there is no temple - it was destroyed again by the Romans in 70 AD. The promised temple will not be rebuilt until the Messiah returns at the end of days. It is THEN when Israel will finally come to repentance, the temple will be rebuilt, and God’s glory will again dwell with His people.

In the meantime, what we learn in the New Testament is that Christ and the Spirit of Christ do dwell somewhere - in the heart of the believer.

But for that to happen there is also a spiritual condition that must happen - you must repent and believe. Be born again. Turn from your sin and the idols of your heart and turn to the Word who came in flesh and dwelt among us - Jesus Christ.

God remembers and has not forgotten. He is furious with sin, but He patiently extends the gift of repentance to the sinner by His grace.

As Zechariah preaches the message of repentance to Israel over 2500 years ago, the message is still the same today - turn from your sin and trust in your Savior.

Conclude:

When I first became a Christian, my grandfather was close to death.

- Refused

- Threw medicine bottles

- Never desired

- Last words were a prayer of repentance and faith in Christ, believing Christ died and rose again to forgive Him and have eternal life.

- A life of sin led him to his death, and by God's grace I pray came to saving faith at the end.

- Do not wait and let a life of spiraling cycling sin rob you from the blessing of life in Christ and to glorify Christ.

- Turn to Him today to bring Him glory for the rest of your days - today is the day of salvation for you.

- This is the message of Zechariah: God Remembers, Therefore REPENT. Next time we will look together at The Model of Repentance in verses 4-6 and look ahead to the unfolding of that message for the rest of Zechariah.

Let's pray.