I. TITLE

A. Zechariah, the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo, prophesied after the Exile, 1:1, 7

1. This is probably the same Iddo who is listed among the returning priests with Zerrubbabel in 546 (Neh. 12:4, 16)

2. So Zechariah was both priest and prophet, like Ezekiel and Jeremiah.


1. "Zechariah Son of Jehoiada" may have had two names and Jesus is referencing this "Zechariah"

2. "Zechariah, Son of Berechiah," i.e., Zechariah grandson of Iddo, is the one Jesus references and the OT does not record his murder.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Two dates are mentioned in connection Zechariah's prophesies

1. 520 B.C. — the 2nd year of the reign of Darius Hystaspis, 1:7

2. 518 B.C. — the 4th year of his reign of his reign, 518 7:1

3. Zechariah may have been active before 520 and long after 518.

B. In 538 B.C. (18 years before Zechariah's prophecy) Babylon was destroyed by Cyrus the Great

1. Nabonidus king of Babylon had turned the responsibility over to his son, Bel-shar-usur (Belshazzar of Dan 5)

2. Cyrus, exhibiting a tolerance to the religions of the oppressed nations, to return home

3. Cyrus gained control over the entire ancient Near East, but died in 528.

C. His son Cambyses succeeded him, but proved to be a weak king
1. His greatest achievement was defeating Psammetichus III of Egypt and occupying that country.

2. His abuses in Egypt awakened their animosity to such a degree they continually tried to overthrow the Persian overlords.

D. Prior to this Cambyses had behaved similarly at home

1. He murdered his brother Bardiya (Smerdis) but kept the deed secret.

2. Thus, while in Egypt resentment grew at home.

3. A Magian named Gaumata arose, claiming to be Bardiya, and gained popular support.

4. A rebellion started March 11, 522.

5. Cambyses was soon dead, but on his deathbed he confessed to his brother's murder hoping to unmask the pretender and ensure that the new king would come from the ranks of the Achaemenians.

6. The strategy worked, for a young officer named Darius returned to Persia from Egypt and killed Gaumata in a carefully planned conspiracy.

7. Darius, who was somehow linked to the family of Cambyses, succeeded in gaining control on Sept. 29, 522.

E. At first only 2 satraps were loyal to Darius

1. Media formed its own government

2. Parsa, homeland of Darius, became unfaithful

3. Elam declared its independence

4. Darius turned against Babylon, which had rebelled under the so-called Nebuchadnezzar II (Nidintu-Bel), and defeated the rebels on Dec. 18, 522

5. Early in 521 he was in control of the entire empire.

6. Later that year another Babylonian pretender tried to gain control, but he was defeated and the rebel leaders were impaled.
F. This set of circumstances created new hopes for liberty among the smaller nations.

1. The returning Jews hoped to succeed in rebuilding the temple
2. Its construction had been interrupted by the Samaritans
3. They had written the Persian authorities requesting a halt to the work
4. As we have seen in Haggai, Haggai and Zechariah played an important role in kindling enthusiasm for this work.
5. The whole episode of the building and the protest of the governor of the western part of the kingdom are vividly described in Ezra 5-6
6. When Cyrus' original document authorizing the rebuilding was found, Darius commanded the governor to withdraw his accusation (Ezra 6:6f.).
7. The Jews were allowed to continue their work,
8. They completed it in the 6th year of Darius
9. Zechariah’s night vision played a particularly important role in this outstanding accomplishment.

G. While this historical background throws some light on the first part of Zechariah (1-8), the second part (9-14) is very difficult to associate with any definite period.

III. CONTENTS — The prophecies of Zechariah can be subdivided in three sections: 1-8; 9-11; 12-14.

A. 1-8:

1. General Introduction, 1:1-6
   a. These verses issue a special message of repentance to the Jews.
   b. 1:1 states Zechariah delivered it in the 8th month of the 2nd year of Darius, i.e., 520 B.C.

2. Eight Visions of the Night, 1:7-6.15 — dated the 24th day of the 11th month of the 2nd year of Darius; that is, 3 months after first prophesies and 2 months after the cornerstone of the temple had been laid (1:7; cf. Hag 2:18) all these visions encourage the people to rebuild the temple.
a. **The 4 Horsemen and the Man Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17)** — the horsemen announce that the world is at peace (in 520).

   (1) This is not encouraging, because Jerusalem is still oppressed.

   (2) The comforting thing is that Yhwh is again turning to Jerusalem in compassion and the temple will be built (v. 16).

b. **The 4 Horns and Four Smiths (1:18-21 [H 2:1-4]):**

   (1) The horns symbolize the world powers that carried the Jews into exile.

   (2) The smiths are sent by God to destroy these powers.

c. **Man with a Measuring Line (2:1-5 [H 5-9]); Appendix (2:6-13 [H 10-17]):**

   (1) **2:1-5 (H 5-9):**

      (a) The man with a measuring line indicates that Jerusalem will be rebuilt.

      (b) No wall is necessary because the Lord Himself will protect the inhabitants.

   (2) **2:6-13 (H 10-17):**

      (a) **Verses 6-9,** refer to the Exile and the impending punishment of Judah's oppressors

      (b) **Verses 10-13,** which promise that the Lord will dwell in the midst of His people as soon as the temple is built.

d. **Trial of Joshua the High Priest (3:1-10),** whose filthy garments indicate both his sins and the people, as accused by Satan and acquitted by the Lord.
e. **The Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees (4:1-14)**, can be subdivided into three parts:

1. **Verses 1-5**, are a vision of the lampstand and two olive trees, which refer to the restoration of the temple service.
2. **Verses 6-10**, show that nothing will stop Zerubbabel from rebuilding the temple.
3. **Verses 11-14**, in which Zechariah is told the vision refers to the two anointed ones (generally thought to be Zerubbabel and Joshua).

f. **The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)** announces that sinners will be cut off from Judah.

g. **The Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)**:

1. Symbolizes the nation’s sins
2. She is carried away to Babylon, the seat of sins.

h. **The Four Chariots (6:1-8)**:

1. This vision stands in close connection with the first.
2. The difference is that the horses return in the first vision, while the chariots do not.

3. **Miscellaneous Prophecies and Historical Events (6:9-8:23)**:


b. **True Righteousness Superior to Fasting (ch. 7)**:

1. In 7:1 a new date is given, the 4th day of the 9th month of the 4th year of Darius, thus 518 B.C.
2. Stresses that unrighteousness will be punished.
(3) Zechariah delivered this message after a deputation came to the priests and prophets to ask about fasting over the fallen city and the mined temple.

c. **Promise of Glorious Blessings (8:1-23):**

(1) This prophecy sketches a glorious future for the remnant of Israel.

(2) When the messianic age dawns on Judah and Jerusalem, there will be manifold blessings (vv. 1-17).

(3) Then the Jews will hold their fasts in great joy and the heathen will join them in seeking the Lord (vv. 18-23).

B. **9-11:**

2. The Messianic Kingdom and the King’s Triumphant Procession (9:9-17).
3. God Alone the Giver of Rain (10:1f.)
4. The Triumphant Deliverance and Return from Exile (10:3-11:3).

   a. These emphasize that God’s anger is turned against the oppressors of Israel

   b. 11:1-3 describes their fall

5. Good and Bad Shepherds (11:4-17) — in symbolic words and acts, this enigmatic passage prophesies the judgment of God’s unfaithful people.

C. **12-14:**

1. Future Deliverance and Blessing (12:1 -14) — in the far future enemies of God’s people will march against Jerusalem but God will obliterate them (cf Ezek 38-39).

2. The Rooting Out of Idolatry and False prophecy (13:1-6)

3. National Purification (13:7-9) — the death of the shepherd (leader) will lead to the scattering of but a faithful remnant will remain.

4. Last Battle of the Host of Yahweh (14:1-21):
a. Foreign nations will march against Jerusalem on “a day of the Lord,” but they will be defeated by God.

b. The people of God will live in peace in Jerusalem, and other nations will come to celebrate with them the Feast of Tabernacles.

IV. COMPOSITION

A. Most modern scholars do not regard Zechariah as a unity.

1. Only chaps. 1-8 are commonly assigned to Zechariah.

2. Some scholars have thought that a redactor contributed to this part, but this is very difficult to prove.

3. Both 1:1 and 7:1 assign the prophecies of this part to Zechariah.

B. The real difficulty lies with the second part, chaps. 9-14.

1. Matt 27:9 quotes Zech 11:12ff. but attributes the passage to Jeremiah.

a. In the 1st century the OT did not have chapters and verses

b. Verse citation therefore was nearly non existent

c. Instead of "book, chapter, and verse," we find things like "found the place where it was written" (Luke 4:17)

d. Matt 27:9 mentions both the "potter's field," and the "30 pieces of silver"

e. Jeremiah mentions the potter (18:2-3; 32:6-15) and, being a larger book would be easier to find

f. Evidently, the practice was to cite the larger book.

2. There is considerable variety of opinion relative to the date of these chapters.
a. Proposals include the days of Alexander the Great, the wars of the Diadochi, the Ptolemaic period in Palestine, the time of Antiochus the Great’s invasion of Palestine, and the age of the Maccabees. The dates range, therefore, from 330 to 166.

b. Scholars really have no way of knowing

c. The major problem is that no definite historical event is mentioned in these chapters.

d. Some arguments for certain dates are built on stylistic and linguistic differences, the short and fragmented nature of this section makes any conclusion difficult

e. At the present we just do know what the date for these prophecies.

3. There is some connection in style between 6:9-8:23 and the second part.

a. Zechariah may have written the second part in two consecutive sections — 1st chapters 9-11, and then chapters 12-14.

b. Zechariah may have used earlier prophecies. e.g., those of Jeremiah, and blended them with his own, but we have no proof

V. CHARACTER

A. Zechariah is one of the few OT books with definite apocalyptic characteristics.

B. Various visions are described in other prophetic books,

C. Zechariah’s eight night visions must be regarded as unique

1. They are written in language that is symbolic and sometimes almost cryptic.

2. There are horses with different colors, an outsized book or scroll, an ephah, a mysterious lampstand, and two olive trees

3. Sometimes an explanation is offered, but sometimes it is withheld.

4. All these visions symbolize important expectations.
5. The symbolism is artificial as is common in apocalyptic literature.

6. Frequent reference is made to angels, and the role of an interpreting angel is especially emphasized, which are common in later apocalyptic literature.

7. Zechariah differs from apocalyptic literature in that Babylonian and Persian influences are almost completely absent.

D. When Zechariah is compared with other apocalyptic literature, Zechariah's influence on the formation of the apocalyptic genre is evident.

1. Zech 1-8 originated in a time of uncertainty and danger for the Jewish nation.

2. The Jews did not know what attitude they might expect from Darius, the new king.

3. Symbols were the best way to communicate in unambiguous terms.

VI. TEXT

A. There are no major difficulties with the text and versions of the book of Zechariah.

B. The text of the Twelve Minor Prophets discovered in the caves of Wadi Murabba’at near the Dead Sea is quite mutilated.

C. Zechariah is represented only by the beginnings of six lines up to 1:4.

D. This Dead Sea Scroll text is closely related to the MT.

VII. MESSAGE

A. The prophecies of Zechariah brought a powerful message to the people of his time.

1. They were a small group of disappointed Jews who went to Jerusalem to rebuild their sanctuary but were stopped before completing the work.
2. According to Ezra 5:1; 6:14, Zechariah and Haggai were responsible for new hope and renewed activity among the Jews.

3. Typically Zechariah began by calling the Jewish people to repent, saying that their dilemma was due to their sins and unfaithfulness.

4. With vigor and faith he fired the hopes of his people.

5. His night visions especially stirred them to recommence building.

B. One of the main strands in Zechariah’s message is the expectation of salvation for the Jewish nation.

1. Employing apocalyptic language, the prophet sketched the final war between the people of God and the hostile powers.

2. In this war God alone will defeat the enemy.

3. To an oppressed nation that had become almost resigned to servitude, this message brought new hope for a blissful future.

4. Messianic expectation also plays a very important role and should be noticed in the NT references to Zechariah.

5. The prophet was a staunch believer in the power of the almighty God and His control of world affairs, even of the acts of mighty kings.

VIII. ZECHARIAH IN THE NT

A. There are 11 direct NT references to Zechariah

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<tr>
<th>Zechariah</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:16</td>
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<td>11:11-13</td>
<td>Matt 27:9-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:12</td>
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1. Less direct references push the number to 41

2. These reveal the book’s important role in eschatological literature.

3. Revelation echoes Zechariah 21 times, while some of its symbols resemble Zechariah — horses of different colors (Rev. 6:1-8)

B. The NT refers in a very few instances to the OT for predictions of the passion of Christ; e.g., John 19:37 and Rev 1:7 cite Zech 12:10

C. These few examples indicate that Zechariah exercised a profound influence on NT thought, especially on its eschatology.