

Post-Exile Prophets
THE FINAL BURDENS
Monday, August 25
Reading: Zechariah 9-11

Zechariah 9:10 *He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

The last six chapters of Zechariah look a lot different from the previous eight. Gone are the night visions and the prophet answering questions posed by the people. Now we encounter sweeping pictures of the future. Even the language and style of writing has changed! This has made some critics assume these chapters were written by a different author. But there are more similarities than differences between these two halves of Zechariah's book. It is more likely that Zechariah wrote the last half later in his life – maybe up to 20 years later – and that his writing has changed and developed over the years.

The previous message (Zechariah 7-8) was dated to the 4th year of Darius (518 BC). Persia was at the height of its power and would continue to rule over the Middle East for almost 200 years before being conquered by Alexander the Great and his Greek army in 330 BC. In Jerusalem, the temple was completed 2 years after Zechariah's message (516 BC). The next thirty years are quiet for the Jewish people. We have no biblical record of events in Jerusalem until Ezra the scribe arrives in 458 BC. Zechariah would have written these last two prophecies a few decades before the events of the book of Esther (488-473 BC) and the arrival of Ezra.

With a completed temple and life getting back to normal, the Jewish people may have wondered, "What comes next?" There would be many wonderful and tragic events through the centuries for God's people. In these last prophecies, God allows Zechariah to see events far in the future. Many of them are still in the future for us today.

These last chapters can be divided into two parts, both introduced by the words "a prophecy" or literally "a burden." This word gives us the idea of the weight and importance of these prophecies. The two parts are Zechariah 9-11 and 12-14.

In his first prophecy (9-11), we witness God fighting for His people. It also introduces us to Messiah, who comes as a humble King. Messiah is also contrasted with the foolish shepherds (leaders) who have ignored and abused the sheep (Israel). This first prophecy focuses on Christ's 1st Coming.

The second prophecy (12-14) focuses on Christ's 2nd Coming. While there is debate over how to interpret the events described here (literal? figurative? spiritual?), everyone agrees that the focus is on Messiah – the mighty Warrior who comes to finally redeem His people and bring in everlasting peace and holiness.

1 Peter 1:13-16 Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed at His coming. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

As we read about the glorious return of Jesus Messiah to set all things right, let us live in a right relationship with God and others today!