

Old Testament Survey
Lesson 40 – Two Temple-Building Prophets and a Persian Queen
(Haggai, Zechariah, Esther)

Haggai and Zechariah

Haggai and Zechariah were both called to be God’s prophets in the same year, 520 BC. This was about 16 years after the first group of exiles returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Jeshua. Together with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, they were chiefly responsible for the rebuilding of the Temple. Both prophesied the glories of the age of the coming Messiah – Haggai in fairly plain words, Zechariah in visions that are somewhat difficult to understand. Many of the prophecies of Zechariah concerning **JESUS** were fulfilled during Holy Week, beginning with Palm Sunday and culminating on Good Friday.

Read both chapters of Haggai and several chapters of Zechariah. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Haggai 1 – *Haggai’s Part in the Rebuilding of the Temple of God*

Haggai urges the selfish people to start working on the Temple (vv. 1-11).

“Is it time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” (v. __)

“Build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified” (v. __)

Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people begin rebuilding the Temple (vv. 12-15).

“They came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God” (v. __)

Haggai 2 – *Haggai Prophesies the Future Glory of God’s Temple*

Haggai encourages work on the Temple by predicting glorious things for the Temple in the future (vv. 1-9).

“I will shake heaven and earth... I will shake all nations” (vv. ____ (See Hebrews 12:26).

“I will fill this temple with glory... In this place I will give peace” (vv. ____)

Haggai assures the people of God’s blessing (vv. 10-19).

Haggai declares that Zerubbabel is like a signet ring guaranteeing the fulfillment of God’s promise of an everlasting kingdom (vv. 20-23)

Zerubbabel was an ancestor of **JESUS** Christ. See Matthew 1:12-13 and Luke 3:27.

Zechariah 1 – *Zechariah’s Message of Repentance and Two Visions*

Zechariah tells the Jews not to repeat the sins of their fathers (vv. 1-6).

The vision of a rider on a red horse among the myrtle trees (vv. 7-17).

“I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it” (v. __)

The vision of four horns and four craftsmen (vv. 18-21).

Zechariah 2 – *The Vision of the Man with the Measuring Line*

“Rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst” (v. __)

Zechariah 3 – The Vision of Jeshua (the High Priest) and Satan

“Take away the filthy garments from him... I will clothe you with rich robes” (v. ___)

“I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH... I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day”
(vv. ___)

Jeshua is a picture of JESUS Christ, the true High Priest who did remove iniquity in one day.

Zechariah 4 – The Vision of the Golden Lampstand and Two Olive Trees

The lampstand is the Church; the oil is the Holy Spirit. The two olive trees are Jeshua, as high priest, and Zerubbabel, as prince (and ancestor of the Messiah).

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD of hosts” (v. ___)

Zechariah 5 – The Vision of the Flying Scroll and a Woman (Wickedness) in a Basket

Zechariah 6 – The Vision of the Four Chariots and the Crown on Jeshua’s Head

“Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! ...He shall build the temple of the LORD” (v. ___)

Zechariah 7 – The LORD Wants Obedience Rather Than Fasting

Zechariah discusses a question about fasting (vv. 1-7).

Zechariah says Judah’s sins brought about their captivity (vv. 8-14).

“They made their hearts like flint, refusing to hear the law” (v. ___)

“Thus great wrath came from the LORD of hosts” (v. ___)

Zechariah 8 – God Promises to Return to His People Again

“I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem” (v. ___)

“They shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and righteousness” (v. ___)

“I am determined to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear” (v. ___)

Zechariah 9 – Zechariah Prophesies the Coming of the Messiah, the King

“Behold, your King is coming to you, ...lowly and riding on a donkey” (v. ___)

“He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be from sea to sea” (v. ___)

This prophecy was fulfilled on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

Zechariah 10 – Zechariah Prophesies the Complete Redemption of His People

“They shall be as though I had not cast them aside” (v. ___)

Zechariah 11 – Zechariah Prophesies Israel’s Rejection of Christ and God’s Judgment

Verses 12-13 speak of Judas’ betrayal of Christ. Note **“the thirty pieces of silver”** (v. ___)

Zechariah 12 – God Will Protect His People and Give Them Victory

“They will look on Me whom they pierced” (v. ___ – a reference to what happened to Jesus later.)

Zechariah 13 – Zechariah Prophesies the Cleansing of God’s Church through the Shepherd’s Death

“In that day a fountain shall be opened...for sin and for uncleanness” (v. ___)

“Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (v. ___ See Matthew 26:31, Mark 14:27.)

"The LORD my God will come... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth" (v. ____)

The Persian Queen Esther

The story of Esther takes place at Shushan (Susa) during the reign of Xerxes I (486-465 BC), who is also called Ahasuerus. Thus the events occur between the return of the exiles under Zerubbabel in 536 BC and the return under Ezra in 457 BC. It is an exciting story, showing how God through Esther protected the Jews from their enemies in the Persian Empire. This story also explains the origin of the Jewish festival of Purim.

Although the name of God does not appear in the book, God is very much alive and present – working through various circumstances to protect His people through the efforts of Mordecai and Esther.

Read the entire book of Esther. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask them.

Esther 1 – Xerxes divorces his queen Vashti because she refuses to appear at his banquet in Susa.

Esther 2 – The beautiful Jewess, Esther, a relative of Mordecai, wins a beauty contest and becomes Xerxes' Queen. Mordecai discovers a plot against Xerxes' life in time to save him.

Esther 3 – Mordecai refuses to honor Haman, the leading man in the land, and Haman makes plans to exterminate all of the Jews in the Persian Empire.

Esther 4 – Mordecai asks Esther to use her influence as queen to avert this disaster. She bravely agrees to do what she can.

"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (v. ____)

"I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish" (v. ____)

Esther 5 – Esther obtains the king's favor to feast on two successive days with the king and Haman. Haman makes plans to have Mordecai hanged.

Esther 6 – Xerxes spends a sleepless night, reads in the records that Mordecai once saved his life, and determines to reward him. Haman unwittingly advises the promotion of Mordecai.

Esther 7 – Esther tells Xerxes in Haman's presence about Haman's plot against the Jews. Haman asks Esther for mercy, but Xerxes orders Haman to be hanged.

Esther 8 – Esther receives Haman's house. Mordecai takes Haman's place in the kingdom. A new decree is made that permits the Jews to defend themselves on the day appointed for their extermination. The original decree ordering the extermination of the Jews could not be changed because it was a law of the Medes and Persians.

Esther 9 – On the appointed day the Jews and their enemies fight, and over 75 000 enemies are killed. The Feast of Purim is celebrated for the first time.

Esther 10 – Mordecai becomes second in power to Xerxes.

Historical Note

Xerxes I is known as the Persian king who invaded Greece. After capturing Athens, Xerxes' navy was defeated in the naval battle of Salamis (480 BC). It is reported that Xerxes commanded his men to whip the sea because the sea did not cooperate with his plans. He also killed the engineers of a bridge he had ordered built because a storm ruined it. Xerxes was a powerful and wealthy king. He had palaces at Susa and Persepolis. His splendid palace in Susa covered 1 hectare (2.5 acres). It has been discovered and excavated.

Questions

1. Why were the Israelites slow to rebuild the Temple?
2. How did the prophet Haggai encourage the Israelites to continue building it?
3. What great promises did Haggai make concerning the future of Israel?
4. Whom did Zechariah mean when he spoke of the Branch?
5. What teaching is illustrated by the removal of Jeshua's filthy garments?
6. What is the meaning of the two olive trees in Zechariah's vision?
7. How did Zechariah prophesy the events of Palm Sunday that took place many years later?
8. List several other Messianic prophecies in Zechariah's book.
9. How did God allow Esther to help her people in a time of great danger?
10. How did Esther show great bravery in her dealings with the king?
11. How was Haman changed from the king's right-hand man to his enemy?
12. How does this section of the Bible show that the LORD is in control of all history?