



Key Passage: Zechariah 1:16; Malachi 3:7

Key Thought: God's presence with his people, and the people's responding to God.¹

The Gospel in Zechariah.

“That a horse of a different color.” For my grandparents generation, they remember where they were when this movie first came on television. You know the movie, right? The Wizard of Oz. That line, though, is an allusion to something. You might know about the 4 horses of the Apocalypse. But Revelation was borrowing from the Old Testament. In Zechariah 1-6, the prophet has 8 visions involving horses of different colors. But that's not all. We find a stone with 7 eyes, lampstands and olive trees, a flying scroll, chariots, mountains, a woman in a basket, horns, and measuring lines. All of these are elements we will see again in the book of Revelation.

Revelation quotes Zechariah 31 times, but it makes allusions to Zechariah 81 times.

¹ This lesson summarizes or quotes Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, pp. 125-28, 133-36. These notes are compiled from 4 principal sources. In addition to Michael Williams book, notes are also derived from Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, and H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible*.

The second place where we see a collection of quotes from Zechariah are in the gospels, where Zechariah quotes appear 27 times.

Now you know the title of the last book of the Bible, right? It's not "revelationS." It's revelation. And it's not the revelation of John. The first verse tells us it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The gospels may be according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, but the gospel, says Mark 1:1 is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So according to the New Testament, the best place and time to quote Zechariah is when Jesus is in view.

We know that on the surface. Much of Zechariah's prophecy finds fulfilment in the ministry of Jesus (see Matt 21:5; 26:31; Jn 19:34, 37). But there are two more important connections that need to be made:

First, the apocalyptic language speaks to more than we might think. There is "end of the world" language in Zechariah that belongs to apocalyptic genre. It CAN mean the end of the world. But it also speaks to seismic change WITHIN the space-time universe. It is over-the-top, bigger-than-life language for when God brings about a change so great that nothing is ever the same. We see that in Revelation, but we also see it in the life of Jesus, don't we? We see it whenever the kingdom of God is proclaimed. It's the point of every kingdom parable.

Second, the focus of Zechariah is about rebuilding the Temple. The over-the-top language is meant to describe how important it is for God's dwelling place to be among his people. The presence of God is the difference between life and death (1:14; 12:1-5). Every ritual that took place within the Temple would remind the people of God's gift of life and constant cleansing (5:5-9; 13:1-6). But that's not all. The ultimate goal was that all of the earth—every inhabitant—would know of the presence of God, and God would dwell among all. We see this sense of all-earth submission (2:11; 8:20-22; 14:9, 16) in the book, and the role of the High Priest, signifying the role Jesus himself would eventually play for all people (3:8-9; 6:9-13).

And, yes, there is in Revelation the story of God's new creation. But notice what seems to be at the heart of it. "The holy city" comes down out of heaven, and the word "temple" appears 10 times in the book. But there is no temple in the new Jerusalem. For, as Rev 21:22 says, "the temple IS the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb."

But we already knew that from the gospels. Jesus said "destroy this temple, and in 3 days I will raise it up." He was talking about his body. Paul then uses that same language

to speak of the church as the temple or house of God, since we are His body (1 Cor 3:16; cf. 1 Pet 2:4-5)

So the two points to focus on are these:

First, the apocalyptic language of catastrophic change doesn't have to be relegated to the end of things. It can describe the shift at your baptism, or every time the kingdom of God comes near.

Second, the presence of God—represented by the Temple of God—is all-important. But the temple was always a stand-in. Jesus becomes prophet, priest, king, and temple. And we will see it fully later. But we can realize it even now. And that means God's glory is in our midst!

Think of it. Like the people of Zechariah's day, we should be busy "building the temple." That is, telling the good news of Jesus Christ to all who are still outside the protective walls of the kingdom. "Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be rebuilt" (8:9).

The Gospel in Malachi:

When Malachi enters the scene 100 years later, the temple has been rebuilt. The walls of the city had been restored. The rituals of worship had been reinaugurated. So...where was the glory? I thought God would return and do a work and a wonder that others would never fail to notice. Where was it? Where was God? The people began to wonder if God even still loved them (1:2).

Malachi reminds them that God has not abandoned them. He indeed still loves them. And he will return to deliver his treasured possession (3:17). He will send the prophet Elijah and then he will return himself (4:5).

But had the people really returned to God? They had the formalities covered. They had fresh new walls—the plaster was still wet it was so fresh. But its what is inside a person that mattered most then; it matters most still. God deserves honor (1:6-2:9). God deserves a united people (2:10-16). God deserves justice (2:17-3:5). God deserves our trust (3:13-18). And God deserves whatever is most important to us, so that he can take the seat of God in our hearts. And that usually means money (3:6-12). When we fail to give him honor; when we fail to be unified, when we fail to seek justice. When we fail to give him our trust; when we fail to deliver up the gods of money and possessions,

we are robbing God. We wouldn't notice His presence. Only when we are divested of everything can we see that God provides for us in our lack.

400 years later, Jesus tells us that the prophet who was to come is John the Baptist (Matt 17:11-13). And that means the fulfillment of God returning to take up residence and fill the earth with his presence began with Jesus (2 Cor 1:20); but it wasn't how most people expected. Not through conquering the Romans; but by offering them the gospel. Not overnight. But the body of Christ continues to grow throughout the world, and the kingdom makes its appearance in the most unlikely of places. And this because the Lord loves his people. And in his sacrifice, we learn the Lord loves ALL people, and wants to claim all people as His people.

Even now, we are called to give him honor. To trust. To wait. And when we too begin to wonder if God even still loves us, we reflect on his sacrifice and his promise.

We honor God (2 Tim 2:15)

We show love and unity (John 17:11)

We stand firm in confidence and hope (Hen 3:6)

And we give ourselves away