

Zechariah and Ezra 6
God's Plans for the Future and the Temple Completed
Lesson 6

Key Verse

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you
will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ.

—Philippians 1:6

Key Verse Thought: Read the Key Verse. Try to understand that God promised to help His people. When we give our heart and life to Jesus, He will help us live faithfully for Him. **Perform** means “*to complete; to finish.*” In this lesson, we will see the Israelites finish rebuilding the Temple. They had laid the foundation, but then the enemies stopped the work. Nevertheless, God sent someone to encourage them to finish. God promised to help us complete the work He has for our lives.

Emphasis: Christians are to read the Bible, understanding that God will encourage us through His Word. We are to remember that God sent Jesus, just as He promised, to take away the sin of man.

Lesson Summary: As we begin this lesson, we need to remember that the building of the Temple had been stopped. Haggai encouraged them to begin again, but the enemy had returned to stop the work. The governor of the land had sent a letter for the king to search the records and find out if the people had permission to rebuild. In the meantime, God sent another prophet to encourage His people.

Zechariah was a priest and prophet. He prophesied at the same time as Haggai also encouraging God's people. He wanted to let them know that God was not finished with them yet – for God had many mighty plans in store. Many of those plans were revealed in the visions that God gave Zechariah. Among the most familiar: a man with a measuring line, Joshua with the filthy garments, a golden candlestick, and the flying scroll. For lack of time, we will not study them all, but we will look at Joshua with the filthy garments.

Joshua was the high priest at this time, and he was a representation between sinful man and God. We will learn that the Angel of the Lord (remember we learned through previous lessons that this is the pre-incarnate Christ) removed the filthy garments from Joshua. We will find out the significance of that event today.

Zechariah understood that Jesus would come – just as God had promised. Just as Isaiah was the Major Prophet with the most prophecies about Christ, Zechariah was the Minor Prophet with the most prophecies about Christ.

Zechariah especially had words of encouragement for Zerubbabel. He especially reminded Zerubbabel that when God asks His people to do something, he gives them the strength to complete it. Zechariah had a message of encouragement to the people as well. With those words of encouragement, the Temple was completed.

Suggested Bible Reading to Prepare for This Lesson

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| • Monday: Zechariah 1-3 | • Thursday: Zechariah 10-12 |
| • Tuesday: Zechariah 4-6 | • Friday: Zechariah 13-14 |
| • Wednesday: Zechariah 7-9 | • Saturday: Ezra 6 |

Zechariah and Ezra 6:
God's Plan for the Future and the Temple Completed

1. Zechariah's Message (Zechariah 1, 3)
 - God was displeased with their sin and wanted them to repent
 - Joshua with filthy clothes
2. Zechariah Understood Jesus Would Come
 - The Branch (Zechariah 6)
 - Zechariah 9, 11, 13
3. Encouraging Words to Complete the Temple
 - First to Zerubbabel
 - Then to the people
4. Israel Resumes Work (Ezra 6)
 - Temple Completed
 - Passover Celebrated

Note: In our last lesson, we read about the beginnings of the return of God's people into Israel from captivity in Babylon. The foundation of the Temple was laid, but then the building process stopped. The adversaries had made themselves known. When God's people were discouraged and the building stopped, God sent His prophet, Haggai, to encourage them to complete the building of the temple. God stirred the spirit within Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant to finish the Temple. When they began again, the enemies rose up against them, sending a letter to King Darius to stop the building process. Although the Israelites had permission to rebuild the Temple from a previous king, the enemy's plan was to stop the building, once again.

Today, we read more encouraging words from another prophet, Zechariah, that God was with them. Finish the Temple.

1. Joshua with Filthy Clothes (Zechariah 1, 3)

Before Haggai had even finished encouraging God's people to complete the Temple, for God was with them, Zechariah began to preach to them as well. **Zechariah** means "*the Lord remembers*." That will also help us understand this book. Zechariah spoke words from God for the people. First, he told them that God was displeased with their fathers, the ones who had been carried captive into Babylon. "2. **The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.** 3. **Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts**" (Zechariah 1:2-3). God wanted this people to repent and turn back to Him. Then God promised He would turn to them. "**Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD**" (Zechariah 1:4). They were not to be like their fathers who had rejected God's Words from His prophets.

In the rest of chapter one and in chapter two, God gave Zechariah many visions to understand what God was doing, and what He would do in the future for His people. Zechariah saw: a man on a red horse, four horns and four carpenters, a man with a measuring line, Joshua with filthy garments, a golden candlestick, a flying roll (scroll), four chariots, etc. Most importantly, God wanted His people to understand that He was in control of everything that was happening, and God would have His vengeance, "... **for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye**" (Zechariah 2:8b).

As we read chapter three, we find a very interesting vision seen by Zechariah. "**And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him**" (Zechariah 3:1). First, we need to remember that Joshua was the high priest at this time. He was a representation of God's people before the Lord. Also, notice that Satan was standing there, resisting him. **Resist** means "*to attack; to accuse; an accuser, an adversary*." Picture a courtroom: Satan as the prosecutor (accuser), Joshua as the defendant (sinner), and the angel of the Lord as the defender (the Advocate with the Father; see 1 John 2:1: "**My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous**"). Satan was accusing the high priest, Joshua, who represented a sinful people before the Holy God. The angel of the Lord was the pre-incarnate Christ (Jesus before He was born as a man here on this earth). Notice that He stood with Joshua, the high priest. "**And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?**" (Zechariah 3:2). Joshua did not have to defend himself – for Jesus withstood Satan for him. The angel of the Lord acknowledged that God's people were a brand plucked out of the fire – they were a sinful people whom God had just delivered from the enemy's hands. (Remember what we have learned about mankind: Romans 3:23: "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**" and Romans 6:23: "**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life**").

through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Each person that is saved is a “brand plucked out of the fire.”) Keep those thoughts in mind as we continue.

3. Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.
4. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. 5. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by. (Zechariah 3:3-5)

Joshua’s garments, as priest, were to be as we read in the following verse. “And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty” (Exodus 28:2). We just read in Zechariah 3:3, that Joshua was dressed in filthy garments. That was a picture of the sin that could not be hidden. He had no defense – for he was guilty. However, Jesus (the angel of the Lord) ordered that the filthy garments be taken away, for Jesus caused the iniquity to be taken from him. (Remember: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” Psalm 103:12.) He then called for new garments – picturing a renewed, right relationship before God. The people’s sins were taken, and God’s judgment was set aside. Read what the angel of the Lord said next. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by” (Zechariah 3:7). God’s people were expected to walk in God’s ways, for they now had the freedom to walk with God. They were to accomplish the task set before them – completing the Temple of the Lord.

Not only did Zechariah see that God would take away the people’s sin, allowing them to serve Him, but read the following promise. “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they *are* men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH” (Zechariah 3:8). Remember what we have already learned in Jeremiah. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jeremiah 23:5). Jesus is the Branch – the Promised One who would be sent to earth one day to be sure a *true* pardon of *all* sin would occur.

A Deeper Path: Christians are to recognize that Satan is our accuser, too. “9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:9-10).

2. Zechariah Understood that Jesus Would Come

We just read that God gave Zechariah the promise of a righteous Branch (Jesus), and see what else we learn. As you read the following, compare them with the verses in the New Testament.

A. God gave that promise to Zechariah again:

Zechariah 6:12-13: “12. And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name *is* The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his

place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: 13. Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” This time it is with more detail.

Compare those verses with the following from the New Testament:

- **Ephesians 2:13, 19-22:** “13. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ ... 19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”
- **1 Peter 2:5:** “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”
- **Hebrews 8:1:** “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;”

B. Notice the accuracy between the prophecy and fulfillment in the following verses:

Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he *is* just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

Compare to the following New Testament verses:

Matthew 21:4-5: “4. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, 5. Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.”

C. Read another place in Zechariah that is vividly speaking about Jesus:

Zechariah 12:8: “8. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David *shall be* as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.” Remember how often we have already recognized that Jesus revealed himself to His people as the “angel of the Lord.” One day Jesus, of the house of David, would come – no longer as the angel of the Lord, but as the Son of God.

Zechariah 12:10: “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn.”

Compare to the following New Testament verses:

John 19:33-34, 37: “33. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34. But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water ... 37. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”

Revelation 1:7: “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, *Amen.*” One day, God’s people would recognized that it was Jesus, whom they pierced, that God sent as their Messiah – and they would mourn.

3. Encouraging Words to Complete the Temple (Zechariah)

After the great *discouragement* God's people had faced from their enemies because they wanted to rebuild the house of the Lord, God sent great *encouragement* by his prophets.

God gave specific words for Zechariah to speak to Zerubbabel, the one who was to lead in the completion of the Temple: "6. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. 9. The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you" (Zechariah 4:6, 9). God was with Zerubbabel as they laid the foundation of the Temple, and God would be with Zerubbabel as he completed the work. Then all would know that God was with Zerubbabel and His people.

Read the more encouraging words. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built" (Zechariah 8:9). Remember the previous words of encouragement they had received when the foundation was being laid.

1. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them. 2. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them. (Ezra 5:1-2)

See also:

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I *am* with you, saith the LORD of hosts: (Haggai 2:4)

It was with these words of encouragement that they were able to resume the work.

A Deeper Path: Read what was most important to Jesus while He was on this earth. "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34). See also: "But I have greater witness than *that* of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (John 5:36). Recognize that Jesus finished the work God wanted Him to do. "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4).

Not only do we have the example of Jesus, who finished all of the work God had for Him, but we also have the example of the disciples who desired to finish the job God had for them. "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Christians too, must set our hearts to finish the work God has for us here on this earth – mainly to testify the Gospel of Jesus!

4. Israel Resumes Work (Ezra 6)

Remember how we left the undone work last week:

- The enemies had come against them to try to stop them again.
- A letter was sent to King Darius, telling the king that the Jews had resumed working on the Temple.
- The governor of the land wrote to the king asking about the permission the people had received from Cyrus.
- They were waiting on a reply so they could resume their work.
- But in the meantime, God had sent encouraging words to be strong, for He would help them finish

Read what happened when King Darius received the letter. “1. *Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. 2. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written*” (Ezra 6:1-2). After searching, they found a decree, written by King Cyrus.

3. *In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid ... 4. With three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expenses be given out of the king's house: 5. And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.* (Ezra 6:3-5)

Not only did they have permission to build, but also we understand the king would provide the finances to do it. King Cyrus had even returned the golden and silver vessels that King Nebuchadnezzar had stolen – to be returned to the house of God.

King Darius then declared, “6. *Now therefore, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shetharboznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence: 7. Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place*” (Ezra 6:6-7). The men who were causing the trouble for the Jews were told to stay far away – on the other side of the river. They were to leave God’s people alone and let them build the house of God. In addition, *anything* God’s people needed, they were to give it to them (see Ezra 6:8-10). What if they did not like providing everything for them? “11. *Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this. 12. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of God which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed*” (Ezra 6:11-12). If they did not like it, their house would be pulled down and they would be hanged. King Darius recognized that God was with His people, and he would do nothing to hinder their work on the house of God.

The men, who had given them so much trouble, did just what King Darius ordered them to do.

14. And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia. 15. And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king. (Ezra 6:14-15)

After completing the Temple, they dedicated it to the Lord, offered great offerings, organized the priests and Levites, and kept the Passover. Not only that, but see what else they did. “21. And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat, 22. And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (Ezra 6:21-22).

God had done just as He had promised His people – he strengthened them to complete the Temple.

Zechariah 1-14 and Ezra 6 at a Glance:

Zechariah:

Chapter 1: A call to repentance; God gave hope in visions – of a man riding upon a red horse, an angel’s prayer, and four carpenters

Chapter 2: A man with a measuring line; God will be their protector “for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zechariah 2:8).

Chapter 3: Joshua clothed with filthy clothes and Satan, his adversary, rebuked him and Jesus (angel of the Lord) gave him clean clothes

Chapter 4: Angel showed him a golden candlestick; gave him words for Zerubbabel to finish the Temple; saw olive trees

Chapter 5: Saw a flying roll (scroll); saw ephah, a talent of lead, and a woman; saw two women with wings of a stork

Chapter 6: Saw four chariots from between two mountains; mentioning again of The Branch (Jesus) who will sit upon the throne

Chapter 7: Word to Zechariah revealed the hypocritical fasting of the priests; when told to correct, they refused then God would not hear

Chapter 8: God had returned to Jerusalem in the midst of His people and they will dwell there again; once again, people would come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord – for God is with them

Chapter 9: Judgments against enemy nations, with mercy shown a few; a prophecy of Jesus; God will deliver

Chapter 10: False religions would be revealed as such and God would strengthen the house of Judah – for God would redeem them

Chapter 11: Although God would restore Israel as a people, when Messiah (Jesus) would come, they were going to reject Him (compare vs. 12-13 with Matthew 26:15 and 27:3-10)

Chapter 12: Jerusalem would be restored and any who come against it will be smitten; God will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem

Chapter 13: A foretelling of the rejection of Jesus and even the death of Jesus – but one third would recognize the Lord as God

Chapter 14: The Day of the Lord that will come when Jesus will rule and reign from Jerusalem – then all enemies will be dealt with

Ezra:

Chapter 6: Darius found record of permission for Israel to rebuild Temple; Temple completed; Passover celebrated

Reinforcement: Once again, the people had to be reminded that they were a sinful people, and God cannot look upon sin. Nevertheless, at the same time, God gave them hope. He reminded them again of the promise of Jesus who was to come. Although they did not know His name yet, He is recognizable as the Angel of the Lord and the righteous Branch. Zechariah saw the Angel of the Lord, Jesus, as a sinful people's Advocate with the Father, God. In this, all who read can understand that Jesus would be the only one to defeat Satan and take away the sin of man. When Jesus gave Joshua the clean clothes, it allowed for a perfect and right relationship between man and God. That is the picture Christians, today, can compare to the act of baptism. It is a *picture* of the death to the old sinful life, and a new clean life before God – only through the death of Jesus, our Advocate, on the cross. He took the penalty for mankind's sin.

Once Zechariah gave the people encouraging words, they were able to complete the Temple.

Once Christians have Jesus in their heart, having removed the sin, they then have the ability to accomplish the task God has for their lives.

Closing: It would be good to close with a short prayer reinforcing today's lesson. Always include any prayer requests you may have. *Today, pray that we will faithfully read the Bible so we can be encouraged by God's Word. Also, pray that we will never forget God sent His Son, Jesus, to take away our sin.*