

Southwell
Minster

*The Cathedral and Parish Church
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*



GROWING
DISCIPLES

Wider Younger Deeper

Zechariah

James Halstead

Intro & Context – a hopeful book

Why care about context?

Text or Scripture?

A disputed text – 2 major ‘chunks’ with very different styles...

1:1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah, son of Iddo...

- See 1:7
- See Haggai 1:1
- See Zechariah 7:1
 - Return
 - Peace
 - ...but frustration
 - Ravaged Land, including drought (Haggai 1)
 - Under attack from surrounding nations (Ezra 4)
 - Tattenai’s interference (Ezra 6)

How does the context help? ...

1:1-3 ...the word of the LORD came... The LORD was very angry with your ancestors, therefore say to them: Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Return to me,’ says the LORD of hosts’ and I will return to you...’

HOPE!

1:16-17

In the tension between hope and frustration...

Haggai: looking down and in

Zechariah: looking up and out

...the medium is the message...

“Symbolism has a unique force, impressing itself on the mind and touching the emotions with greater facility and power than prosaic literary types. The symbols in this section of Zechariah are peculiarly appropriate because they convey a perspective that reaches far beyond the immediate concerns of the temple builders. The cosmic symbols impress us with a profound sense of God’s activity in history, moving human events to a monumental climax. It is as though we stand above time, observing in the prophet’s symbolic language the awesome forces at work in the world that we cannot otherwise perceive.”

(Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets: A commentary on Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Vol. 3; Baker Academic, 1998), p1012)

Q: How does knowing some of the historical background help you with thinking about whether / how these books (and Zechariah in particular) are helpful Scriptures for today?

Q: How do you maintain hope when life is dispiriting? In particular, how does the ‘symbolic’ feature in your own experience and practice of faith?

Reading the Visions

First Vision (1:7-17) – The Horsemen in the Myrtle Trees

1:7 – Dating and context

1:8 – what’s the ‘atmosphere?’

1:10 – what’s happening?

1:11 – what’s the situation?

...the problem: the earth is at peace (but the prophets said it wouldn’t be?): 1:12

1:13-17 – *gracious and comforting words!*

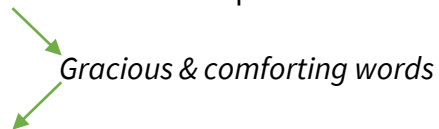
Second Vision (1:18-21) – The Horns and the Blacksmiths

Four horns

Four blacksmiths

...the promise: the nations *will* be upended

First vision – there's peace where there shouldn't be



Second vision – the upending *will* come

Hope: expressed in terms which engage more than minds alone

Reading the Oracles

1-6 – visions

7-8 – middle section

9-14 – two oracles

Change of style

✿ Authoritative utterances...

✿ ...involving proclamation of judgement

Reading the Whole Book

Divine Sovereignty: clear

Human Responsibility?

1:2 Anger at ancestors' disobedience

(Visions: including the nations are at peace))

6:15 *if you diligently obey...*

7-8 Leaders are flagging

9-11 Oracle 1: further disobedience leading to further scattering

12-14 Oracle 2: the nations will be in tumult

Q: Can you trace the flow of the story from beginning to end? How does this match up with what you'd sensed of the book from your reading ahead of this session?

Q: Zechariah offers realism and hope. What (perhaps uncomfortable) 'realism' do you think he might have to speak to us at this time – and what hope would he point to beyond that?

The Temple

A building?

The **branch** (6:9-15)...

...So, maybe, a person?

(cf. John 2:13-22)

(Zech 9-14 and the Passion Narratives)

...THE TEMPLE/MESSIAH

Q: How have you understood the Old Testament to be pointing to Jesus?

Turn some of your thoughts to prayer – for one another, for our world, and for this reality of Christ's Kingdom to be seen and known ever more widely.