

Major Messages from the Minor Prophets
Awakened to Do Something
The Book of Zechariah

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Text Introduction: This fall we have studied through the Minor Prophets. We are coming to the end in the next few weeks. The Prophets of the Old Testament are divided by scholars into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Major Prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance.¹

Today, we are studying the Book of Zechariah.

The last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after the exile was complete. The other prophets warned of the exile unless there was repentance. In 722 B.C. the northern tribes of Israel were occupied and many were sent into exile. In 587 B.C. the southern tribes were occupied and many were sent into exile. Eventually, the Medes and Persians became the dominating world power and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak of the return of the Jews to the land of Israel under Cyrus's reign. Cyrus' reign gives way to Darius' reign. Haggai and Zechariah are prophets in the day of the rebuilding of the temple. In their own way, each is responsible for motivating the people toward moving forward with the completion of the temple.

In a different style than Haggai, Zechariah exhorts the people to rebuild the temple. Whereas, Haggai encourages with direct instruction to rebuild, Zechariah's exhortation is more indirect. In fact, without Ezra's assessment in Ezra 5:1 we would not be able to make the connection that God used Zechariah to encourage the progress of the temple. Zechariah's concern is more with the coming of Messiah. The logic is that Israel needed to prepare for the coming of Messiah with repentance and a return to worship. A tangible way of restoring worship would be to rebuild the temple.

Now, one other introductory word is in order for the book of Zechariah. This is not an easy book. That is probably one of the reasons that it has been ignored. The book is dominated with what we call apocalyptic language. The first part of the book is dominated with eight visions that God gave to Zechariah.

Let's read the first six verses and dive in to what this book has to say to us today.

Text: (Zechariah 1:1-6) 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:² "The LORD was extremely angry with your ancestors.³ So tell the people: This is what the LORD of Hosts says: Return to Me"—this is the declaration of the LORD of Hosts—"and I will return to you, says the LORD of Hosts.⁴ Do not be like your ancestors; the earlier prophets proclaimed to them: This is what the LORD of Hosts says: Turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds. But they did not listen or pay attention to Me"—this is the LORD's declaration.⁵ "Where are your ancestors now? And do the prophets live forever?⁶ But didn't My words

¹ Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.

and My statutes that I commanded My servants the prophets overtake your ancestors? They repented and said: As the LORD of Hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so He has dealt with us."

Introduction: You notice my title for this message this morning: "Awakened to Do Something." I don't always start by explaining my title, but I think it could be helpful to us this morning. First, along with this fall series of studying the Minor Prophets, we have also engaged together in thinking around a common goal that we have called ***Do Something***. Hopefully you know this already, but there is a church goal and an individual goal. We are challenging ourselves to do something for God that we have never done before. That is, individually, I challenge you to begin to do something for God that you have never done before. (There is a list of ideas in the bulletin today.) We are also striving to do something together as a church that we have never done before now. Since the historical reason for the writing of Zechariah has to do with inspiring the people to rebuild the temple (to do something in their day), we ought to be able to find great common points of application in our own call to do something.

Then, there is the idea of "Awakened." This word comes from the fact that God rouses Zechariah in the night with these visions. God awakened Zechariah with the message through visions.

So, might be awakened to do what God calls us to do in our own time?

Overviewing the Book—Eight Visions Again, the first part of this book is based upon 8 visions. The last part of the book is dominated with Messianic prophecy. I want to emphasize the 8 visions today in that these visions were what God used to spur the people toward the completion of the temple. We don't have a lot of time, but let me summarize the 8 visions.

1. 4 Horsemen of Different colors—This vision is a representation of God's plan to rebuild Jerusalem.
2. 4 Horns—This vision also represents God's power over the powers of the known world. God's promise is that He is going to destroy the powers of the world in the Messianic age.
3. Measuring Line—This is another reminder that God, as the master builder, is going to rebuild Jerusalem.
4. High Priest—The vision here is that part of the process of preparing for the Messianic spiritual-age to come is that there will have to be a spiritual cleansing starting with the high priest.
5. Golden Lampstand and 2 Olive Trees—This vision represents the presence of God. Zerubbabel will be successful because of the presence of God.
6. Flying Scroll—This symbolizes God dealing with sin.
7. Woman in a basket—This symbolizes God dealing with sin.
8. Four Chariots—This vision assures of the peace of God to reign in the world.

So, in sum...God awakened Zechariah in the night to remind him of God's power, His presence, His plan to bring peace, and His continuing desire to deal with sin. God used these visions and Zechariah's preaching through these visions to encourage the people to rebuild the temple of God.

What does God want us to do? And, what will it take for us to do that something?

What Does it Take to Do Something!

The Promise of God

The first three visions are all related to the promises of God. God promised that through Him, the temple was going to be rebuilt. He was going to be the Power over the world powers. He was going to be the master builder. He would take the measuring line and set the foundations. This was His promise.

Now, what has God promised us? We need to be careful here. We certainly don't need to make something up that we want and call it God's promise. But, at the same time we have His promise in His Word for some things. There are many, but I just want to highlight a few.

Remember these...

- Matthew 16:18—Jesus said, “I will build My church.”
- Acts 1:8—Promise of power to be witnesses.
- Philippians 4:13—Promise to do all things through Him.

The Purity of the People of God

But, there is something that ought to accompany the promise of God—that is the purity of the people of God. God has chosen to work through clean vessels. We especially see that in the fourth, sixth, and seventh visions.

You want to know how important purity is to the blessing of God? Remember the story of Achan? We read about Achan in the seventh chapter of the book of Joshua. The Battle of Jericho is the first conquest of the Promised Land. It is a rather interesting battle. We read about it in Joshua 6. God wanted to show Israel that He was giving victory through their obedience so He gave an interesting plan. He told Joshua to lead the army around the city one time for six consecutive days. Out in front of the army, God commanded there to be seven priests carrying trumpets. Then, on the seventh day, God told them to march around the city seven times. Then God commanded them to blow those trumpets and for the people to shout. When this happened, the walls of Jericho fell and Israel captured the city.

The Battle of Ai in chapter 7 shows the result of disobedience. Ai was not nearly as large as Jericho. As a result, the people of Israel decided their own battle plan which included only sending a few thousand men to the battle. Their defeat was great. In reality the defeat was the result of disobedience. God had directed Israel about the plunder from the war and what they could keep and what they could not keep. One man, Achan, took some of the forbidden things. This obedience caused defeat.

God blesses obedience. He wants to bless, but withholds His blessing in disobedience.

The Power of the Spirit of God

We see this primarily in the fifth vision. In fact, in the fifth vision, we see one of the most important truths in the book and one of the most important truths in the whole Bible.

We read this truth in Zechariah 4:6, “Not by strength or by might, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of Hosts.

Can you see it? Our success is not ultimately tied to our strength, our skill, our intellect, our personality, and certainly not our resources. In fact, God says that our victory will not be based on any of that, but on Him.

Can you see how this impacts our Do Something Strategy? We have to be in God's will. We need to be careful to ask the right questions. We need to be careful to count the costs. But let us not say, "We can't" because something is too big, too expensive, or too "whatever" for us. **But God!** In fact, if we confine our thinking to what we can do, what we can manage, and what we can afford, perhaps we have not thought enough!

I ran across this quote this week from Charles Spurgeon. "It is extraordinary power from God, not talent, that wins the day. It is extraordinary spiritual unction not extraordinary mental power, that we need. Mental power may fill a chapel, but spiritual power fills the church with soul anguish. Mental power may gather a large congregation, but only spiritual power will save souls. What we need is spiritual power."

The Plan of God

We talked about the ultimate plan of God last week as well, because it is at the root of the rebuilding of the temple that both Haggai and Zechariah talked about. Ultimately, the plan of God was the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. The plan was and is relationship. "Return to Me and I will return to you." (Zechariah 1:3) We must be encouraged to walk in obedience to God, even in the tough times, because even the tough times lead to ultimate return.