RETURN FROM EXILE

Studies in Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

Nehemiah 9:33

Trinity Bible Church Sunday School Fall, 2010

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INTRODUCTION

Our study this Fall will cover the days after the LORD graciously delivered His people from captivity in Babylon. The historical account is found in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Here, we learn about the return from Babylonian captivity after 70 years, as Jeremiah had foretold, and by the decree of Cyrus king of Persia, as Isaiah had predicted. These two historical books tell of the rebuilding of the temple and the wall of Jerusalem as well as the righteous leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah. During these days, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah brought their messages from the LORD as is mentioned in Ezra 5:1. Malachi also prophesied in this era, but was later and is not mentioned in the historical books. His message from the LORD was truly the final Word of revelation before the coming of Christ. The final historical book from this era is Esther. This is a record of the providence of God in preserving those of His people who had not returned but remained in the land of their captivity, which now was the Persian and Median empire.

There are several lessons to be learned as we consider this age in perspective. In the first place, we see here an historical verification of the faithfulness of the LORD to His people. In Jeremiah 29:10, the LORD promised to bring His people from their captivity back into the land. This truth encouraged Daniel during the days of captivity (Daniel 9:2). Ezra began his book by noting the LORD'S faithfulness to His word through Jeremiah. The immediate cause of the return from exile was the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. This was also a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy where Cyrus was mentioned by name long before his birth (Isaiah 45). It is clear in both Ezra and Nehemiah that the LORD was the cause of the return to the Promised Land.

A second obvious lesson is that this is a gracious work of God. The righteous standard of God is affirmed by Ezra and Nehemiah, as

well as the three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. The people who returned from exile were found to be as wicked as their fathers. They did respond to the righteous leadership that God provides, but quickly turned aside to iniquity. The people continued to show the failures of their fathers in doing good. It was God's grace and not the inherent good of the people that led the LORD to deliver them from captivity.

Despite this stain of iniquity upon the people, the pre-eminent lesson is that God is continuing His work of bringing salvation through the coming Messiah. This is the message of the times. What is needed is not a return to old times. While the restoration of the Temple of God and the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem are signs of God's favor upon His people, what is really needed is a transformation of the hearts of the people. This is to be accomplished by the establish-ment of "a fountain for sin and uncleanness." This will be when the Sun of righteousness comes with "healing in His wings."

The lesson for this age is that proper, even Godly circumstances are insufficient for sinful men to please God. What is needed is for the hearts of sinful men to be cleansed by the sacrifice of the righteous Son of God. The people are not to be content with the present blessing of God's restoration in the land, but to be continually looking forward to the coming King Whose dominion shall be "to the ends of the earth."

We also have been richly blessed of God by being made participants in the great work of salvation. But we must not be content with the blessings of the day. We look forward to the day when Christ returns to bring about the final consummation of this great salvation. We must learn, with the people of this post-exilic era, that our sufficiency is through Jesus Christ and will not be fully realized until He returns.

Schedule

September 5	Lesson 1:	The return to Jerusalem Ezra 1-3
September 12	Lesson 2:	
September 19	Lesson 3:	
September 26	Lesson 4:	The time has come! Haggai 1-2
October 3	Lesson 5:	Zechariah's visions, part 1 Zechariah 1-3
October 10	Lesson 6:	
October 17	Lesson 7:	God will save the remnant Zechariah 7-8
October 24	Lesson 8:	Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! Zechariah 9-11
October 31	Lesson 9:	The Day of the LORD Zechariah 12-14
November 7	Lesson 10:	Rebuilding the wall Nehemiah 1-4
November 14	Lesson 11:	Discord and conspiracy Nehemiah 5-7
November 21	Lesson 12:	Revival in Jerusalem Nehemiah 8-10
November 28	Lesson 13:	Nehemiah, the faithful governor Nehemiah 11-13
December 5	Lesson 14:	Esther becomes queen Esther 1-5
December 12	Lesson 15:	Esther saves the Jews Esther 6-10
December 19	Lesson 16:	Spiritual pollution Malachi 1-2
December 26	Lesson 17:	The Sun of Righteousness Malachi 3-4

Memory Assignments

Ezra 7:10

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Haggai 2:6-7

- For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;
- And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

Zechariah 4:6

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.

Zechariah 9:9-10

- 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.
- And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

Memory Assignments (continued)

Nehemiah 9:33

Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

Malachi 3:1

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 4:2

But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace



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Lesson 1: The return to Jerusalem Ezra 1-3

MEMORY: Ezra 7:10 HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace" **PURPOSE:** to see how the children of Israel came to return to Jerusalem from exile, and what they did when they arrived back in the land. 1. Why did Cyrus make the proclamation recorded here? 2. What did Cyrus say in his decree? 3. Who went to rebuild the house of the LORD? 4. What was provided for their return, and who provided it? 5. Besides the general group of captives returning, what special groups were identified? 6. What did Jeshua and Zerubbabel begin on the first day of the seventh month? 7. What feast is mentioned here? 8. What did Jeshua and Zerubbabel do in the second month of the second year?

9. What happened when the foundation of the Temple was laid?

Lesson 2: Rebuilding the Temple Ezra 4-6

MEMORY: Haggai 2:6 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see the opposition that came as the people tried to rebuild the Temple, and how God provided for the completion of the task.

1.	How did the enemies of Judah and Benjamin oppose the work of rebuilding the Temple?
2.	What did the enemies of the people of God tell King Artaxerxes in their letter to him?
3.	How did King Artaxerxes answer this letter?
4.	Why was the work on the house of God stopped, and then why was it restarted?
5.	What question did Governor Tattenai ask of King Darius?
6.	What did King Darius find in his search of the palace archives?
7.	What decree did King Darius issue?
8.	What factors led to the completion of the Temple?
9.	Why was there joy in Jerusalem, and how was it expressed?

Lesson 3: Ezra ministers in Jerusalem Ezra 7-10

MEMORY: Haggai 2:6-7 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see how Ezra came to Jerusalem, and the nature of his ministry there.

1.	What background information are we given about Ezra?
2.	What instructions did King Artaxerxes give to Ezra?
3.	How did Ezra respond to this letter from the king?
4.	What preparations did Ezra make for the journey?
5.	What caused Ezra to tear his clothing and pluck out his hair?
6.	If Ezra's prayer is used as a pattern for us, what should be included in such a prayer?
7.	What did Shechaniah propose?
8.	What proclamation did Ezra issue?
9.	How did the people respond to Ezra's proclamation?

Lesson 4: The time has come! Haggai 1-2

MEMORY: Zechariah 4:6 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to hear Haggai's prophecy that the remnant of the people should rebuild the Temple in anticipation of God's future blessing upon His people.

1.	Write down all the dates that are given in Haggai and briefly note what happened on those dates.
2.	What did the LORD say about the priorities of the people?
3.	What did Haggai want the people to consider about their work?
4.	What happened as a result of this first message of Haggai?
5.	What promises did Haggai bring in his second message to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant?
6.	What did Haggai ask the priests about the Law, and what point was he trying to make?
7.	What had the LORD done to the people in the past, and how had they responded?
8.	What were the people to expect from the time of the laying of the Temple foundation?
9.	What message did Haggai have for Zerubbabel, governor of Judah?

Lesson 5: Zechariah's visions, part 1 Zechariah 1-3

MEMORY: Zechariah 9:9 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to learn from the first four of Zechariah's eight visions, given during the rebuilding of the Temple of God, of a yet future restoration in glory and righteousness.

1.	What did Zechariah tell the people about the "words and statutes" of God?
2.	Briefly describe Zechariah's first vision of the rider on the red horse.
3.	What did the LORD tell the angel about Jerusalem?
4.	Briefly describe Zechariah's second vision of the four horns.
5.	Briefly describe Zechariah's third vision of the man with the measuring line.
6.	What did the LORD promise to do for "the apple of His eye"?
7.	Briefly describe Zechariah's fourth vision of Joshua, the high priest.
8.	What did the Angel of the LORD tell Joshua to do?
9.	What are we told about the BRANCH?

Lesson 6: Zechariah's visions, part 2 Zechariah 4-6

MEMORY: Zechariah 9:9-10 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to learn from Zechariah's second four visions more of the LORD'S plans for the future restoration.

1.	Briefly describe Zechariah's fifth vision of the lamp stand and olive trees.
2.	What was "the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel"?
3.	Briefly describe Zechariah's sixth vision of the flying scroll.
4.	Briefly describe Zechariah's seventh vision of the woman in the basket.
5.	Briefly describe Zechariah's eighth vision of the four chariots.
6.	What did the LORD tell Zechariah to do for Joshua?
7.	What are we told about the BRANCH?
8.	How was the crown to be used?
9.	What was to be learned from the building of the Temple?

Lesson 7: God will save the remnant Zechariah 7-8

MEMORY: Nehemiah 9:33 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see how Zechariah unmasked the hypocrisy of the people of God, and then proclaimed God's intention to bring His people back from the lands of exile to experience His salvation in the land.

1.	What prompted the LORD to speak through Zechariah this time?
2.	What word of condemnation did Zechariah bring?
3.	What did the LORD call upon the people to do?
4.	What happened when the people refused to heed the word of the LORD?
5.	What did the LORD say about Zion or Jerusalem?
6.	How did the LORD say that He would save His people?
7.	What evidence would there be that the LORD was not treating the residue (remnant) of the people as He had formerly?
8.	Since God is determined to do good to His people, how should they respond?
9.	What worldwide result would there be from the zeal of the LORD for His people?

Lesson 8: Behold, thy King cometh unto thee! Zechariah 9-11

MEMORY: Malachi 3:1 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see that God intends to save His people by the hand of the coming King Who will bring peace from enemies without and deliverance from the false shepherds of Israel.

1.	Against what cities or nations did the LORD announce judgment?
2.	How was the coming King described?
3.	How were the people of God described in the day that the LORD saves them?
4.	Why had the people been unable to obtain comfort, and why were they in trouble?
5.	How did the LORD intend to deal with Judah and the house of Joseph?
6.	What will happen to those who are scattered out of the land?
7.	What instructions did the LORD give to the shepherd?
8.	What were the names of the two staffs of the shepherd, and what did he do with them?
9.	What did the LORD say about the foolish shepherd?

Lesson 9: The Day of the LORD Zechariah 12-14

MEMORY: Malachi 4:2 and review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see that there is a coming Day in which the nations will be judged, the land purified and the LORD Himself will rule the land in holiness.

1.	What did the LORD say will be true about Jerusalem "in that day"?
2.	What will be the result of the outpouring of the Spirit of grace and supplication?
3.	What will happen to the idols and prophets "in that day"?
4.	What will happen when the Shepherd is struck?
5.	What division will be made of the people, and what will happen to each division?
6.	What will happen in Jerusalem in "the day of the LORD"?
7.	What will the LORD Himself do in "the day of the LORD"?
8.	What is the plague that the LORD will send on the enemies of Jerusalem?
9.	What will happen in Jerusalem after it is delivered?

Lesson 10: Rebuilding the wall Nehemiah 1-4

HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace" MEMORY: Review **PURPOSE:** to see how Nehemiah came to lead in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem and how that work was started in the face of opposition. 1. What did Nehemiah do when he heard about the broken walls of Jerusalem? 2. What did Nehemiah tell the LORD in his prayer, and what request did he make of the LORD? 3. What did Nehemiah ask of King Artaxerxes? 4. How did the king answer Nehemiah's request? 5. What did Nehemiah do when he arrived at Jerusalem? 6. What did Nehemiah tell the rulers of Jerusalem, and how did he answer those who ridiculed him? 7. What did Nehemiah say to God about the opposition of Sanballat and Tobiah? 8. How did Nehemiah respond to the threat of attack?

9. How were the workers organized in the work of rebuilding the wall?

Lesson 11: Discord and conspiracy Nehemiah 5-7

MEMORY: Review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see that the work of rebuilding the wall was completed despite discord among the people of God and opposition from without.

1. What was the problem that made Nehemiah angry?

2. What did Nehemiah say about what the nobles and rulers were doing?

3. How was the problem resolved?

4. How was Nehemiah different from the previous governors?

5. What did Sanballat and Geshem first try to do, and how did Nehemiah respond?

- 7. What did Shemaiah try to do to bring Nehemiah into dishonor?
- 8. How did the enemies of Nehemiah respond to the completion of the wall?
- 9. In these chapters, note the times that Nehemiah prayed and record his requests.

Lesson 12: Revival in Jerusalem Nehemiah 8-10

MEMORY: Review

HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see the revival that followed the reading of the Law by Ezra the priest. 1. What did Ezra do on the first day of the seventh month? 2. How did the people respond to the reading of the Law? 3. What did the Levites do on this day? 4. What happened on the second day of the seventh month? 5. What happened on the 24th day of the seventh month? 6. What attributes of God are found in the prayer in Nehemiah 9? 7. What works of God are noted in this prayer? 8. How is the wickedness of man seen in this prayer? 9. What was the covenant that the people made with God?

Lesson 13: Nehemiah, the faithful governor Nehemiah 11-13

MEMORY: Review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace" **PURPOSE:** to see the joyful celebration at the dedication of the wall, and the reforms that Nehemiah had to institute upon his return from Babylon. 1. Why were the Levites sought out for the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem? 2. What arrangements did Nehemiah make for the dedication of the wall? 3. How was the day of dedication described? 4. When the Book of Moses was read before the people, what did they discover, and what did they do about it? 5. What had Eliashib the priest done for Tobiah? 6. What did Nehemiah do to restore order and service in the house of the LORD? 7. What did Nehemiah find out about the activities of the people on the Sabbath, and what did he do about it? 8. What did Nehemiah do when he found that some of the Jews had married women of Ashdod, Ammon and Moab?

9. In this last chapter, what did Nehemiah ask God to remember?

Lesson 14: Esther becomes queen Esther 1-5

MEMORY: Review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see how Esther was elevated to the position of Queen of Persia and Media, and how Mordecai enlisted her help in blocking Haman's plan to exterminate the Jews.

1.	Why did King Ahasuerus remove Queen Vashti from being queen?
2.	Who were Mordecai and Esther?
3.	How did Hegai, the keeper of the women, and King Ahasuerus treat Esther?
4.	What service did Mordecai provide for King Ahasuerus?
5.	Why did Haman seek to destroy all the Jews?
6.	What decree did Haman issue in the name of King Ahasuerus?
7.	What did Mordecai want Esther to do, and why was she reluctant?
8.	What request did Esther make of the king?
9.	What special plans did Haman make for Mordecai?

Lesson 15: Esther saves the Jews Esther 6-10

HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

*PURPOSE: to see how the plans of Haman to destroy Mordecai and the Jews are thwarted so that Haman and his people are destroyed instead.

1. What did King Ahasuerus discover during the night he could not sleep?

2. Why was Haman in the king's court that night, and what did the king ask him to do?

3. What did Queen Esther tell the king about Haman at the second banquet?

4. What happened to Haman?

5. What happened to Mordecai?

- 7. What happened on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month?
- 8. What is the feast of Purim, and when is it to be celebrated?
- 9. What happened to Mordecai after the deliverance of the Jews?

Lesson 16: Spiritual pollution Malachi 1-2

MEMORY: Review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace" PURPOSE: to see that God's love for His people is returned by pollution of worship, corruption of the priesthood, and infidelity in marriage. 1. What did the LORD say about Jacob and Esau? 2. How did the LORD show His hatred for Esau? 3. How had the priests despised the name of the LORD? 4. How did the LORD respond to this behavior? 5. What did Malachi tell them about the heathen (the nations of Gentiles)? 6. What will the LORD do to the priests? 7. What were the duties of the priests (the covenant of Levi), and what charges did Malachi make against them? 8. What sins had the people committed in marriage?

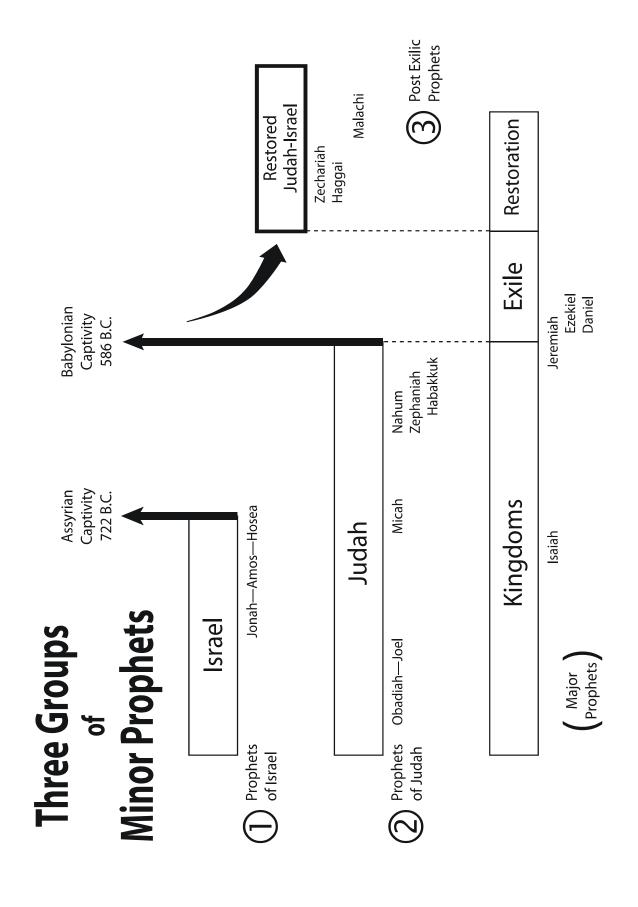
9. How had the people wearied the LORD with their words?

Lesson 17: The Sun of Righteousness Malachi 3-4

MEMORY: Review HYMN: "Fountain of Never-Ceasing Grace"

PURPOSE: to see that there is coming a Day when the LORD will purify the land by the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of righteousness in the people of God.

1.	What did Malachi say about the messenger of the LORD?
2.	Who is "the messenger of the covenant," and what will He do?
3.	Why is it important that the LORD does not change?
4.	What test did the LORD propose regarding the matter of the tithes?
5.	What "stout" or harsh words had the people spoken against the LORD?
6.	What will the LORD do for those who fear Him?
7.	What will happen to the wicked on the coming Day?
8.	What will the Sun of Righteousness do for those who fear God?
9.	What did Malachi tell us about Elijah?



457 B.C. 9 **Dissolving Mixed Marriages** The Work Reforms under Ezra 8:33 The Journey Second Return Artaxerxes of Exiles The King 854 9۱۶ Book of Esther Dated Here Rebuilding the Temple Restoration under Zerubbabel The Work The King Darius 4:5 The Journey First Return of Exiles The King Cyrus 239 B.C.

Restoration and Reform

Key words and phrases: went up, Jerusalem, decree, house of the Lord, Law of the Lord

Key verses: 6:21-22; 2:1; 7:10

Nehemiah

Building for Security

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	Redistribution Rededication Reform	12:27	curity	S	Drayor	
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ללל	Revival	7:73b	Building for Spiritual Security	Worship — Dwellers	Key: Law	Revival of a Nation
	Resettlement	7	Security	ers		man
	Reconstruction	3	Building for Physical Security	Work — Builders	Key: Wall	Leadership by a man
445 B.C.	The Plans	-		Prayer		

Key words: build, remember, pray, wall, work, mercy

Key verses: 2:17b; 6:3

Esther Bo

Book of Providential Care

473 B.C. **Exaltation** of a Jew 10 128697 NOTO 4 5 PUNCO NOTO 60 16 (CA). 9) Deliverance of the Jews Commemoration 1:01 minud to 12697 and Exaltation </_{!6} Influence of a Jewess Feast of Esther ® The Jews are Spared 8 < **Deliverance** Feast of Esther © 9 Threat Facing the Jews \$ τΖτ Elevation of 6**Z**Þ a Jewess 8 Feasts of _ Ahasuerus 480 Honoring the New Queen Gentile Setting The Jews are Threatened Plot ક 483 B.C. Moberity suoitold off Enitonoff edito isest shing shingsent shingsent (1.73) surjousent Setting

Key words: Jew (51x), feast

Key verse: 4:14b

Haggai

Build the House, and I will be Glorified

— Put first things first —

				F	Finished 516 B.C.	Ezra 0:15
ay	2:20 2:23 Fourth Sermon	Promise	ınt		nish	
1 day	2:10 Third Sermon	Blessing	God's Work Prominent		Encouragement to Finish	
2 months	2:1 Second Sermon	Encouragement	i,po9		Encon	
	1:12 Response	Assurance	ninent		Work Begun	
3 weeks	1 First Sermon	Reproof	People's Work Prominent		520 B.C. Charge to Resume Building	
	.5 B.C. Seed 534 B.C.		əlda Be		520 B.C. CI	

Book opens Key words: Consider, Word of the Lord, with a problem Lord of Hosts, house, glory

, Key verse: 1:8

Book closes with a promise 2:23

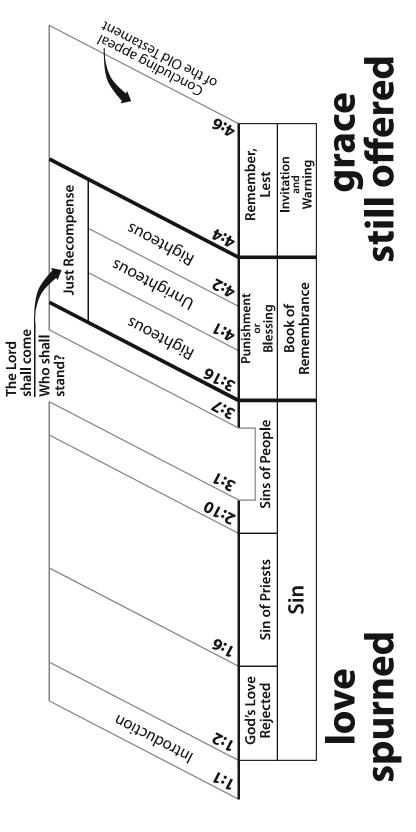
Zechariah

King over all the Earth

520 B.C.			518 B.C.	after 516 B.C.?
	Written during the building of the Temple	f the Temple		Written after the Temple was completed
1	Eight Visions 1:7	6:9	Four Messages 7:1	Two Burdens 14
Way of	Messianic Kingdom Visions	Bringer	Present Commands	Future Things
Salvation	Behold the Man the Branch	or Salvation	Love, Truth, and Peace	the Day of the Lord cometh
	"My house shall be built" 1:16		"Let your hands be strong" 8:9	"holiness unto the Lord" 14:20

Key words: Lord of Hosts (52x), jealous, Branch, King, I saw, Shepherd, Jerusalem





Key verses: 3:1, 8

Wherein ye say Day of the Lord

Saith the Lord of Hosts (20x)

Key words:

Messenger

Remember