

Tracing the Thread of Compassion

Psalm 86:15 But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

THOUGHTS:

- The Old Testament Prophets can seem to have a lot of doom, judgement and disaster to strike various peoples (including Israel)!
- Yet there are also very special verses of care & compassion
Many 'Christian Favourites' are quotes from the Prophets
- The verses of compassion are linked to:
 - a call for His people to return
 - a promise of God's faithfulness
 - the fact that God can save, heal and restore
- Use the verses given on the exercise sheet to trace the thread of compassion through Zechariah for yourself

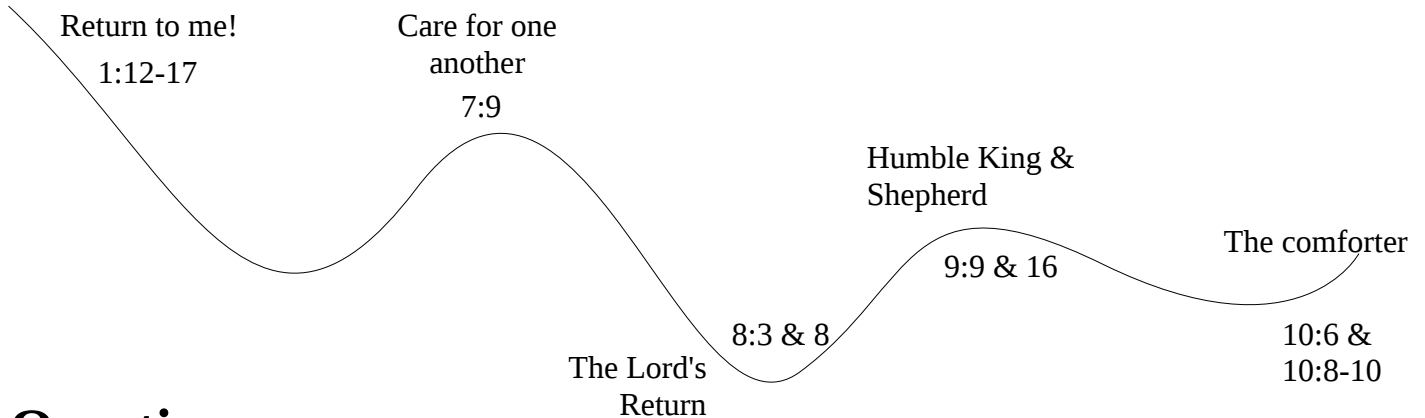
PRINCIPLE: God is gracious & faithful. Our part of the bargain is to be embraced by His love and live faithfully within it. Yet of course we stray, we do our own thing, have our own ideas, yada yada ...!

Yet God is still faithful, He longs for us to return ... and when we do so we discover His ongoing compassion, His desire to restore and *set right*.

Zechariah also teach us that this same compassion is available to all peoples, to any who would come

Tracing the Thread of Compassion

Trace the thread yourself by looking up the following verses in Zechariah



Questions

How many of these verses are close to, or contrast to, verses of doom or trouble?

Which verses are about God, which are about us?

What overall impression do you get from looking up these verses

Responses

[Discipline of OFF] Reflect on the key question:

[UP] How much do you appreciate that God is passionately for you?

[Share the Walk] Have someone pray with you about appreciating at an even deeper level God's passion for you

[Ever Closer to Jesus] Seek Jesus for fresh ability to extend His compassion to other people (see Mark 6:34)

Glimpses of the Messiah

Zech 9:9 See your king comes ... riding on a donkey

THOUGHTS:

- Throughout Zechariah we see links back to Old Testament passages & principles, and we see looking ahead to a coming-chosen-special-God-anointed-one (or *Messiah* for short!)
- Some references appear to first apply to actual figures (Joshua and Zerubbabel), others to figures who have yet to appear
- As Christians we see fulfilment of these verses in Jesus

PRINCIPLE: Prophecy can:

- speak into the current situation
- speak into the near future
- speak into the far future
- speak into the far far future (i.e. even future for us)

It can also have *multiple fulfilment*. We see this in some of the glimpses of the Messiah, with application to both the original context and the future Messiah. In pointing to the Messiah the prophecy is pointing to the bigger purposes of God.

Jesus fulfils the long-promised purposes of God

Glimpses of the Messiah

Group & match these Zechariah references with the Gospel and other references

Zech 2:10	Mt 1:17
Zech 3:8	Jn 10:11
Zech 6:12	Mt 26:14 - 16
Zech 4:7	Jn 19:34
Zech 10:4	Is 11:1
Zech 9:9	Jn 1:14
Zech 9:16	Ps 118:22 - 23
Zech 10:3	Mt 21:2 - 7
Zech 13:7-9	Mt 21:42
Zech 11:12-13	Is 53:4 - 5
Zech:12:10	Mt 27:3 - 7
Zech 13:10	

[Share the Walk] *You could do this exercise as a group using the sheet & pieces provided on the table*

Questions

Which references/links do you prefer? Do any seem a bit tenuous?

Can you see how these links might be helpful in witnessing to a Jewish person?

What about witnessing to a Muslim?

Responses

[Discipline of OFF] Give your own thanks to Jesus, and for His coming.

[Ever Closer to Jesus] Jesus brings God's Kingdom, where God's purposes are fulfilled. Seek Jesus, Seek His Kingdom, on earth as it is in Heaven

Zechariah in Pieces

1:1 ... the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah

THOUGHTS:

- The book of Zechariah can be broken down into different chunks
- A pattern of broad themes can be seen between the chunks
- Whilst some chunks are given dates in the text, others are not
 - Also some chunks perhaps refer to previous history, that seems out of sequence
- There are literary differences between the chunks and within them
 - maybe different authors contributed them, and they were later compiled into what we now have as the Book of Zechariah

PRINCIPLE: Scholars can research and shed light for us on the possible different authors and periods of history. Reading with that extra knowledge can be helpful, especially for passages that seem particularly difficult or obscure to us. However it is not necessary to become hung up on these questions: God can still speak into our lives today through the book taken as a whole, i.e. *in the form that we now have*.

*Author or authors → Possible Editor →
God speaking to us as the reader*

Zechariah in Pieces

[Share the Walk] With one or two others, do the jigsaws provided on the table to see how the book of Zechariah can be pieced together, and the question marks raised.

Questions

If Zechariah is an edited compilation of several prophets or authors, how does this change your view (if at all) of:

1. The prophet figures themselves?
2. Of scripture, how it was first written down and how it has reached us?
3. Of God's ability to speak into your life through this book?

Responses

[Discipline of OFF] Reflect on the fact that *God reveals* – both directly to people, and through Scripture (i.e. revelation that people have then written down and compiled) ... to us

[Ever Closer to Jesus] Scripture points us to Jesus, the true and living Word. Reflect on the incidences in this series alone that have enabled you to know or see Jesus more clearly.

Consider also the Glimpses of Messiah (on another table)

Syncing The Prophets and History

1:1 ... the eighth month of the second year of Darius ...

THOUGHTS:

- The explicit date references such as Zechariah 1:1 are most helpful! (1:1 dates it to ~520BC)
- These can be positively cross referenced to other archaeological evidence and sources
- Sometimes in the prophets just a king or another character is mentioned, but no explicit date
- Sometimes an episode is told by a prophet that we can read in 1 or 2 Kings and/or 1 or 2 Chronicles
 - Zechariah links with Haggai, and also Ezra
- Some prophetic books appear to span larger periods of history, e.g. Isaiah may cover over 300 years, most likely with multiple separate authors/compiler
- Knowing the history we can see application for the original hearers, yet we also see larger meaning, in some cases for fulfilment in *our* future as well

PRINCIPLES: A) Having the prophetic works anchored in history can help our understanding of what God was saying to the original hearers.

B) The larger prophetic books are more likely a collection of different revelations – given over a lifetime (or perhaps even several lifetimes), rather than one huge download.

*God speaks into the situation of the day → yet this can have a larger
(longer-range) meaning*

Syncing The Prophets and History

Group and match these different passages

Zech 1:1	2 Chr 28:27
Isaiah 6:1	2 Ki 20:12 - 19
Isaiah 36	Ezra 5:12
Isaiah 37	2 Ki 20:1 - 11
Isaiah 38	2 Chr 26:1 - 3
Isaiah 39	2 Ki 19
Haggai 1:1	2 Ki 18:17 – 37
Is 14:28	

[Share the Walk] *You could do this exercise as a group using the sheet & pieces provided on the table*

[Share the Walk] Use the jigsaw provided on the table to think more on the breakdown of Isaiah

Questions

Does it surprise you that great chunks of text seem to be repeated verbatim (or almost) between 2 Kings (history writings) and Isaiah (prophet)?

What does this suggest to you about scripture, how it was first written down and how it has reached us?

Responses

[Discipline of OFF] Reflect on the fact that *God reveals* – both directly to people, and through Scripture (i.e. revelation that people have then written down and compiled) ... to us

[Ever Closer to Jesus] Scripture points us to Jesus, the true and living Word. Reflect on the incidences in this series alone that have enabled you to know or see Jesus more clearly.

Consider also the Glimpses of Messiah (on another table)

Pictures & Drawing

God speaks to us in different ways. Sometimes we get an impression, a sense of a word or words, or maybe we see an image or picture.

What might God be saying to you today ... or even to someone else here or all of us?

Try being still & quiet for a minute or two, asking God to show you whatever He would have you see or hear. Then feel free to draw (use paper etc. provided) what you sense has come to mind, or write down or illustrate key words that you feel have come to you.

Once you have drawn / written / illustrated ... do you think this may be helpful or relevant to anyone else here today? If so, why not share with the service leader.

Bonus Question/Thought: Do you think this approach of being still – praying – drawing/doodling what comes to mind might be useful with our children?

Sculpture/Expression: Rebuilding!

Go on, express yourself!

The prophets get various images – sometimes obscure to us – for God to convey His purposes. Sometimes the prophets act out a little play, or construct a scene for God to make His point!

In Zechariah we have learnt about the period of rebuilding Jerusalem, the temple, the city, the people, the nation and God fulfilling His purposes.

Example verses are Zech 1:16, 2:1-5, 2:10-13, 3:1-5, 4:2, 4:11-14, 5:2, 8:3-5, 8:9-10, 8:20-23

Remember that as well as they physical temple & city, there is restored relationship, community etc.

Using the table, the chairs, the paper/pens (e.g. to make signs or labels) ... and whatever else you can reasonably get your hands on ... have a go at making a sculpture that expresses something we see in Zechariah of God rebuilding, restoring, being among His people etc. etc.

Its down to your artistic interpretation – so if no-one else gets it, thats because they are the ones who are narrow minded!

Put together the jigsaw pieces to see the how the book of Zechariah fits together

Zechariah in 4 parts	1:1 - 6		Call to faithfulness	Has date reference
	1:7 to 6:15		Promises of God's purposes	Has date reference
	Ch 7 & 8		Call to faithfulness	Has date reference
	Ch 9 to 14	9-11 2 nd author?	Promises of God's purposes	No date references + hard to date
12-14 3 rd author?				

Put together the jigsaw pieces to see the how the book of Zechariah fits together

Call to faithfulness	1 st Part	1:1 - 6
	2 nd Part	1:7 to 6:15
Promises of God's purposes	1 st Part	Ch 7 & 8
	2 nd Part	Ch 9 to 14

Put together the jigsaw pieces to see the how the book of Zechariah fits together

Author 1	Chapters 1 to 8
Author 2?	Chapters 9 to 11
Author 3?	Chapters 12 to 14

Put together the jigsaw pieces to see the how the book of Isaiah fits together

1 st Isaiah	Chapters 1-39	Speaking to the Kings – Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah (787 to 697 BC)	Editor / Compilers stitching it altogether
2 nd Isaiah	Chapters 40-55	Crying out, into the Exile (~550 BC?)	
3 rd Isaiah	Chapters 56-66	Preaching to the nation after the Exile (~450 BC?)	