

## **Dispensational Transitions From the Dispersion into Babylon To the Close of the New Testament**

### **I. From the Dispersion into Babylon to the close of the Old Testament**

#### **1. The Period of Captivity in Babylon. 586-516 B.C.**

After the defeat of the Northern Kingdom in 721 B.C. by the Assyrian armies, the southern kingdom continued to exist but did not learn the lessons taught to their brothers.

Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian armies defeated the Assyrians in 605 B.C. and came into Judah. The prophets Daniel, Jeremiah (including Lamentations) and Ezekiel spoke of this time.

The Jews had violated 70 Sabbatical Years and the Lord was collecting them all at one time. Daniel 9 cf 2 Chr 36:20-21

The Babylonian kings who ruled over Israel during this time were:

- Nebuchadnezzar ruled from 605-560.
- Evil-Merodach ruled from 560-558 B.C. (2 Kg 25:27; Jer 52:31).
- Neriglissar ruled until 556 B.C.
- Nabonidus ruled until 539 B.C.
- Belshazzar ruled until 522 B.C. Dan 5
- Darius, aka Artaxerxes, of Persia ruled until 516 B.C.

#### **Persian kings**

Cyrus the Great. 550-530 B.C.

Cambyses. 530-522 B.C. son of Cyrus

Bardiya. 522 (killed by Persian aristocrats)

Darius I. 522-486 B.C.

Xerxes I. 485-465 B.C., son of D1

Artaxerxes I. 465-424 B.C., son of X1

Xerxes II. 424 B.C., son of A1, killed by Sogdianus

Sogdianus. 424-423 B.C., son of A1, killed by Darius II

Darius II. 423-404 B.C., son of A1

Nebuchadnezzar's appointed king, Zedekiah, did evil in the eyes of the Lord and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, who had become a believer. In 586 he came to Jerusalem, sacked the Temple, killed many Jews and carried off the captives to Babylon. 2 Chr 36:9-19

2. The Prophets' Encouragement.  
 A. Haggai. (Encouragement)

Haggai is one of three prophets who wrote after the exile in Babylon. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all spoke to the Jews who were returned to Israel. Their objective was to encourage the spiritual and moral life of the small group which remained, now back in their homeland, as they sought to rebuild the Temple and the nation.

Haggai and Zechariah dealt mostly with the spiritual needs as they related to the rebuilding of the Temple and Malachi dealt primarily with the moral and social needs involved with the reconstruction of the nation itself.

Haggai's name means "festal" or "festive," suggesting to some that he was born on one of the major feast days, though there is nothing in the text to support this. Haggai is known only from this book (mentioned 9 times) and the mention of him in Ezra 5:1-2 and 6:14. Little is known about him. He refers to himself as "the prophet Haggai" (1:1), but nothing is known about his parents or genealogy. He was a contemporary of Zechariah the prophet and Zerubbabel the Governor. As is normal with the writing prophets, the book is named for the prophet himself.

Date of Writing: 520 B.C. Under the policies of Cyrus the Great (550-530 B.C.), King of Persia, almost 50,000 Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem. Among these were Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:2-4 cf. Isaiah 44:28), Joshua the high priest and the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The authorization allowing the Jews to return to their land occurred October 29, 539 B.C. It included authorization to rebuild the Temple but not a complete restoration of the city. The return was not completed until 516 B.C.

As stated by Haggai in 1:1, his first message was given on the first day of Elul (August - September) in the second year of Darius. This was in 520 B.C.

The Book of Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament; only Obadiah is shorter. The literary style of Haggai is simple and direct. The content of the book is a report of four messages by a seemingly insignificant prophet whose ministry was apparently of limited duration.

Though Haggai is the second shortest book in the Old Testament, we should not underestimate the power of Haggai's four messages in his role in encouraging the rebuilding of the Temple. Few prophets have succeeded in placing so much spiritual common sense into such a brief writing. One outstanding feature of Haggai's message is his strong awareness that his messages had their origin in God. Some 25 times he affirmed the divine authority of his messages. He consistently introduced his messages with, "*This is what the LORD Almighty says,*" and concluded them with a similar focus "*declares the LORD Almighty.*"

Haggai wrote to encourage and exhort the returned remnant of Israelites to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. In the process of this he taught (1) God blesses His people when they put Him first, (2) we should not grow weary in the service of the Lord and (3) God's promises for tomorrow become the foundation for our confidence for today.

Christ is seen in Haggai as the Restorer of the Temple's glory (2:7-9) and the One who overthrows the kingdoms of the world (2:22).

**Outline:**

1. **The First Message: A Call to Rebuild the Temple (1:1-15)**
2. **The Second Message: A Call to Find Courage in God's Promises (2:1-9)**
3. **The Third Message: A Call to Cleanness of Life (2:10-19)**
4. **The Fourth Message: A Call to Confidence in the Future (2:20-23)**

**B. Zechariah. (The Jealousy of YAHWEH)**

Zechariah, the prophet, was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (Zechariah 1:1). He was a contemporary of Haggai (Ezra 6:14). Zechariah's name means "YAHWEH remembers" or "YAHWEH has remembered." This is a theme that runs through the whole book.

**Date of Writing: 520–518 B.C.** The first verse presents Zechariah as the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo, who was the same priest as the one mentioned in Nehemiah 12:4 as a contemporary of Zerubbabel and Haggai. In Zechariah 2:4 the prophet is spoken of as a youth. He would probably have been a young man at the time he too issued a prophecy about the coming building campaign. His last dated prophecy (7:1-14) was given two years later, in 518 B.C. Chapters 9–14 show every appearance of having been composed some decades after that, possibly after 480 B.C. in view of the reference to Greece (9:13).

We have no further information concerning Zechariah's personal career, except the reference in Matthew 23:35, which seems to indicate that he was martyred by mob action in the Temple grounds. A different Zechariah, the son of Jehoida the priest, was also executed about the same time (2 Chr 24:20-21).

Zechariah was written to encourage the returned remnant of Jews to prepare to rebuild the Temple. The prophet also showed that God was at work in the world restoring Israel to their spiritual inheritance in preparation for the coming Messiah. Doctrinally, Zechariah demonstrates the prominence of the Temple in God's spiritual restoration of Israel, shows the providence of God in bringing back His people to their land and highlights the superiority of the Messiah in the future spiritual restoration of the Nation.

**Christ as Seen in Zechariah:** Perhaps no Old Testament book is more Messianic than Zechariah. This book presents Messiah in both of His advents and as both Servant and King, as Man and God, as the Angel of the Lord (3:1), the Righteous Branch (3:8), the Stone with the seven eyes (3:9), the Crucified Savior or the pierced One (12:10), the coming and humble King (9:9-10), the Shepherd who will be abandoned (13:7) and the coming Judge and righteous King (14).

**Outline:**

1. **The Call to Repentance (1:1-6)**
2. **The Eight Visions of Zechariah (1:7–6:8)**
3. **The Crowning of Joshua (6:9-15)**
4. **The Questions Concerning the Fasts (7:1–8:23)**
5. **Two Oracles Concerning the Future (9:1–14:21)**