

2 Zechariah 3-4 LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

There's something very sad about an abandoned construction site - the exposed frame, the half finished walls, the disused pile of bricks, the overgrown yard. It's particularly sad for the person who coughed up the money for this building in the first place!

Now think about the time when Israel returned to the promised land from exile. There would have been high hopes that the restoration of the temple would proceed quickly, but **read Ezra 4:1-6** to discover what happened...

Due to the scheming of the Samaritans and a royal decree from the Persians, the temple got no further than the alter being set up and the foundation being laid. In fact, for 15 years the temple construction was left abandoned. That would have been a very depressing sight indeed. If the very heart of Israel, the place of God, can't be made right, then what hope is there for the nation? In chapters 3-4, the visions that God gives to Zechariah continue, so let's see what God promises for the nation through the prophet Zechariah.

Read Zechariah 3 and then draw in your masterpiece below to show what's happening in this vision.



Your Title:

What is the message of this vision?:

1. Joshua was the high priest during the time of Zechariah. Here he represents God's people. What is this man's problem and what is the message of the clean clothes?

The stone in verse 9 is probably a capstone, a foundation stone for God's great building project (see 4:7,9). The temple is never far from this vision of this great priest/Branch to come. And then all of a sudden God gives a great promise in verse 9 - 'I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.'

2. How will God remove sin in a single day?

3. At any time during the history of Israel, the story of the nation inevitably involves sin. That's just the way humanity is. In the vision of chapter 3 we see that God is determined to remove the stain of sin. That's why he sent his son, Jesus. What does this tell us about God?

Read Zechariah 4 to discover the next vision that God gives to Zechariah. This time it involves Zerubbabel who was the governor when the exile Israelites returned to the land. Draw the vision as described in chapter 4.



Your Title:

What is the message of this vision?:

4. How did you go at drawing the lamp-stand, bowl, light and trees? For us it is a bit hard to work out how it all fitted together. When Zechariah asks what this all means, what is the answer he's given? (v4-6)?

5. At the time of Zechariah, the temple is a half completed mess. That's significant ammunition for the people of God to be discouraged. But what wrong attitude does verse 6 correct?

6. **Read Ezra 3:10-13.** This is the time when the foundation to the temple was laid. Many are very happy - that is why there are shouts of praise. But for others, it seems they can remember Solomon's former temple and this new one doesn't seem to measure up. That's why there is also great weeping. What wrong attitude is being expressed in Zechariah 4:10 and what is the encouragement Zechariah's vision is supposed to bring?

Some people were realising that the new temple would be much less grand than the first one it was replacing. But Zechariah says that people will rejoice to see God's building project being completed. God is at work! But as we keep thinking about the temple, we need to remember that by the time you get to Jesus, this 2nd temple has been destroyed and the 3rd temple (headed up by Herod) is in construction phase. But even then, Jesus promises that this 3rd temple will be destroyed. See appendix 1. It seems God isn't particularly concerned anymore about temples of bricks and mortar today. But God is still very much concerned with building a temple in a different way. God is very much still at work.

7. How does 1 Peter 2:4-8 show that Zechariah's prophecy is being fulfilled?

What is the temple God's Spirit is building?

What is the celebrated cornerstone?

8. Passages such as the one concerning the temple in Zechariah have been used by many a church building committee to raise funds for a building project. And people can talk about the church building with phrases such as 'the house of God', and 'the sanctuary'. What cautions would you sound about this?

9. If the people of Zechariah's time can look at the construction of the second temple and 'despise the day of small things' do you think Christians today can do something similar? That is, do you ever feel the church is small and weak, and does it look like your hard work counts for little? If that's the case, what encouragement should Zechariah's fulfilment in Christ bring to us?

Pray Give thanks that Jesus completely dealt with our sin on that 'single day' when he died on the cross for us. In the midst of possible discouragement - pray that we would know that God is building his house with us as the holy priesthood, and that He will certainly bring it to completion.