

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Zechariah*

*Zechariah Message 1*

*Introduction & Times of Gentiles Part 1*



The Chariots of Zechariah's Vision by Gustav Dore Cir. 1880

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

# Pentwater Bible Church

## The Book of Zechariah

### Message one

### Introduction and the Times of the Gentiles Part I

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Daniel E. Woodhead

#### INTRODUCTION

The name Zechariah comes from the Hebrew זְכַרְיָה *zakar* the verb for remember. The last half of his name is a reference to the Lord as *Yah*. Therefore this name of the Lord remembering is a fitting one because the entire prophecy is an exposition of the fact that the Lord remembers Israel. This is quite a common name in the Hebrew Bible, which is our Old Testament. It is found forty three times in the OT referencing at least twenty different individuals. He was given prophecies that were clearly near term to his day (Cir. 520 B.C.) and on to the second coming of the Messiah. His book may be viewed as the Old Testament apocalypse or the continuation of the prophet Daniel. He was born in Babylon was both a prophet and a priest like Ezekiel and Daniel as well as being a contemporary of Haggai. Haggai was much older and saw the temple (Haggai 2:3) before its final destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Haggai was probably in Israel when the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar invaded in 605 and 597 B.C. In 539 B.C. the Persian emperor Cyrus conquered Babylon bringing in a completely new ruling attitude over Jerusalem. Cyrus granted the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their city and their temple in 536-35 B.C. Cyrus was succeeded by in 530 B.C. by Cambyses II his son. Darius I succeeded him in 522 B.C. It was during his reign that the Lord gave Zechariah his prophecies.



Ancient Map of the Media Persian Empire Cir 500 B.C. In Public Domain

## Zechariah 1:1

*<sup>1</sup> In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying (ASV 1901)*

The book fittingly opens with a chronological identifier characteristic of ancient text, the *eighth month, in the second year of Darius*. This particular sign of the reign of Darius I provides us with two pieces of information. (One) The time of Zechariah's prophecy is after the Babylonian exile. Prior to the exile all chronologies were identified by the Israelite king's reign. (Two) The Times of the Gentiles that Christ spoke of (Luke 21:24) were in the second stage of development.

Darius I the Great, was an Achæmænid prince, the son of Hystaspes. He is prominently mentioned in both the book of Haggai and here in Zechariah. He recorded his victories on a stone call the rock of Behistun, which was an important archaeological find in. It is located on the side of Mount Behistun in the Kermanshah Province of Iran, near the city of Kermanshah in western Iran. Its primary significance has been the provision of a translation of three versions of the same text, written in three different cuneiform script languages: Old Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian (a later form of Akkadian). Therefore this carving is to cuneiform what the Rosetta Stone is to Egyptian hieroglyphs. It is a source of understanding in the translation of a previously lost language.



Darius I The Great Inscription from Wikipedia, accessed May 4, 2013  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Darius\\_I\\_the\\_Great%27s\\_inscription.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Darius_I_the_Great%27s_inscription.jpg)

Following the setting of the chronological milestone the prophet identifies his father and grandfather Berechiah and Iddo who was also a prophet. Zechariah and his family returned from exile along with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Nehemiah 12:4). He followed his



grandfather in that office under the high priest Jehoiakim (Nehemiah 12:16), from which he returned from Babylon in his youth, and that his father died young. This also probably serves to explain the fact that Zechariah is called *bar 'Iddo*, the son (grandson) of Iddo, in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, and that his father is passed over. Zechariah started prophesying only two months later than Haggai, together they sought to encourage the building of the temple (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), and that while he was still young, which is inferred partly from from the epithet הַנֶּעֶר הַלֵּוֹי (*hanaar halaz* = the young man) in Zechariah 2:8, in which he refers to himself.

The Jews had been in Babylon for seventy years when they were given the authorization to return home and Zechariah was one of the pioneers who took advantage of the decree to restore and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple. He died at an advanced age, and was buried close to Haggai. Besides the far-reaching prophecies of the two appearances of the Messiah and the Great Tribulation he provides supporting references to Christ's predictions of the Times of the Gentiles. It is to that important material that we must understand in order to get a complete perspective of what the Lord Jesus was talking about.

#### THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

A proper introduction to the book of Zechariah must include the Times of the Gentiles. The "Times of the Gentiles" is not explicitly laid out in the book of Zechariah, but it is in the book of Daniel in several chapters. We're going to go back to the book of Daniel and look at:

What are the Times of the Gentiles and why is that important?  
How does it fit into what we need to do today to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Lord referred to the times of the gentiles ending at some point in time. The Gentile control of Jerusalem and world government in general is going to end. It's not going to last forever. Now the Lord said this in the Olivet Discourse:

#### THE TRAMPLING OF JERUSALEM

Luke 21:24

*And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled (KLV).*

His disciples asked Him, "What's going to happen? When are you coming back? Tell us when these things are going to happen." He wouldn't tell them when He's coming back, but He would tell them what the circumstances on the earth were going to be. One of them was that Jerusalem is going to be trodden down by the Gentiles. In other words, the Gentiles are going to control Jerusalem for only a predetermined amount of time.

He warned us to be alert to the dynamics of the social environment we live in so we will

know what is transpiring on the world scene and be able to avoid much of what He warns us about.

He is warning us to be aware of the deception that is in the earth today and The Great Tribulation that is coming. We should know that He has made us aware of these circumstances. He wants us to know what has happened, what will happen. He doesn't want us to be deceived (Matthew 24:25).

Hosea 4:6 tells us that "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge because thou hast rejected knowledge." Now the context of that is that the Jews have rejected learning, rejected the knowledge of Christ, [Jehovah] and they have rejected the knowledge of God. Therefore, they're going to be deceived and it's going to destroy them. The same thing can happen to us by our not being aware of the world environment. It's even worse for people that aren't Christians; they have no idea who's driving the world scene. They think it's just chance, circumstances, treaties, and political powers. They don't think that God is causing and managing all human events on the earth

#### THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES IS A LONG PERIOD OF TIME

The Times of the Gentiles is that long period of time from the Babylonian captivity until the Second Coming of Jesus where the Gentiles have been in control of Jerusalem. During this time, the Gentiles [have had and will have] control over the city of Jerusalem. There has been only a few times of temporary [or partial] Jewish control over the city:

Maccabean Period (164-63 B.C.) The first period the Jews took control was in 166 B.C. that was the Maccabean Period. They ruled Jerusalem from 164 to 63 B.C

First Jewish Revolt against Rome (A.D. 66-70) This [occupation was short lived] and finally ended up with Titus Vespasian leveling Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and destroying the Temple. The only thing left to the Temple now is that Western Wall. There was a Jewish revolt and for the first four years the Jews had control, but they lost it.

The second Jewish Revolt which was the Bar-Cochba Revolt against Rome (A.D. 132-135) Simon Bar-Cochba was one of the first false messiahs. Those unbelieving Jews that wouldn't accept Christ were following him. The people who were following him were declaring him to be the Messiah so they decided to have a revolt against Rome. The Romans just crushed them.

Since the 1967 Six-Day War which is still only temporary, because Jerusalem will continue] be trodden down by the Gentiles for at least another 3 years during the Tribulation (Revelation 11:1-2). Since 1967 when the Six Day War occurred, the Jews took Jerusalem back - again. This Six Day War is another temporary period, it's not going to last, nor do the Jews have total permanent and complete control over Jerusalem.

In order to understand the predominance of Gentile control over Jerusalem it is necessary to couple the prophecies that the prophet Daniel received from chapters two and seven. Daniel was carried away in the very first invasion of 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar the King has this dream but could not understand it until the Jewish Daniel interpreted the vision.

This is Daniel talking to Nebuchadnezzar:

Nebuchadnezzar's Vision, Daniel 2:31-35

Daniel 2:31-35

*Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness [was] excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof [was] terrible. This image's head [was] of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest [In his dream that is] till that a stone was cut out without hands, [It wasn't made with human hands] which smote the image upon his feet [that were] of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (KJV).*

First Daniel provides a general description of the awesomeness of the image (v.31) that Nebuchadnezzar saw, then he moves to a composition of the image. (vv.32-33) The image is described as having a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron and ending with the feet and toes of part iron and part clay. These metals have two important characteristics:

They increase in strength as you move from the head to the toes.

The metals as you move from the head to the toes decrease in value as they increase in strength. As they go from gold to iron, they decrease in value.

The fulfillment of the image as we move from the head to toe will be in the decrease of the character of authority and rule. Babylon as the head was an absolute monarchy and the monarch was above the law. The king could do anything he wanted even if it broke the laws of the land. As we move down the image we see that the Medo-Persia monarch, [the breast and arms of silver] was not above the law and did not have the authority to change his own decrees. The Hellenic kings the belly and thighs of brass had no dynastic or royal right to rule, and ruled by force of conquest and personal gifts. Finally Roman Imperialism was a republic legs of iron, which degenerated into mob rule merging with the imperial form of government.

You will notice that as there was a decrease of character and authority as we moved down the image there was also an increase of the strength of these empires, one over the other.

A stone destroys the image, and the stone smites the image on its feet (vv.34-35a). Then with the image destroyed, the stone become a great mountain that fills the whole earth (v.35b). The stone cut without hands, emphasizes His divine origin. We know who the “Rock” is. Christ is described as the Rock throughout Scripture. (Luke 6:48; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4 etc.)

Interpretation of the vision, Daniel 2:36-45

After Daniel describes the image to Nebuchadnezzar, which he dreamed, he proceeds to give the interpretation of it in verses 36-45.

Daniel 2:36-45

*<sup>36</sup>This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. <sup>37</sup>Thou, O king, art king of kings, unto whom the God of heaven hath given the kingdom, the power, and the strength, and the glory; <sup>38</sup>and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee to rule over them all: thou art the head of gold. <sup>39</sup>And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee; and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. <sup>40</sup>And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that crusheth all these, shall it break in pieces and crush. <sup>41</sup>And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. <sup>42</sup>And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. <sup>43</sup>And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay. <sup>44</sup>And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. <sup>45</sup>Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure (ASV 1901).*



## HEAD OF GOLD

After declaring, “this is the interpretation” (v.36) Daniel begins to interpret the meaning of the head of gold (vv.37-38) as being Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed the First Temple and Jerusalem in 586 B.C. So Babylon was the first empire that began the Times of the Gentiles when they dominated Jerusalem. The actual grant given to Nebuchadnezzar included the whole earth but he chose not to take advantage of this. Jeremiah affirms this fact in 27:5-8 and Ezekiel also in 26:7-14.

## BREAST AND ARMS OF SILVER

The two arms of silver united into the breast of silver represents the two nations of the Medes and Persians, who established the Medo-Persian Empire (v. 39a). It is declared to be inferior to the Babylonians. It lacked the inner unity of Babylon because the Medes and Persians though united, never fused into one people group. Further their government was not above the mistakes of the law (Daniel 6:12-14).

The Medo-Persian King or Monarch was not above the law. We see this in the story of Daniel and the Lion’s Den. This is just one example, there are secular examples too, where Darius makes this stupid law where people can’t pray and



Daniel's detractors go to the King and say, "Look, this one's praying." Darius doesn't want the law to apply to Daniel but he says, "We have to follow it; I'm not above the law." So they put him in the lion's den and God miraculously saves Daniel. You know what the story is, but the issue here is that Darius doesn't have the ability to by-pass the law and do what is right. We see that character of absolute authority is decreasing with each subsequent kingdom.

#### BELLY AND TWO THIGHS OF BRASS

The Greek, also known as the Hellenistic Empire, followed the Medo-Persian Empire. It is symbolized by the belly and two thighs of brass (v.29b) for the third territorially embraced both East and West. The two thighs may also represent Syria and Egypt, which arose out of the Hellenistic Empire and controlled Jewish territory and Jerusalem. Its grant was the same as Babylon, the whole world, but like Babylon it did not choose to exercise the entire world dominion that was given to them by God.

We know that Alexander of Macedon went east and he went west from Macedon, which is just north of Greece, and he conquered a huge portion of the world. He set up Hellenistic schools where Greek was taught (The New Testament was written in Greek). The Greek language spread around quickly especially in the whole area where the Apostle Paul went on his missionary journeys.

Finally the Hellenistic Kings didn't have any dynastic or right to rule. Alexander didn't need one. And when he was on his deathbed he was asked, "Who will get your kingdom?" He said, "Give it to the strong; Give it to the strong." So he had his generals fighting themselves for it. There was no divine rule, no legal succession. It was just simply fighting throughout the Kingdom. The generals took it by force and they didn't have the right to it

#### THE LEGS AND THE TOES

The rest of the image represents the Fourth Gentile Empire (vv.40-43). Other aspects will be given in the seventh chapter of Daniel. This Fourth Empire goes through several stages, three of which are presented in this text. First there is the United Stage (v.40). But this United Stage gives way to the Two Division Stage (v. 41), which still has the strength of iron. Eventually, however, the Fourth Gentile Empire gives way to a Ten Division Stage, as seen in the ten toes (vv.42-43) being composed of part iron and part clay. Part of this Ten Division Stage will be strong and part will be brittle and weak. The lack of cohesiveness is especially evident in the toes (vv.42-43) being composed of part iron and part clay. Unity is impossible and the ten divisions take place because the individual elements will not coalesce – they just won't come together.

The Fourth Gentile Empire is unique from all the previous ones. It totally subdues and crushes all that precede it. It is the fourth Gentile Empire that is particularly emphasized by the text dealing with the Times of the Gentiles.

So there is an increase in the strength in these empires we are seeing as we move from the head to the toes. The empires are progressively becoming stronger and more war-like than the previous one and are able to conquer more. So the empires represented by this image will be successively destroyed, one by one, one by another. They don't disappear from the planet, it's just their power ceases to exist as a World Empire.

#### A SUPERNATURAL STONE

Then this stone comes in and it smites this image on its feet. We see that in verses 34 and 35a. The "stone", as represented in the Bible is the same as the "rock" and it's Christ.

1Corinthians 10:4

*"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."*

Christ is the stone; Christ is the coroner stone. And this Stone, cut without hands (meaning with divine origin) is going to eliminate the last segment of the Roman Empire and set up His Kingdom on the earth.

Following the Fourth Gentile Empire, God is going to set up his own Kingdom. The Fifth Empire that follows is going to be predominantly Jewish. (vv.44-45). Two prominent symbols are used here, but they are consistent with their usage elsewhere.

Whenever the word stone is used symbolically it is always a symbol of the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, the Lord Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. Whenever the word mountain is used symbolically, it is always a symbol of a king, kingdom, or throne. Therefore, following the Fourth World Gentile Empire, God will set up His own Kingdom. The Kingdom is set up during the Ten Division Stage (v 44a), and this brings to an end the domination of the other kingdoms (v.44b). In the end the image of Gentile domination will be smashed at the Second Coming. Once the Messianic stone smashes Gentile domination, this will set up the Kingdom of God. That's this mountain that takes over the whole world. It's not evangelism by the Christian Church, it's God making His statement that, "I'm taking back control of the earth!" That will end Gentile domination.

#### GOD'S KINGDOM

With God, in Christ, sitting David's throne in Jerusalem a new government is going to be set up. It's going to be an entirely different form of Government. It's going to be a theocracy ruled by the real King and it's going to be a whole lot different than the way things are now. That brings an end to all of Gentile dominion over the earth, particularly Jerusalem. Once the Messianic stone, as we saw in the image, smashes Gentile dominion, the Kingdom of God is going to be set up. Everything is going to change, the whole world structure. Everything we know is not going to be as it is now. The trees and everything are going to be here, but it is the way people conduct themselves and even the way animals act toward us will be different. There is going to be peace here. It's going to

be entirely different for 1,000 years.

In summary, the Times of the Gentiles is a long period of time when four Gentile empires will follow one another in sequence with the Fourth Empire going through several different stages. But eventually this will give way to God's setting up His own Kingdom. While the Gentile empires are of human origin; the Kingdom of the Stone is of divine origin. While the Gentile empires are all temporary, God's kingdom is eternal.

#### THE KINGDOMS OF DANIEL 2 OUTLINE

The Babylonian Empire starting in 605 B.C.

The Medo-Persian Empire.

The Hellenistic Empire

The Fourth Empire,

    The United Stage.

    The Ten Division Stage

The Messianic Kingdom

NEXT WEEK: THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES PART II-DANIEL CHAPTER 7

**Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments**

[Info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com](mailto:Info@pentwaterbiblechurch.com) Toll Free 877-706-2479