

The last two post-exilic prophets

Zechariah

Zechariah was born in Babylon of a priestly family. He is both a priest and a prophet. He was a contemporary of Haggai. They were ministering to the same people at the same time. While Haggai was short and to the point--in your face, Zechariah was mystical and focused on the holy presence of God. He writes of 8 visions he had in one night--all indicative of a plan of God. Zechariah's purpose was to bring hope and encouragement to the insecure and unstable refugees. Only 50,000 returned to the land and they most likely felt small and jostled around by the powers surrounding them. Zechariah encourages them that God is with them and they will complete the building of the Temple.

Discussion Questions:

- a. Why do you think so many of the people did *not* return to the land?
- b. What kind of tree did Zechariah see in his first vision? How does this tree represent the Nation of Israel?
- c. What are the horns a symbol of?
- d. What is the man with the measuring line a symbol of?
- e. What is seen in the 5th vision? What is its meaning?
- f. What is oil a symbol of?
- g. Examine your heart: Are you surrendered to God's spirit or do you try in your own might and power to accomplish God's work? How can you be more in tune with the Holy Spirit every day in every activity?
- h. What verses tell of the 1st coming of Christ? Which verses tell of the 2nd coming?

Malachi

We don't know much about Malachi. All we know is that he brings a message about a future messenger, a forerunner to Christ. His message contains the final words of God before the new covenant. This book is in dialectic form. It is an intensely personal conversation between God (God through the prophet Malachi) and the people of Israel.

Discussion Questions:

- a. What does the name Malachi mean?
- b. What is God trying to tell the people?
- c. How is doubt of God's love at the root of all of man's problems?
- d. What things does God complain to the people about?
- e. In what way did the people rob God?
- f. What is the last word in the old testament?
- g. Examine your heart: Are you robbing God?
- h. How many silent years are there between the old testament and the new testament?