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READING ZECHARIAH WITH ZECHARIAH 1:1–6 AS THE INTRODUCTION TO THE ENTIRE BOOK. Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 59.

By Heiko Wenzel. Leuven: Peeters, 2011. 340 pages. Paper. \$61.00.

For at least three reasons critics divide the book of Zechariah between chapters 1–8 and 9–14: (1) the sections exhibit different literary styles, (2) Zechariah's name does not appear in the book's last six chapters, and (3) there is a heightened apocalyptic style in Zechariah 9–14. Heiko Wenzel, in his 2006 Wheaton Graduate School Ph.D. dissertation, argues against splitting the book into two parts. His thesis is that Zechariah 1:1–6 is more than an introduction to the prophet's eight night visions. Rather, these verses provide an interpretive framework for the entire book; the warning of Zechariah 1:3–4 is sounded again and again throughout all fourteen chapters.

Wenzel's argument is largely based upon the reading strategies of Michael Bakhtin. For instance, Bakhtin urges us to see books as unified coherent pieces of art. We are not to separate the part from the whole. Textual tensions need

not signal multiple authors; rather they facilitate interpretation and understanding. Therefore, to interpret Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14 separately is tantamount to interpreting a different work than the book of Zechariah. It is a faulty exegesis to assume that there is no traceable argument that runs throughout the book. Wenzel instead argues that Zechariah presents us with a coherent narrative.

Bakhtin also assumes that a dialogue is going on between textual producers and those who receive them. Defining the receptor community, therefore, greatly assists the interpretive process. For the book of Zechariah, then, it is best to assume that the prophet's focus is upon how those in Persian Yehud in the late sixth century respond to God's word. Zechariah frequently uses the messenger formula (e.g., *Zec* 1:3, 4, 14; 3:7; 7:9; 8:23; 11:4) and announces that he has been sent to the people (*Zec* 2:13, 15 [EN 2:9, 11]; 4:9; 6:15). Standing in line with other ancient Near Eastern messengers, the prophet's role was to facilitate dialogue between Yahweh and his people as though they were standing face to face.

Armed with these two reading strategies from Bakhtin, Wenzel's chief text is Zechariah 1:4. When the prophet challenges his audience in this verse to be different from their forefathers, whose sins brought the Babylonian catastrophe, he implies that they are in grave danger and may end up like their ancestors. To be sure, the surviving post-exilic remnant heeded Haggai's preaching (*Hg* 1:1–11) and began to rebuild the temple (*Hg* 1:14). Yet the book of Haggai describes the community's discouragement (*Hg* 2:3–4), their unclean state (*Hg* 2:14) and the fact that they did not turn to Yahweh

(Hg 2:17) though this was the prophet's repeated command (Hg 1:5, 7; 2:15, 18). The outward transformation of the temple did not match an inward change in their hearts. This is why Zechariah's preaching, which overlaps Haggai's by a month, issues such a stern warning in Zechariah 1:4.

It may appear as though Zechariah's ministry was a complete success. He preached. The temple was rebuilt. Everyone was thankful. And they all lived happily ever after. But this is not a correct reading of the book. Hypocritical fasting (Zec 7:1–3), idolatry (Zec 10:2; 13:2), and a lack of godly leadership (Zec 11:3–17) indicate that there would be another exile. The prophet describes this in Zechariah 14:1–2. However, Yahweh's final word to his faithful remnant is grace and mercy (Zec 14:20–21).

Judgment is promised in Zechariah because the book's theology is based, in large part, upon the Sinaitic covenant. The rhetorical questions in Zechariah 1:5–6 refer to Deuteronomy 28:15, 45 and announce that covenant curses overtook the community's ancestors. This reference to texts in Deuteronomy indicates the validity of Deuteronomy 5:3; "*Not only* with your ancestors did Yahweh cut this covenant; but also with us, we, these ones here today, all of us alive." The Sinaitic covenant is therefore in play with each successive generation of Israelites. And this includes the post-exilic generation living in Persian Yehud. Jeremiah's new covenant (Jer 31:31) has not yet been fulfilled. The Babylonian destruction of the temple was not the end of the covenant Yahweh made with his people at Sinai. It was rather the covenant's execution. The post-exilic community of Yehud was faced with a similar situation

that confronted their ancestors. Shall they worship and serve the God who lovingly rescued them from their enemies or blend in with the surrounding nations and bow down to their gods?

Wenzel is largely successful in pointing out that Zechariah's audience is different from their forefathers only in that they listened to prophetic preaching and resumed rebuilding the temple. The more fundamental change of their hearts did not happen. As a result, the prophet promises that divine wrath will fall again, only to be followed with complete restoration (Zec 13:7–14:21).

Sometimes Wenzel makes connections in Zechariah with earlier texts that appear dubious and occasionally his interpretive comments are forced. But these minor weaknesses do not detract from his trenchant defense for the unity of Zechariah as well as his numerous interpretive insights. Those who preach and teach from this, the longest of the Minor Prophets, will find Wenzel's study to be invaluable.

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