

WHICH ZECHARIAH IN MATTHEW 23:35?

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That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Matthew 23:35

There are plenty of commentaries from the first century until now discussing which Prophet Jesus was speaking of in this passage (Matthew 23:35) and in Luke 11:51.

Distilling the possible options, we have the Zechariah son of Jehoida in 2Chronicles 23, Zechariah the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo in Zechariah 1:1; or some other Zechariah (there were many in the Old Testament and also the father of John Baptist). Irresponsible and unreasonable options are that Jesus made a mistake or a scribe mistakenly changed Jehoida to Berechiah when copying the Book of Matthew. We will not consider these two options.

Jehoida's son in 2Chronicles 23 lived 300 years (around the 9th century BC) before the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.

From the context where Jesus was speaking, Jesus is requiring the blood of the righteous prophets from Abel to a *specific* Zechariah. Abel is the first righteous blood shed in the Old Testament. As Jesus was (*I suppose*) giving a complete range of the Old Testament prophets, he ended with a prophet from 2Chronicles. 2Chronicles is the last book on the Hebrew Old Testament (their order is different from the Christian Old Testament).

I contend the Zechariah Jesus referred to is the Zechariah from Zechariah 1:1 – the son of Berechiah (Barachias) the son of Iddo. This Zechariah prophesied around 520 BC, after the 70 years of Babylonian captivity led to the rebuilding of the temple. Now, although many better men than I have commented, I shall also give my opinion. I dare not say this is the final answer, but it is worth a hearing.

Here are my reasons for presenting this Zechariah as the son of Berechiah and Iddo (Zechariah 1:1):

- 1 Jesus specifically described which Zechariah he spoke of. Jesus said, "... the son of Barachias." A simple search shows only one, and that is the Zechariah from the Minor Prophets, the second to the last book in our Old Testament. As the old saying goes, if you hear hoof beats, think horses before zebras. This is the direct and simplest direction, considering Jesus made the effort to specify which Zechariah he was speaking of.
- 2 This Zechariah prophesied to encourage the rebuilding of the temple after the Babylonian destruction of Solomon's Temple (see 2Chronicles 36:19-23). Jesus' comments referred to the temple. Although there have been a few killed in the temple area, to suppose Zechariah the son of Jehoida is the one Jesus mentioned (simply because of his name, which was not uncommon) ignores the possibility that there were others.
- 3 This Zechariah prophesied in the second year of Darius (Zechariah 1:1). According to Ezra 6:14, 15; the temple was rebuilt in the 6th year of Darius. It is very likely Zechariah the son of Berechiah prophesied in the temple, especially considering his ministry was centered on the rebuilding of the temple.
- 4 Reading 2Chronicles 36:19-23, you see that Zechariah – although not mentioned by name – was *likely* part of the "Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up." This still fulfills the point that Jesus was including the blood of prophets from the Abel (the first in the first book) to the prophet in the last book (actually, the last chapter of the last book). The son of Jehoida was killed in 2Chronicles 23, 300 years before the son of Berechiah, *probably* among those mentioned in 2Chronicles 36. This is even a better fulfillment of Jesus' mention of the complete Old Testament.
- 5 Lastly, and though not totally scriptural, the Targum version of Lamentations adds to Jeremiah's writing a mention of Zechariah. Here is the Old Testament reading of Jeremiah 2:20:

Behold, O LORD, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, and children of a span long? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

Here is the Targum reading:

See, O LORD, and observe *from heaven* against whom have you turned. Thus is it *right for the Daughters of Israel* to eat the fruit *of their wombs due to starvation, lovely children wrapped in fine linen?* *The Attribute of Justice replied, and said, Is it right to kill priest and prophet in the Temple of the LORD, as when you killed Zechariah son of Iddo, the High Priest and faithful prophet in the Temple of the LORD on the Day of Atonement because he told you not to do evil before the LORD?*

Although I am **not** saying that the Targum readings are inspired * – they were Aramaic renderings added to the Old Testament by the Jews in dispersion to help them understand and teach the sacred books – I am saying the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking in Matthew 25 **did** know the Targum. They were Aramaic-speaking Jews. Since Jesus mentioned that the son of Barachias was slain “between the temple and the altar,” this is added inspired revelation from the mouth of our Saviour. Similar to the revelation that the two who withstood Moses were Jannes and Jambres, which we know as a result of Paul’s writings to Timothy (2Timothy 3:8).

With the above-listed reasons, we still maintain the context of what Jesus was communicating; do not add to or take away from his words, but take them at face-value; and we span the prophets from Abel (Genesis 4) to Zechariah (2Chronicles 36; Zechariah 1:1); or, from the beginning of mankind (Abel) to the end of the Babylonian captivity (Zechariah).

I hope this is a help to the readers.

* Lamentations was written by Jeremiah shortly after 586 BC. The prophet Zechariah the son of Berechiah died over 70 years later. The Targum reading is obviously an addition made long after Jeremiah wrote it.