

**BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
THE MAN AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES
ZECHARIAH 1:7-17**

Introduction

Approximately three months after Zechariah instructed his people to give themselves wholly to the Lord, he received this mighty vision illustrating Jerusalem's future. (For the time frame compare verses 1 and 7.)

Just how literally this promise should be taken is evident from God's first revelation concerning the future of the city of Jerusalem.

The Jews had returned to Jerusalem. They had started to rebuild the Temple and had turned to the Lord again. God's answer was not long in coming.

In fact He turned back to them and gave them a wonderful revelation about Jerusalem (which is called the city of the great King in Matthew 5:35).

The curse they had been under until then would be removed, and again, they would be a blessing! (Cf. Zechariah 8:13)

A large number of Jews will turn to the Lord during the Great Tribulation. According to Revelation 11:1, they will also rebuild the Temple. Then the Lord will return to His people.

God's promises will also become a perceivable blessing, comfort and living hope for those of us who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ when we dedicate ourselves completely to Him: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God...Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*" (James 4:7-8).

I. A VIEW OF JERUSALEM DURING THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES. (ZECHARIAH 1:8)

Zechariah saw a rider on a red horse who stopped in a *bottom* (or ravine) "...*among the myrtle trees*."

The myrtle tree symbolizes Jerusalem, where many of them grow in the valleys. Characterized by their dark, green, glossy leaves, they are adorned with flowers.

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During Zechariah's time, they were often used as wedding decorations and at the Feast of the Tabernacles to make booths (Nehemiah 8:15). Perfume also was made from myrtle trees.

The tree's green leaves signify Israel's hope and future. Jerusalem will not fade. It will bloom before the Lord forever!

Where were these myrtles located? In a bottom, a shade, a hollow or a deep ravine! The "*bottom*" symbolizes Israel's position among the nations.

The time of the Gentiles began with Jerusalem's first destruction by the Babylonians. Jerusalem never really has been free of being trodden down by the Gentiles since then.

Jerusalem was ruled by the Romans when Jesus was here the first time. This occupation by Gentiles will last until Jesus returns as Israel's Messiah: *Luke 21:24—"...and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."*

Jerusalem (Israel) is like the myrtle tree, which grows modestly in a shady, low place. Accordingly, Israel and her people are despised by the Gentile nations even today. Jerusalem is contested and hated, and the other nations of the world would like to take the country back from the Jews.

II. A VIEW OF THE GENTILES' THOUGHTS TOWARDS JERUSALEM.

While Israel, the myrtle, is despised by the Gentile nations, the Lord stands among the myrtles in the bottom! He remains standing where others have passed by. Three times, we see reference to this:

"...*He stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom...*" (vs 8)

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"And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said..." (vs. 10)

"And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees..." (vs. 11)

While the nations of this world treat Israel thoughtlessly, the Lord remembers them!

As messengers of the Lord of hosts, the angels mentioned in verse 11 were given the task of seeing how the nations would behave toward Jerusalem.

What did they see? "...all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."

I believe this is a picture of indifference, thoughtlessness, self-confidence—i.e. a presumptuous rest. Nobody cared about Israel! Peace among the nations was more important than siding with Israel! There was no turning to the Lord and His Word! And there was no turning to Israel!

Nothing has changed! The world remains relatively silent when terrorists murder Jews both inside and outside of their homeland!

There is no protest when the Arab League and its representatives pour out their tirades of hatred on Israel. By and large, hardly anyone lifts a finger in response to the many injustices directed toward Israel!

But this same world condemns Israel every time she makes a move — even when she is defending herself!

How different were the Lord's thoughts? Jerusalem is mentioned 5 times in this passage of Zechariah. (5 is the number of grace) God's feelings about the city are apparent: (**Vs 12, 14, 16, 17**)

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Who among the powerful men of our world has like-minded thoughts concerning Jerusalem? This shows how far the nations live from the thoughts of God!

But understand that the Lord is on Jerusalem's side, even if the nations are indifferent and thoughtless toward them!

There will be a day in the near future when the Lord turns to Jerusalem again in all His perfect grace!

He will have mercy upon His city and people!
He will again be jealous for them!
He will comfort them and He will choose them!

III. WHAT WILL BE THE FINAL SOLUTION? (Vs 15)

A. The Nations Of The World Have A View Of A Final Solution!

The nations are eagerly searching for their own final solution to the Jewish problem.

The final solution they are seeking for will never be justified! God's answer to ANY such an attempt will always be Divine wrath!

B. The LORD's Has His Final Solution!

The Lord's "final solution," will be Israel's final liberation from the pressure of the Gentile nations!

This final liberation will come when Jesus returns!

Then, His thoughts against all the nations but Jerusalem will be realized! The time of the Gentiles will end!

God's wrath will come upon the nations in such fury that they will cry out as recorded *Revelation 6:15-17*:

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"And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

C. What About Our Stance As Believers?

Believers must not be indifferent where Jerusalem is concerned! It is sad to say, but many professing believers come up on the wrong side where Israel is concerned!

The land of Israel and the Jewish people must be dear to our hearts because they are dear to the Lord!

It is not by chance that Zechariah was told twice that he should proclaim the words of the Lord! (**Vs 14, 17**)

The Lord is angry with those who hate Jerusalem, but He will bless those who love her! (**Genesis 12:3**)

Psalm 122:6—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

IV. THE PERSON OF THE FINAL SOLUTION! (Vs 8)

Who is this mysterious man who stands among the myrtle trees? It is the Son of man, Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah!

He is concerned about Jerusalem, and He is also concerned about you!

The man among the myrtle trees appears suddenly on a red horse during the time of the nations, in the middle of the night (vs 8).

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Israel had no king at that time. The Jews were busy rebuilding Jerusalem, and were encountering violent resistance from their enemies.

Even at that time, the Arabs were contesting their right to Jerusalem: Nehemiah 6:1—"Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and that there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;..."

It's no different today! The Arabs have been raging against Israel ever since Jerusalem has been reclaimed by Israel! Pressure from Jerusalem's enemies is increasing. The city's enemies are not only Arabs, but are also found in other nations around the world.

This will continue until the end of the days when all the nations will gather against Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will become a cup of trembling according to Zechariah 12:2.

When the city of Jerusalem is at its lowest point ever, the Lord will take care of His people, who are despised by the world. The Lord's return will bring about Israel's salvation, light and blessing!

Why does the Lord stand between the myrtles? It may be a prophetic reference to Isaiah 55:13: *"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."*

There Will Be Blessing Instead Of Cursing!

The Lord, who bore a crown of thorns, and over whose head was written, *"Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews"* (John 19:19), will see that the curse is removed and that myrtles grow in the place of thorns.

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He who bore the curse of the crown of thorns in His death now stands among the myrtles because Jerusalem will flourish eternally before Him and through Him! The Lord stands by Jerusalem.

This time He will wear a crown of ornaments instead of a crown of thorns: *Isaiah 61:10—“I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom deck-eth himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.”*

Let's return to the fact that the man is standing among the myrtles in the bottom (vs 8). Where is the lowest point of the earth's surface? Geographically, it is the Dead Sea, but spiritually, it is Calvary.

The Lord descended from heaven to earth to reconcile the world to God. Israel's future salvation also lies in Calvary: "...he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (*Philippians 2:8*).

He stands in the bottom among the myrtle trees to bring salvation to His people. While the world stands against Israel, the Lord Himself will stand by Jerusalem!

This man who appears on the scene is riding a red horse. Red symbolizes the color of His blood, the color of victory; but it also represents the color of the Judge over all the nations.

Here, this man is called "*the angel of the Lord.*" (*Vs 11*) Clearly, it is the Lord Himself who stands among the myrtle trees. The term "angel of the Lord" often refers to the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ who is synonymous with God (*Genesis 22:15-17*). He is the visible manifestation of the invisible God in the Old Testament.

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An angel spoke to Zechariah in vs 9. Zechariah asked the angel about the horse's significance: "*Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.*"

The angel wanted to answer him, but apparently he could not. He could only point to the One with the answer, the Lord as the angel of the Lord: "*And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth*" (vs 10).

Jesus is the only One Who can answer the most important questions in life!

Behind the man among the myrtles stands God's heavenly host. The angels on the red, speckled and white horses show us that over the visible armies of this world is an invisible host of God which is much mightier! It reminds us of the passage of Scripture in *2 Kings 6:16* that deals with Elisha and his servant:

"And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them"

This Lord who once wept over Jerusalem will now stand as a High Priest and Advocate for Jerusalem and Judah, and He prays for them: (*Vs 12-13*)

If the Lord Himself intercedes for Jerusalem and Judah in such a moving way, should we love Israel any less?

Scripture does not reveal what the Father said to the Son, but He used kind, comforting words. We know that the Father always hears the Son (*John 11:42* and *John 17*), and doubtless He did so in this case as well.

The timing of Jerusalem's final restoration is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. It will take place when Jesus returns. Nobody knows the day or hour this will take place.

Although we are not told WHEN it will take place, we are told HOW!

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Following His prayer and God's response, the Lord turned back to Zechariah and commanded him to cry aloud for Jerusalem, making it clear that He had been heard! (*Vs 14-17*)

So it is with all divine authority that we can proclaim that the time is coming when the Lord will turn back to His people!

What Is The Message That All Should Hear?

Let's summarize the seven statements concerning Jerusalem:

1. *"I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy"*
—The divine authority — God Himself — is with Jerusalem.
2. *"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies"*
—The divine love is of Jerusalem.
3. *"My house shall be built in it"*
—The divine presence is back in Jerusalem.
4. *"A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem"*
(Jeremiah 31:38-40)
— The divine indivisibility remains in Jerusalem.
5. *"My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad"*
— The divine blessing is back in Jerusalem.
6. *"The Lord shall yet comfort Zion"*
—The divine kindness is back in Jeruslaem.
7. *"...And shall yet choose Jerusalem"*
—The divine promise will remain in Jerusalem. And, concerning the nations, we read:
8. *"I am very sore displeased with the heathen..."*
—The divine wrath will fall over all those who hate Jerusalem.