

## Zechariah 1:7-17

Sometimes we can have experiences in this life which change us beyond recognition. This was the case for the prophet, Zechariah.

### Thesis

**In Zechariah 1:7-17, Zechariah begins to receive a total of eight night visions which are revelations from the God of heaven, changing him forever as he became a prophet, and a messenger of good news to the people.**

### 1. Apocalyptic Visions

Usually we think of prophets receiving words from the Lord, but it was not unusual for them to receive visions as well. Zechariah is confronted with an extraordinary vision containing, a drama in the heavenly realms with its own dialogue that provides the meaning. Apocalyptic visions present a heavenly perspective of earthly events and reveal the sovereignty of God to an oppressed people.

### 2. First Vision vv. 7-9

There are four elements to this vision:

**The image of horsemen** is familiar to the reader of the Old Testament.

A mounted host was frequently used to display the angelic legions of God's heavenly army (**Deut. 33:2; 2 Kings 6:17; Ps. 68:17**). Horsemen are also associated with royal wealth and power (e.g. Solomon glory; **1 Kings 10:26**).

**Myrtles** are evergreen shrubs that grow well in Israel. Some scholars see the dark trees as providing a shadowy backdrop to lend a sense of foreboding to the vision.

**The myrtles are in a ravine** which adds to the ominous mood.

One scholar sees this gully as representative of hostile spiritual and worldly powers.

**The colors of the horses** do not seem to convey a specific meaning.

The text merely gives a general description: behind the rider on the red horse are horses red, sorrel (a chestnut reddish brown), and white.

Seeing all these things, Zechariah indicated his need for help in understanding, in response to which the angel said, "I will show you what they are" (**Zech. 1:9**).

### 3. Horsemen's Report vv. 10-11

The vision's meaning is found in the drama that unfolds with three scenes.

**First, the report of the horsemen: (Zech 1:10-11).**

The military picture here is one of light cavalry, whose role was to spread out over the battle field to provide commanders with accurate information about the enemy.

These riders represent a graphic image of the omniscience (all-knowing), omnipotence (all powerful) and omnipresence (all places) of God. The combined

effect of this omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence is absolute sovereignty. These horsemen represent the exercise and the revelation of God's sovereignty. Kings may be powerful, but God is all-powerful. God's horsemen range throughout the earth as a display of his unhindered reign.

By 520BC, the year of this vision, Darius held firmly the reins of imperial power and Persia remained unassailable in her rule over the Ancient Near East. A generation after the return from exile, the people of God were still under the dominion of the Persians. It was to these people that the prophet spoke of the Lord Almighty, the sovereign ruler whose horsemen range throughout the earth.

#### 4. Angelic Anguished Plea vs. 12-13

In the second scene in this drama, we hear the angel's anguished plea (**Zech 1:12**). The angel of the Lord; the rider on the red horse, who received this report inquired, as to why God allowed Israel's oppressors to enjoy their spoils at leisure, while He withheld mercy from Israel? This teaches us a lot about the Bible's view of prayer. **First**, it may seem that the angel is irreverently chastising God but God does not rebuke the angel for his anguished plea (**Zech. 1:13**). **Secondly**, the angel composes his prayer with promises from God. What a comfort it is to know that God invites us to cry out to him like this angel, reminding Him of all that he has promised to do (**Phil 4:6-7**).

#### 5. Lord's Comforting Reply vv.14-17

The third and concluding scene is the comforting reply from the Lord (**vv. 14-17**) Those who have God's favor are blessed, however little they may have, and whatever troubles surround them.

#### 6. God with Us

The message of the vision was: "The sovereign God is with you, in his power and glory and love, so do not fear."

The vision was Zechariah's commissioning with a message of hope, good news of great joy: "I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy," said the Lord. "MY house shall be built in it.... My cities shall again overflow with prosperity" (**Zech. 1:16-17**).

Zechariah's message conveyed that God was with his people, so that they should take heart.

It is most likely that the angel of the Lord in Zechariah 1 is the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus. The "Angel of the LORD" is how the second person of the Godhead is often and most typically portrayed in the Old Testament.

What Jesus said to Zechariah, he also says to all who trust in him. As he said to his disciples before ascending into heaven: "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (**Matt. 28:20**).

Jesus is "Immanuel", God with us "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you," he said to his disciples "Because I live, you also will live" (**John 14:18-19**).