

III. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective

The Gospel According to Zechariah

“Vision #1 – The Horseman”

Zechariah 1:7-17

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This is our third study in our series on Zechariah and I’m going to do a review on these opening verses just to mention a couple of themes.

Zechariah 1:1-6 says [1] *In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, [2] “The LORD was very angry with your fathers. [3] Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. [4] Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. [5] Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? [6] But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, ‘As the LORD of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.’”*

Who is the man? The man's name is Zechariah whose father is Berechiah and his grandfather is Iddo. They are listed in the Levitical priesthood. So Zechariah is a priest who is also called as a Prophet born into a priestly family. We noted there is something new – post exile Babylon where no longer are our books of the Bible dated by royal kings of the line of David. Now they are dated by the kings of this world – the pagan kings of this world. Secondly, Zechariah is called to minister to the people of God and operates within a number of leaders that are already in and among the people of God. These leaders will keep cropping up as you study the minor Prophets, even in Zechariah.

First of all, there were the political leaders of the post exile. There is Zerubbabel who was of the line of David, who is the governor. He will later be followed by Nehemiah. There is Joshua, the high priest, Ezra, the teacher, and then there are the Prophets that come after the exile which are Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi, after which there is silence for 400 years. Then there are the post exile kings, and that is Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes I but also Artaxerxes II in the days of Nehemiah will have impact upon the people of Israel. Zechariah’s message to the people happens in the second year of Darius which is 520 B.C. He is also ministering in the eighth month which would be more like our October, with some discussion of November. Why? My seminary professor made the point that the Hebrews under the guidance of the Lord, had enough sense not to start the new year in the middle of the dead of winter, but in the spring begins in April.

The burden of Zechariah’s ministry is calling the people to repentance which we see in Zechariah 1:3. They are to repent of their sins not to do better, but to go to the Lord to know Him, follow Him and serve Him. The better begins when you come back to Him. It is a God centered repentance that sees sin and its sinfulness and God alone as worthy of our devotion and allegiance.

We also see in these opening verses that all men no matter how lofty their status, how sacred their calling or how famous they might be, they all come to an end. I'm reminded of the book of Isaiah 6:1 that says [1] *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a*

throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple. We are reminded here that our King never dies. He is everlasting and His kingdom is forever, but all the prophets, they fade away except the Prophet, our Savior. All the kings fade away except for our King, Christ Jesus and all the priest are set aside, but not our great High Priest who serves the people of God in the presence of the Throne of God at the mercy seat of God. We see also see in these opening verses they were callous to the Word of God. They did not hear God, His warnings and His Word and they didn't last, but what about His Word? His word tracked them down. His Word overtook them.

I want to give some chronology that I didn't give you in the last study that I think could help you. From 2100 B.C. to 1800 B.C., we had the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and then Joseph. Then in Egypt they are there in slavery as God is maturing, mobilizing, disciplining and multiplying His people from a family and a tribe where they now come out into a nation. Then with Joshua and the judges and they go into the land of promise from 1400 B.C. to 1100 B.C. Then from 1100 B.C. to 700 B.C. there is the kingdom under the rule of God in the appointed kings, with the first head of the United Kingdom being Saul of the Tribe of Benjamin, and then David, in fulfillment of the prophecy of the tribe of Judah, and then David's son Solomon and then after that is the division under Jeroboam and Rehoboam and the divided kingdom. In the United Kingdom there was a constant expansion until the promise of Abraham had been realized of the borders that God had promised to His people. They so fulfilled them at the latter days of David and ultimately in the days of King Solomon but in the divided kingdom, the boundaries begin to shrink and shrink.

The Northern Kingdom split off in the ten tribes into apostasy, into syncretism, into pagan worship and then came God's promised judgment in Deuteronomy 28; If My people sin and they do not repent and turn to Me, then I will bring a people who are not My people to disciple My people and then after they have been used to discipline My people, then I will discipline the nation that I use to discipline My people. Then what happened? The Word of God tracked down the ten northern tribes with the Assyrian captivity and then God tracked down Assyria and tracked them down as Babylon conquered them. Then around a century later, the Southern tribes that also went off, even with the warning of God's judgment and the ten northern tribes, they went into paganism, even the practice of child sacrifice began to take place under the worship of Molech, right within the temple. In 605 B.C. the Southern Kingdom are tracked down in a nation that's not the nation of God which is now used to discipline the people of God and then God brought discipline upon the nation that He was using to discipline His people as He brought the Medo-Persian Empire to bring to an end the Babylonian Empire.

Then a king arises in the Medo-Persian Empire that God had already prophesied in Isaiah, and he frees the people right on the timetable that God had prophesied in the book of Jeremiah after 70 years. They begin to return in 538 B.C. God is warning His people and calling them to repent, but they are not going to repent. They will have a brief revival in the days of Nehemiah, praise the Lord and God will bless them, but then they will go back to their sin. What will happen then? God becomes silent and doesn't speak for 400 years. God continues to bring judgment and He tracks down His people again with the Greek Empire and then the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire will bring the discipline of God's hand upon His people like never experienced before and this will happen between 66 A.D. to 70 A.D. as God tracks them down again with judgment.

Here we see God warning His people to return and if they don't God's Word will find them out. It's obvious that this ought to be something very important to our hearts. We are, Lord

willing, entering into a coming year in which we would like to emphasize being instruments of God in evangelism that is winning people to Christ. The reason we want to do that is we want people to know Jesus. Why do we do that? We want to obey Jesus and preach the Gospel to the world. But why do we do that? Let me give you another reason. The people you know – your family, friends, neighbors, coworkers that don't know Jesus – God's Word is going to track them down and as Hebrews 10:31 says [31] *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* This is not in redemptive judgment as it comes to His people, but eternal, everlasting judgment. I will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Nahum 1:3). So that's why we take the Gospel and call men and women to repent and turn to Christ and put their trust in Him alone as their Lord and Savior.

Now we come to Zechariah's eight visions. I think it's interesting to note the way these visions are laid out and the reasons why they are laid out this way. I believe visions one and eight are connected, two and seven, three and six, and four and five. I believe these visions are also interdependent upon each other, but I'm going to preach through the linear and grammatical linear trajectory as they're given to us in the Scripture. I will mention some of the connections as we work through each of these visions.

First, we will look at the essentials or the elements of this vision, then the essence of the vision and then the intercession of the vision. Let's look at our text of Scripture now for this study.

Zechariah 1:7-11 says [7] *On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, [8] "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. [9] Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' [10] So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.' [11] And they answered the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, 'We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.'*

As we look at the elements of essential in this vision, we are first of all, confronted with a rider on a red horse and he's not actually riding for when he is seen in the vision, he is standing still. Realize all eight of these visions happened in one night. Sometimes the dreams I have are so good that when nature calls in the middle of the night, I try to stay asleep if I can because I don't want to lose the dream, but I don't know what I would do with eight dreams in one night. Somehow Zechariah not only has them, he remembers them in detail and they are given for a reason all on that night. According to the text, we are now at the 24th day of the 11th month. This would be in February in our calendar. In the Roman calendar we would have moved from 520 B.C. to 519 B.C. Now in Zechariah's calendar he's still in the same year, he's just gone from the 8th month to the 11th month.

I'm going to do some Bible teaching here so let's look at the book of Hebrews. This is a relatively important thing to remember as we follow the trajectory of this vision, and in fact, this has to do with all of the visions. Hebrews 2:1-4 says [1] *Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. [2] For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, [3] how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? (God's Word will track us down.) It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who*

heard, [4] while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

Here is this glorious and marvelous word that God has given in His Son Jesus. He then gave it to the Apostles. They then wrote it down. We called that the New Testament and to make sure that you knew who were the apostles and could distinguish them from false apostles, they had the ability to do signs, wonders and miracles. Those were the attesting gifts of being an agent of revelation. Now let's look at Hebrews 1 where we are back to the Old Testament.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says *[1] Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.* Here God is reminding us that He gives us the Old Testament with the prophets, the New Testament with the Apostles, the Old Testament is pointing to Jesus and the New Testament is expounding Jesus. Here we learn God communicates to the prophets through dreams and visions.

Does God still speak or ministered to us with dreams and visions? People ask me this all the time and the answer is yes and no. The answer is yes in that God can use dreams to inspire us, to instruct us, to emphasize to us or to clarify for us. In other words, God still can use dreams for illumination, but He does not use dreams for revelation. Why? It is because revelation has ceased for God has finally spoken to us in His Son and actually the seeking of extra Biblical revelation through the various dreams and experiences of the netherworld is forbidden and even carries a capital punishment in the Scriptures that is called necromancy. It is not to be done. It is not to be sought. I have dreams. They are not revelation, but they have served an illumination. In fact, right beside my bed is a yellow pad of paper and it's there because God just blesses me with insights and thoughts throughout the night and I don't want to lose them so I'll just wake up and write them down.

I believe God does move with illumination, but He does not communicate revelation. He is not revealing a new word that is binding upon our conscience. The Scripture has been completed. God has finally spoken in His Son. We need help for illumination so He gives pastors, teachers, disciples and gifted people to help us. He sends the Holy Spirit who is the Teacher, and I believe He can use extra mechanisms and means to inspire us and encourage us in His providence, but it's not new revelation that He gives. We're actually in the Old Testament, so it is not unusual for a Prophet to be given God's Word by the venue of a dream and in this case, He has given eight of them, though. Let's go back and look at this particular vision Zechariah has received.

We see that there is a man who is riding a red horse and there are others around him who are on not only red but sorrel and white horses. I immediately thought of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. In some of the commentaries that I've been studying, there is this fanciful interpretation that starts taking place as they say the Red Horse means this and it goes into all the colors. Dr. Robertson said, "There is no doubt that there is a connection that runs us up to the Book of Revelation and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse but we should not overdo the allegorization." So I am not going to but this is why I find it interesting that when we get to vision eight, we don't have just horses, we've got chariots pulled by teams of horses that are red, white and sorrel.

We also find this man in the myrtle trees. Now, that's a very pregnant term that is a picture and symbol in the Bible. When they made the Feast of Booths, they were instructed to make the booths out of myrtle tree branches. The very name for Esther is in its root is in the myrtle tree. The myrtle tree was a celebration, a time of feasting, a time of anticipation. Its

blossoms and branches were used in weddings and joyful occasions. So here is something that seemingly is in the setting of joy and this man comes back on the red horse but he is no longer riding it. His task is done. He is on the horse as it is standing among the myrtle trees in the glen and behind him were red, sorrel and white horses.

Now, what's interesting in the English Standard Version, it translates this word 'glen' but other translations will use the word 'valley,' 'bottom,' or more likely 'ravine.' It is a word that is used to speak in the book of Jonah, of how the Great Fish took Jonah into the ravine of the ocean or into another word – the abyss itself, down into the abyss. So now, instead of the surroundings, having this sweetness of the myrtle tree, now comes the challenging description of the ravine. I think there is something more to it than the use of the word 'glen' as I will try to point out in just a moment. Behind him were even more of these horses and therefore likely riders upon it.

Now we find out they have come back from a patrol. I believe that these are representatives of angelic ministry. I believe that there is a reason that they're upon the horses. As I read this, I almost start to sing a song that I learned when I was a kid that went 'I may never ride in the Calvary or shoot the artillery' and the fact is they are the Lord's Calvary. They are His patrol. The angelic ministry has a threefold thrust. One is the governments of worship before the Lord. Two is messengers for the Lord especially in the Old Testament where angels are giving revelation to the Prophets as well as dreams and visions. Number three, they do reconnaissance and bring the messages back to the Lord. They are the patrol and thinking of J.R.R. Tolkien's writing these would be the Rangers. These are the ones who range all over God's creation and come back with the report, this rider of the Red Horse and everything is a peace. This is one of those interesting moments in a sin cursed world where instead of the normal report of violence and war, there's peace.

Remember at this moment in history, there is a dominant empire which is the Medo-Persian empire. We also know from history there's another nation that's preparing to bring war against the Medo-Persian Empire, and that is the resurrected Egyptian empire. But at the moment, the text is right for in 519 B.C. there was basically a not Pax Romana, but a pax peace of the Medo-Persian Empire and it was all over except in Jerusalem, where the warlords, the partisans and the revolutionaries were marching in and out of Jerusalem with its walls and gates down which had brought economic ruin and discouragement. The nations of the world have taken a breath, but God's people are under assault. God's people are oppressed and depressed. God's people are being manhandled by the underlings of the world in the assault of the kingdom of darkness upon the people of God.

We're going to see how this relates to vision eight later, but when you read about the apocalypse and the Four Horsemen, the rider on the Red Horse has not a message he brings to the Lord, but a mandate from the Lord and that is the infliction of war and the judgment of war upon humanity. This rider brings back a message of all being at peace but in Revelation 5, the one on the Red Horse, will go throughout the world with the message of war and violence. This one comes back with a message that the world is not in its usual state of conflict because of sin but is in one that is at peace and complacent. What is the response to this message of the ones who the Rangers of the Lord who are making the report? Let's look back in Zechariah 1.

Zechariah 1:12 says [12] Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?'

The message after the patrol is that the earth remains at rest in its sin, in its rebellion, and there's an absence of war, and they are more than content for God's people to be depressed and

oppressed – the economic onslaught upon the people, the famine, these tribal leaders that are coming in whenever they want to take something from the people of God. Here are the nations that will not bless the people of God.

So what does the Angel of the Lord say? This is another phrase that calls for our careful attention. It's going to be in the Book of Zechariah and it's seen throughout the Old Testament. What is and who is the Angel of the Lord? There are angels from the Lord, angels of the Lord, but this is not angels from the Lord or angels of the Lord. This is a very Biblically important theological term in the Old Testament. The Angel of the Lord is a pre incarnate appearance of the second Person of the Trinity. We call it a theophany or a Christophany. Now it is an appearance in human form – a human appearance of Christ. It is not an incarnation, for that awaits the birth of the Virgin. Angels are allowed to make such appearances, but the second Person of the Trinity, when He appears, normally His presence is denoted in the Old Testament as a pre incarnation appearance of Christ with the term 'The Angel of the Lord.'

In Exodus 3 is the account of Moses at the burning bush and Moses is told to take off his shoes because the ground on which he stands is holy, and he is to worship. Why? It is because speaking from the burning bush is The Angel of the Lord. It is not a regular old angel. In the Book of Revelation, two times John falls down and begins to worship angels because he is so astonished at the moment but in both cases the angels tell him, 'Get up and worship God.' So the Angel of the Lord, if commanding worship and accepting worship is not a mere angel, the definite article is telling you this is the special Old Testament presence of the Savior, the pre incarnate ministry and presence of the Lord.

Now, therefore, what is the second person of the Trinity, the Son of God saying here in Zechariah 1:12? Does that prayer ring any bells with you? Basically this prayer is in the Book of Revelation, and it is those who have left the church militant and are now in the church triumphant and those who have suffered and they're crying out to God in the heavens, 'Oh, Lord, how long?' What is praying for when he sees the world in its complacency of sin? Here it stands in rebellion against God, but notice it's a complacent. The culture has been enculturated to sin to the point that it's normal and everyone is at ease in sin, even while the people of God are struggling. What does the Intercessor of all intercessors, the High Priest who ever lives to intercede for us now saying back then? He says back then what He says now as the Ascended Incarnate Savior. 'How long, O, Lord?' That's why the apocalypse continually comes back to this prayer – Come quickly, Lord Jesus. How long Oh, Lord, will You not bring all of this to a consummation? How long will you not bring your judgment upon the world and your consummate blessing upon your people? Let's continue in the text for here comes the comforting words of the Lord.

Zechariah 1:13-17 says [13] And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. [14] So the angel who talked with me said to me, 'Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. [15] And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. [16] Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. [17] Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

Notice the past tense the Lord uses and He gives Zechariah three directions from this vision. Number one, is that God Himself will bring judgment upon the impenitent nations that

are at ease and He will bring judgment that they deserve, even as God in His grace will uphold His people. The Lord says, 'You're asking Me to come in mercy to Jerusalem and I'm telling you, I've already come. Why do you think you're there? I sent you. I've come to speak through you. Why do you think Haggai is there? Why do you think Zerubbabel is there? Why do you think Joshua is there? Why do you think Ezra is there? I am there. I am bringing My word. The consummation hasn't come but I have come and I am doing my work in the wisdom of the Lord. Now you rest in Me.' Note the past tense – I have come.

The second direction He gives the Prophet Zechariah as he raises the trumpet of God's Word is to go preach and tell them He has already come. It's like the Lord is saying to His people here, "I have come. I know you're discouraged. I know you're used to that glorious Solomonic temple and when you look at the foundation that has been laid that is now been dormant for 16 years, and the older people who saw the Solomonic temple are weeping, the younger people who have never seen the temple are encouraged and there's this mixed report. But the glory that will fill this temple is way beyond what filled the Solomonic temple. Do not despise the day of small things. I know when you came to this land under Joshua, there was 1 to 2 million of you, and there's only 40000 to 50000 that have come back – it's a diminished temple, a diminished people and diminished boundaries for you can't even get up a wall around Jerusalem. I know all this. The only reason you're back here is I brought you back here. I've returned."

This makes me think of the song my grandmother would sing to me when I come home from school. The words of that song were 'Little is much when God is in it.' When they looked at that temple, I was trying to come up with an illustration for it. Imagine a pickleball court in place of Wimbledon. That's the way they looked at it. Yet the glory of the Zerubbabel temple will be greater than the glory of the temple that was in Solomon's. In fact, He is almost pointing them right back to Solomon. Solomon told the people, "If my people, when you have sinned and God has brought judgment would repent and call out to the temple, but don't put your trust in the temple. Call out in the temple to the temple, and the Lord will hear and speak and come from Heaven. He will pour it out from the heavens." God doesn't dwell in big temples or big buildings or small buildings. The Earth cannot contain Him. He fills the earth. It is this Lord that has come.

I won't be able to cover all this in this study so I'll continue it in the next study but God tells them "I am building My temple. I am building filling the cities of Judah. I am filling Jerusalem, and I am going to complete this temple.' As a prophetic word – My temple shall be built. When you are looking at a prophecy, remember the trajectory of prophecies. In the Old Testament, when there is a prophecy, it prophesies something that will be immediately fulfilled and in five years this temple will be built. Hebrews 10:1 says *[1] For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.* According to this verse that immediate fulfillment is not the ultimate fulfillment it for that immediate fulfillment is the shadow.

When I was a kid, there was a man who we used to watch anything he produced, because he would give you a good scare and a good mystery. His name was Alfred Hitchcock, and you knew who Alfred Hitchcock was at the beginning of the program because they flashed his shadow with that little pointy nose, that round head, and that gigantic stomach that he had and then the shadow disappeared and you saw him. In the Old Testament were looking at shadows. When Jesus comes, He cuts the light on and you see the beauty of the fulfillment, because the

temple He is speaking of is not the immediate fulfillment of the Zerubbabel temple. It's over 400 years later when Jesus comes to the Herodian temple and this is the fulfillment – the Word has become flesh and has temple among His people (John 1:14). Christ, God has come among us – One of us. Christ has come in bodily form. That is the Temple that's coming. When that temple is torn down at the atonement and then raised after the atonement, and ascends into heaven, He leaves behind three more temples in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament, we had the Tabernacle, we had the Solomon temple, and we had the Zerubbabel temple – all fulfilled in Jesus. Now Jesus in the heavens who will bring the temple into the new heavens and the new earth has three temples until that day. In the New Covenant I Corinthians 6:19-20 says *[19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

Secondly, I Corinthians 3:16-17 says *[16] Do you not know that you (ya'll – all you) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? [17] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* The local church is a temple and that's why gathered worship is so glorious. The temple of the local church is not the structure, it's the people gathered and He dwells in them. The plurality of y'all at Corinth are a Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Then in Ephesians 2:18-22 says *[18] For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. [19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* We are the household of God, the Temple of God, Jew and Gentile, built on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets – Christ, the Cornerstone, the Church universal and one day triumphant is the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

I just love these visions of Zechariah. It's very important for you to properly understand the fulfillment of the Old Testament in Christ and then the New Testament exposition of Christ, and then we will stop creating theologies that worship the shadows. Don't send me an email or news article that they're buying stones to build the temple in Jerusalem. Number one, it'll never happen. Number two, I don't care if it happens. Number three, I don't want it to happen for I have something better. I have Jesus and I don't want to go back there. I have the sacrifice once and for all. I don't want the Old Testament sacrifice. Bulls and goats can't save anybody but Jesus will. That's what He is telling Zechariah to shout out – that we have the Glory coming. He says, I have come, I will come and the best is always yet to come. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time that we could be together in Your Word. Thank You, Father, for the privilege to study it and dive into it. Lord, fill us with the joy of Your Word, the joy of Christ and the glorious truth that Your Word not only will track down those who are impenitent in judgment, but Your Word in the hands of Your Spirit has tracked us down to bring us to salvation in Jesus. Praise God from whom all blessings flow, in Jesus' Name, Amen.