

Pentwater Bible Church

Zechariah *Zechariah Message 4* *Zechariah 1:7-17*



Painting by American artist Sharlene Lindskog-Osorio

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The Book of Zechariah
Message Four
The Vision of the Horses
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THE RED HORSE RIDER AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES

Zechariah 1:7-15

⁷Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying, (ASV 1901).

In customary fashion the Lord's Word provides exact dating of the prophecy about to be described. In fact as supporting information the dating here is more specific than the introductory call to the prophetic office as seen in verse one. The twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, Shebat, is February 15, 519 B.C., in our contemporary calendar. This is approximately three months after the initial call of Zechariah (1:1) and two months after Haggai's last revelation (Haggai 2:10, 20). There is some significance to this date

because on that very day five months earlier, the spirit of Zerubbabel and of Joshua, and “*of all the rest of the people,*” being energized by God through the preaching of Haggai, commenced work rebuilding the Temple (Haggai 1:14-15). While Zechariah’s ancestry is repeated in the Hebrew from verse one, not all English versions will translate it as such citing it as poor English because of the repetition.

This prophecy is the first of eight visions successively given to Zechariah (The Lord Remembers) at the same time. These eight visions are followed by the very significant symbolic crowning of the high priest Joshua, the son of Josedech. The visions represent Gods Program during the times of the Gentiles. Whereas Daniel describes what the Gentile nations will do over the period of human history up to the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom, this book describes what God will do during the Times of the Gentiles. Attesting to the validity of the interpretation of the visions is the unity between conservative commentators regarding most of the images, both Christian and Jewish.

The text tells us that God’s Word is applied directly to the prophet’s mental and spiritual receivers rather than to his ears, is called דְבַר־יְהוָה— *devhar Yehovah* or the word of Jehovah. This is because the pictures seen in the spirit, together with their interpretation were impressed upon Zechariah’s will in a conscience manner. This was not a sleepy dream or even a nightmare. It was a direct communication from God. Since God is spirit and He lives outside of time and space He must communicate directly with the conscious spirit of His servants the prophets. They in turn are directed to provide that communication to the world hence the production of this book and the other prophetic biblical writings as well. Consider how He provides instruction through His prophet Amos.

Amos 3:7-9a

⁷ Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets. ⁸ The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy? ⁹ Publish ye in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt (ASV 1901).

So then Divinely communicated visions were one of the chief ways in which God communicated to the prophets and to the patriarchs. For example in Numbers 12:6 we read “*If there be a prophet among you, I, Jehovah, will make Myself known to him in a vision; I will speak with him (literally, ‘in him’) in a dream.*”

The whole series of visions, which came to the prophet, were probably received in rapid succession one after the other with only short pauses between. They seemed to have come in one night, though each was distinct and in a sense each one complete in itself. They collectively form a connected picture of the future of Israel from 519 B.C. through to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

The general sequence for all these visions is *first* the presentation of a symbol, and then, following a question being, an interpretation is given.

Zechariah 1:8

⁸I saw in the night, and, behold, a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him there were horses, red, sorrel, and white (ASV 1901).

Zechariah initially sees some man who is riding upon a red horse, who stood among some Myrtle trees. He is located in some deep or hollowed place. Additionally there were three more horses one bright red, one reddish brown (sorrel or mixed color), and one white. The identity of the man on the first red horse is revealed in verse eleven as the Angel of the Lord or the Angel of Jehovah. There are other riders behind Him on the other three horses who seem to report to the Angel of Jehovah. He is called in Hebrew the *Malakh Yehovah*—the Angel of Jehovah, who is the second person in the Trinity, our Lord Jesus. God is described 52 times in this book as Jehovah of Hosts. This 1st vision demonstrates that God still has a program for Israel within Gentile world domination.

THE MYRTLES

The myrtles symbolize Israel. It is significant that this particular symbol is chosen. Hadassah (Myrtle) is a popular Hebrew female name. The name Hadassah was one of the names given to Queen Esther, and is now given to Jewish girls. The name is first cited in Esther 2:7a, “*And he (Mordecai) brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maiden was fair and beautiful.*” The name *Hadassah* is derived from the Hebrew word *hadas* a myrtle tree from the Myrtaceae family. The myrtle has a pleasant fragrance and the righteous people are called myrtles, likened to a good tree with a pleasant smell. Hadassah was the name of Queen Esther, a Jew who easily lived among the Gentiles and rose to a powerful position in the Media Persian Empire. She did so with confidence, humility and modesty.

The proud cedar trees used elsewhere in Scripture, are symbols of the powerful world-powers—but the lowly, fragrant myrtle, growing for the most part in the shady valley out of the world’s gaze, is chosen to represent the covenant people. It is with the lowly, with those of a contrite and humble spirit, God identifies Himself. God looks at the earthly “high and mighty” as low and the lowly on earth as high.

Isaiah 57:15

¹⁵For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite (ASV 1901).

The *low place* among the Myrtles represents The Gentile nations. For a time on earth represented by this vision that after the seventy year Babylonian captivity the Angel of Jehovah is with Israel even while they are dominated by the Gentile world powers. God

loves Israel and will never forsake them (Leviticus 26:44; Jeremiah 30:11 etc.). Christ is on a red horse and there are three more horses behind him representing the angels that God uses to deal with the affairs of Human Government. They are divine agencies each representing a different aspect of God's mission. The red is significant of judgment, blood, and vengeance (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1a; Revelation 6:4; 19:11 etc.). It is important to note that in Isaiah 63:1a it is in garments dyed red that the Messiah goes forth in the day of vengeance to tread the nations in His anger, and to trample them in His fury. Here it signifies the same thing—namely, the readiness of the Angel of Jehovah to go forth with His angelic soldiers to execute swift judgment on Israel's oppressors. The white horse is the symbol of victory, triumph, and glory (Revelation 19:11), which shall be to God's people after their great champion rides forth "conquering and to conquer," and executing vengeance on their enemies. The sorrel or mixed shows a combination of judgment yet with mercy with which the Lord judges this earth, its sin, and the treatment the Gentiles showed to the Jews.

EXPLANATION OF THE VISION

Zechariah 1:9-11

⁹Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these are. ¹⁰And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. ¹¹And they answered the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest (ASV 1901).

Now, a new speaker appears called the *malakh haddobher bi*—the angel that talked with me, or, literally, "in me"—and he is not the same as the *Malakh Yehovah*, The Angel of Jehovah. Zechariah the prophet does not address this angel as *Adonai*, "my Lord". We see, then, that "*the angel that talked with me*" is not the same as the Divine Angel of Jehovah—the Messenger of the Covenant—but an *attendant angel* whose mission it was to be God's conveyer or messenger to the prophet of the meaning of the visions. God uses angelic messengers to bring His messages to humans (Revelation 1:1 etc.). The message starts with an identification of the horses and their riders which he states as "*These are they whom Jehovah hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.*" To and Fro is a description of Angelic movement on the earth (Job 1:7 and 2:2) that clearly identifies them as angelic beings. To walk about on the earth is to assert sovereignty over it. When Abram's allocation in Canaan was pointed out to him, he was told to "walk about" in it (Genesis 13:17). The king of Tyre, in his pride, "walked up and down" in proclaiming his kingship (Ezekiel 28:14). What they see is interesting and is stated as; "*behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest*". This is a description of the Gentile world at ease contrasted to the mournful condition of Israel. All the nations lived in undisturbed peace and prosperity. The nations had scattered God's people and had taken possession of their land, and were presently in leisure enjoyment of it. They

didn't care about the state of the Jews nor were they troubling themselves over the sorrows of Israel.

HOW LONG WILL THIS CONTINUE?

Zechariah 1:12

¹²Then the angel of Jehovah answered and said, O Jehovah of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years (ASV 1901)?

Then Zechariah stands with the interpreting messenger/angel and asks how long the 70 years of discipline will last. By the time of this vision in 519 B.C., the “seventy years” foretold by Jeremiah were being questioned. The angel was now questioning when the seventy years would be accomplished, “*is it not done now?*” the *complete* restoration was not yet accomplished even though a remnant had returned, “*Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah*” were still practically desolate. It was clearly understood, however, that the 70 years had a flexible ending, depending on which terminating event was used for the ending measurement. In addition to the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem the termination also was connected to the completion of the second Temple. The 70 years correctly ended with the completion of the Temple, that is, in 516 B.C. This corresponds exactly with the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 B.C., exactly 70 years before. It is their expectation of the nearness of the end of that era that the prophet and people ask their questions about that event and its meaning for them (cf. Haggai 1:2). This poor condition of things moves the Angel of Jehovah to intercede on their behalf.

GOD'S RESPONSE

Zechariah 1:13-15

¹³And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words, even comfortable words. ¹⁴So the angel that talked with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. ¹⁵And I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction (ASV 1901).

Jehovah answers but directs his response to the messenger/angel standing by Zechariah, for it is Zechariah who raised the first questions about the vision he had seen. The Angel of Jehovah, who in ancient times led His people and brought them into the Promised Land, and smote all their enemies before them, was now appearing as the Advocate and Intercessor on their behalf. He begins to provide “*devharim tovhim, devharim nichummim*” (literally, “words good ones, words comforting ones”) to Zechariah and the angel/messenger. He starts by saying, Jehovah is jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy—and He is very sore displeased (or, literally, “*with great anger am I*

angered”) against the nations that are at ease, “for I was but a little displeased,” He says, “and they helped forward the affliction” (or, as it may also be rendered, “they helped for evil”). Consider the situation wherein a parent is disciplining a child and another relative is asked to affirm the need for discipline. Then without authorization the other relative interjects and starts pounding the child. The parent’s jealousy is stirred up, and then a quarrel ensues between him and the inter-meddling relative who dared to mix himself up in the discipline, which was being handled effectively. This only ends with an increase in his child’s sufferings. This is God’s attitude to the oppressors of Israel. One might say that God is not in control. He is but He allows sin in many instances to run its course and not let its effects go unnoticed.

In this vision it is shown to the prophet, that even though the outward appearance of Israel’s restoration was discouraging, the Lord nevertheless had already set the plan of His judgment in motion. He is sending the angels out to overthrow the nations of the world that are still living at rest and in security. The promise embraces the whole of the future of the Jews up to and including the Theocratic 1,000 year Kingdom of Messiah. While the beginning of the fulfillment is seen in the rebuilding of the Temple in the sixth year of Darius, and Nehemiah also began restoration of Jerusalem in the reign of Artaxerxes, these restorations show that the glory of Israel and kingdom of God predicted by the earlier prophets would indeed take place.

JEHOVAH ASSURES FUTURE JEWISH BLESSINGS

Zechariah 1:16-17

¹⁶Therefore thus saith Jehovah: I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies; my house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. ¹⁷Cry yet again, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity; and Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem (ASV 1901).

God promises four outward signs of His mercy to be visibly restored in their sight. They are:

1. “My house shall be built in it, saith Jehovah of hosts,” as the visible sign and pledge of the restored fellowship between Him and His people;
2. And “a line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem,” to mark off the space it is to occupy in its restored condition, and the plan upon which it is to be arranged.
3. And not only shall His house be rebuilt and Jerusalem be restored on a grander scale than before, but *all the land* is to feel the blessed effect of the restored relations between Jehovah and His people.
4. Finally, both as the ground and climax of all, come the last of the “good words.” “And Jehovah shall yet comfort Zion,” after her long night of sorrow, and however contrary to all appearance and human probability, “shall yet choose Jerusalem,” or, by the above enumerated and many other acts of loving-kindness toward her, demonstrate in the sight of the whole world the fact and the

immutability of His original choice of her. this last sentence being the first of a threefold inspired repetition by Zechariah of the words of Isaiah 14:1, which reads, *“For Jehovah will have compassion on Jacob, and yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the stranger shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob.”*

“Cry yet again, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: MY cities”. He is proclaiming this His property. No other land and no other city on earth can claim this, as can Israel and Jerusalem. *“Through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad.”* The idea being used here is of the *“gushing forth of a fountain”* in Proverbs 5:16. Beginning with spiritual prosperity and then the homes filled with citizens, and with abundance and plenty.

CONCLUSION

The message in this vision provides plain words of comfort spoken to the Zechariah generation and all future generations until God’s complete fulfillment.

Angel of Jehovah reveals seven aspects of His attitude and His promises.

1. I am jealous
2. I am sore displeased with the Gentiles. He used them but they exceeded His directions
3. He will restore Jerusalem to fulfill His program
4. The Temple will be rebuilt
5. The line is a construction medium signifying building
6. My city will be prosperous
7. Jerusalem will yet be chosen and Zion will be comforted

NEXT WEEK: ZECHARIAH’S SECOND PROPHECY

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

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