

IV. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective  
*The Gospel According to Zechariah*  
“Vision #1 – The Horseman, Part 2”  
Zechariah 1:7-17

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This is our fourth study in our series on Zechariah and our second study on this opening vision. A professor of mine in seminary, Palmer Robertson said most Sunday school classes that teach on the Old Testament are most regularly from Bible stories that are pre exile but once they get to the Babylonian exile, there is a lot of material in the Bible that just isn't covered and perhaps one exception would be the book of Nehemiah. Not many speak from Ezra and that is post exile where they have been taken away into the Babylonian captivity.

I'd like to remind you of the chronology of the Bible here. God gave us His Word over 1600 years. The Holy Spirit moved Apostles and Prophets to give us this Word. The Old Testament points to Jesus and the New Testament expounds Jesus. In the chronology that leads up to the book of Zechariah it starts around 2100 B.C. From 2100 B.C. to 1800 B.C. that is known as the time of the patriarchs and there are a lot of Bible stories out of that time.

From 1800 B.C. to 1400 B.C. Abraham's family seed has now grown to 12 tribes and now under the sovereign hand of God they are taken into the bondage of Egypt which lasts 430 years. Moses leads them out and after 40 years in the wilderness they arrive in the Promised Land and begin the process of God's ordained leadership of them to conquering and occupying the Land by the tribe's appointment. That takes place from about 1400 B.C. up to the year 1000 B.C. These are approximate years I'm giving. Now we leave the time of Joshua and the judges and we arrive where Israel has a king. From 1000 B.C. to around 587 B.C. they have a kingdom with the first part being a united kingdom under Saul, then David, then Solomon.

Then there is the divided kingdom with Jeroboam and Rehoboam with the ten Northern Tribes and then there is the two Southern Tribes. The ten Northern Tribes come under the judgment of God as He had already prophesied through Moses, as they are taken into captivity and almost eviscerated. The ten Northern Tribes are captured in 722 B.C. and taken into Assyrian captivity. The two Southern tribes, Benjamin and Judah, are later taken into captivity, beginning in 605 B.C. and there will be three raids from the Babylonian Empire, which had supplanted the Assyrian empire. Nebuchadnezzar will be the king that takes the Southern Tribes into captivity over three raids in 605 B.C., 597 B.C., and then in 586 B.C. and in 586 B.C. they will utterly destroy Jerusalem and the Solomonic Temple.

As they are in captivity under Babylon and then later under the Medo-Persians as God had prophesied under the discipline hand of God they would then be released after 70 years. The book of Isaiah will give the name of the king who will release them and that is Cyrus. It's interesting that this is all substantiated in extra Biblical literature such as this Cyrus cylinder and it almost reads like the opening three chapters of the Book of Ezra that also records it. It is primarily known as the Cylinder of Cyrus which is available for anyone to read.

The Book of Zachariah takes place in 520 B.C. There are books in the Bible that exist from this restoration of the people. We don't know exactly how many people were taken away into captivity in both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity but we do know approximately how many returned. Maximum would be 50,000 but it was probably somewhere between 40,000 to 50,000 as the rest had finally in the 70 years, just got comfortable and stayed in Babylon. Some

that could even remember Jerusalem and the temple itself. Those who were young who came back obviously couldn't remember it, but those who were older could. So there are books of the Bible that many people don't spend a lot of time in or have distant interest in.

Now, the Book of Zechariah becomes a little bit interesting for us, because other than the Book of Revelation, there is nothing written more profoundly and pointedly concerning the matters of the consummation and the second coming of Christ than the Book of Zechariah, except for perhaps the Book of Daniel yet many don't really spend time in this book. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Haggai and Malachi are all post exile after the restoration, after the renewal, after they have been brought back. They inform us that when they returned, they immediately laid the foundations of the Temple that they were going to rebuild.

Cyrus was interesting. Nebuchadnezzar's foreign policy was to conquer, take them into slavery, educate them and make them citizens of Babylon. Cyrus had a different policy and that was return them and not only that he gave them stimulus packages in order to rebuild the temple which is what he told them to do. The cylinder of Cyrus tells us he said to them that when they returned to rebuild their temple to remember to lift up him, Cyrus the Benefactor in their prayers. He didn't really care what gods you lifted him up to, but he just wanted them to lift him up. So Cyrus' foreign policy had to do with creating allies as he sent them back.

They come back and get started, but before long, with the walls down, the gates down and the foundations of temple were laid, after two years, they were just trying to stay alive. They were discouraged, despairing and disordered. God had sent them back with three excellent leaders, Zerubbabel, the governor, Joshua, the high priest, Ezra, the teacher, but they had all gotten discouraged again. In fact, we will see in the Book of Zechariah in the next study or so is that the foundation is there, but the ruins of the first temple are just piled in the middle of it. There is no altar, there are no walls. The temple has not been rebuilt. They're just trying to get a get the next meal.

That's when God now sends back two preachers. When God gets ready to do something, He raises up leaders and raises up preaching. He sends back Haggai that began his ministry two months before Zechariah, and Zechariah's ministry is what we have been looking at in our study of this book. This restoration of Israel is going to be a movement in which God's hand is upon them for the next 130 years, and when that is done, He will no longer speak for 400 years. After the last Prophet Malachi, there will be 400 years of silence from God, now stop and think about that. You live in a country where people marvel at how long it has hung around. This nation did not hear a word from God for almost two times the years this country's even existed - silence. We need to know now, though, what He said before that silence came. He spoke to Haggai and Zechariah. We're specifically looking at Zechariah so I want to remind you briefly what we have studied in Zechariah up to this point. First, I want to read the first six verses.

*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.'"*

Israel's kings at this time are now identified by pagan kings. This is Darius the Mede, who has succeeded Cyrus. There are a number of Zechariahs in the Bible, but this Zechariah is referenced by Jesus who speaks of his death that took place between the temple and the courtyard. Due to his family reference in this text we know Zechariah is of the Levites. Zechariah is not only a Prophet, he is also a priest. His family is numbered in the priesthood of the Levites. Deuteronomy 28 is where it says what God would do with His people when they abandoned Him. When they abandoned Him and played the harlot, He would take a nation that's not a nation, and bring discipline upon them. His discipling hand would be for the purpose of His people coming to repentance and when they would He then would bring discipline upon the nation He used.

The Bible is the one thing we have that is not only infallible, inerrant, sufficient and perfect but it will go into eternity. The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of the Lord abides forever (Isaiah 40:8). It is our only rule of faith and practice whereby we know God and make God known. Prophets are gone, fathers are gone, the temple is gone, Jerusalem is gone but My Word abides and My words tracked you down – what I said would happen happened. God's word is true, let every man be a liar (Romans 3:4). According to the text, some have now repented and they have come back.

Now comes the moment where Zechariah is about to get from God eight visions. This is going to be a busy night. All eight come in one night and each vision has an oracle from God through Zechariah to deliver to His people. We started into the first one but we weren't able to finish it so let's go back to it. Note Zechariah 1:7-10 give us the circumstances of this first vision.

Zechariah 1:7-8 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 (an oracle is coming by way of a vision),* [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.*

Here there is a man on a red horse. He is no longer on his mission. He and the horse are standing in myrtle trees. Myrtle, in the Bible is an interesting plant. It's an esteemed tree with its fragrance, its beauty and the blossoms it bears and are used at weddings celebrations in the Bible. Most notably, it was the myrtle tree that they were to secure the branches to celebrate the Feast of Booth's – God dwelling with His people so, the dwelling of God would immediately be in their mind for it's a picture of the covenant relationship God has with His people. Can you not imagine what that must mean for them, whom God had sent them away from His presence in discipline? What does it mean now? Let's continue in the text.

Zechariah 1:9-11 says [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.’*

Here Zechariah now gets into a dialog with this man on the red horse. Now we were given some information. This isn't just any man on the red horse for this man has an angelic presence and behind him is a cacophony of horses. I encourage you not to dig down into the colors so much. This is a cohort of what are called rangers. They are those on the horses from the Lord sent on patrol and these rangers have a responsibility and they have a captain. These aren't

just any rangers and we're getting a glimpse of something that is happening right now but we don't see it. Zachariah is allowed to see it.

I remember the time some of us were sitting with Dr. Francis Schaeffer and he asked us 'What do you see?' One of the students said, "Dr. Schaeffer there is some furniture, a light and there's a lamp." He said, 'take a closer look. What else do you see?' "Well, there are some embroidery rugs, a throw that we can cover ourselves with and some doilies on the table." He said, 'let me tell you what I see. We're opening up God's Word, teaching it and right now all around us is a spiritual war that's taking place that you would be distracted or not listen, that Satan would snatch the seed as it laid upon your heart instead of going into your heart. You are being given a glimpse of is the reality from the sin in the garden until Jesus comes again. There is spiritual warfare.'

People sometimes say to me, 'Pastor, I think I'm in spiritual warfare.' The odd thing would for us not to be in spiritual warfare. There is a war constantly going on. We're in a spiritual war. We are not in a cultural war. The culture is the battlefield. We're in a spiritual war in this world and there are multiple battlefields. There is a battlefield in the church. Who's going to be faithful and who's going to apostatize? There are battlefields in families. Will the husband who left that morning come home tonight? Satan wants to win that battle. There are battlefields taking place everywhere, but there is a spiritual war and here is what you need to remember. It's a real war. There are real spiritual weapons and there is a real armor that we are to put on. There is an angelic war going on all around us. We have some insight in the Book of Jude, where the Angel Michael rebukes Satan over the body of Moses.

There is this constant warfare, but this war has been won. When Jesus came out of that grave and ascended to heaven, we win. That doesn't make the battle any less intense. The Book of Revelation informs us that Satan, the Great Dragon, stands before the Woman, Christ's Church, His bride wanting to devour everything that he can, but he has been defeated. The strong man has been bound and we are to go and plunder his house. But there will be spiritual warfare. We are getting a little glimpse of it in the Book of Zechariah at the time of the restoration of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple and Jerusalem, including its gate that will take place later under Nehemiah.

In this text, Zechariah is telling us that the Lord has us this angelic cohort as rangers doing reconnaissance, giving an accurate report. What have we found? Our mission is over. We were sent out to patrol. We've come back with the message. What is the message that they come back to? I want to give you one other thing before I leave this. The man on the red horse and those with him have an angelic identification but this man has a very specific identification. This one is filled with theological meaning. The man on the red horse, the ranger, the captain of this cohort is called *the* Angel of the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament, that is a theological term that used to described a pre Incarnate presence of the Second Person of the Trinity. The Incarnation is yet to come – 500 plus years later, but this is the One who will come Incarnate.

This is not an Incarnation, but it's called a Christophany, a pre Incarnate appearance of Christ. In this appearance, He is not doing His Incarnate ministry, which He will do when he comes, but the pre Incarnate ministry of Christ prefigures and points to His Incarnate ministry when He does come. When Jacob wrestles with the Angel of the Lord that is also a pre Incarnate presence of Christ (Genesis 32:22-32). Whenever you see the indefinite article 'an' or 'a' that's an angel, but when you see the definite article, 'the' angel of the Lord that is identifying a pre Incarnate appearance of Christ.

When Moses was called by God what did Moses stand in front? He stood in front of the burning bush but the burning bush didn't speak to him, for from the midst of the bush, *the* Angel of the Lord spoke to him (Exodus 3:2). The Book of Hebrews and others texts inform us that this is a pre Incarnate appearance of Christ or a Christophany or a Theophany which is the presence of God in veiled form, not an Incarnation of humanity, but an appearance of humanity that is there for a very specific purpose. So here in Zechariah 1, this captain is the One who would be the incarnate Christ in 500 years, but now is a pre Incarnate ministry, the Angel of the Lord. What takes place next? Let's look further in the text for Zechariah gets a message to give to the people from the Angel of the Lord.

*Zechariah 1:12-17 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?' [13] And the LORD answered gracious and comforting (merciful) 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.'"*

I want to work through this so we understand what is being said here. In the Incarnate ministry of Christ, does He cry out from the earth to the heavens? Yes, we see this in John 17, known as the high priestly prayer. Follow Jesus when He goes to Gethsemane where you see His intensity of crying out to the Father, "If there is any way that this cup can pass for Me, let it pass" (Luke 22:42-44). The intensity was so great His capillaries were bursting and blood was mingled with His sweat.

You may be thinking at this moment "If he is the Second Person of the Trinity and God, the Father, Son, the Holy Spirit are equal, why does He need information?" Remember, the Christophany is the picture of the Incarnate Christ, speaking from His humanity. When Jesus was asked by His Disciples 'when will come the end' Jesus says in Mark 13:32, [32] "*But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.*" In Christ's humanity, the Son of man does not know.

In other words, He is now prefiguring that. So now in this Christophany He is calling out and what is He doing? He is prefiguring His Incarnate ministry by intercession and that's exactly what He's doing right now for He ever lives to pray/intercede for you/us (Hebrews 7:25). Here, you see in the spiritual warfare, the glorious truth that our Savior has now exemplified, something that we see in His Incarnate ministry, and that continues in His glorified ascension, and that is as Mediator of the New Covenant, He is interceding for His people to the Father, even as He intercedes for you and me.

Romans 8:33-34 says [33] *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.* Here you see His intercessory ministry, as He calls out to the Father for grace and mercy. What does the Father answer with the cry that comes up from the lips of the Angel of the Lord? How long O, Lord? We see the saints crying out in Revelation 6:10 which says [10] *They cried out with a loud voice,*

*“O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”* That is something that ought to be on every one of our lips.

The answer in our heart is, ‘Lord, You know the time, but come quickly, Lord Jesus.’ As the Father answers this Christophany, this pre Incarnate appearance of Christ now tells Zechariah that he has a message for him to give to His people. We see from this text that God disciplined His people, had a time of anger with the nations, but now that they are at ease, He is going to bring further disaster even after they came back with a report that everything was at ease, business as usual. Why does that bring the anger of God? Here's why. God’s people are in distress and what you do or don't do for God's people God takes personal.

When Saul was converted on the road to Damascus what did Jesus say to him? “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:1-4) When would that have happened? When Saul went after the people of God, bringing them death warrants and destroying churches that is when he is going after Jesus. In the last day as men and women stand before Him, He says in Matthew 25:42-45, [42] *For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, [43] I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.* [44] *Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ [45] Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’*

Now His covenant people are in distress. They are the off scouring with tribal chiefs, renegades and rebels coming in and through the city is absolutely destroying them as they are ravaging everything that they are doing. They can hardly stay functioning. When God made the covenant with Abraham He said to Abraham, “I am going to bless you. I will bless all the nations through you and the nations that bless you I will bless and those that curse you, I will curse” (Genesis 12:2-3).

May I say, in light of an election coming with no party label on this statement, one of the reasons that we are under judgment as we are seeing Romans 1 happening – God gave them over to promiscuous sexuality, to abnormal sexual sexuality – that doesn’t just set you up for judgment, that's the evidence of God's judgment. Why? It is because at one time, this nation welcomed Christ’s Church to freely function. Now it's finding ways to attack the livelihood of those who would freely practice. God says, ‘I will bless those who bless you, and I will bring judgment upon those who curse you.’ So what you see is an apathetic world that doesn't care what's happening to God's people and God's bringing judgment upon them. And He's bringing compassion, mercy and grace to His people that He has disciplined and these 40,000 plus have come home. They're discouraged. The older people look at the foundations and they weep as they remember the Solomonic temple.

Haggai tells us the young people thrilled as they say ‘There's something here now.’ The older ones who remember the previous days were weeping and both were rising before the Lord. As God's people are in this place, instead of responding to them, there is an apathetic dismissal of them. So God is going to bring His judgment upon those who will not minister to His people in their time of need, but God's hand is not shortened. He himself will take up the ministry.

God says in Zechariah 1:15-16, [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.*

God has returned. Why do you think Zechariah there? Why do you think Haggai is there? Why do you think the people are there? The people, the Prophets, Joshua, and Ezra are all there and they are there because God is there. There wouldn't be a Joshua, Ezra, Zerubbabel, Haggai, or Zechariah, if God Himself had not brought them with Him to minister to His people. He's basically saying 'This isn't something you've worked up! All of this that I have brought to you in this day of challenge and adversity, I am here and I'm bringing the trumpets sound once again to Jerusalem with the Prophet's voice.'

Secondly, God says, 'I have not only returned to Jerusalem, but I returned with mercy.' Justice is when God gives us what we deserve. Grace is when God gives us what we don't deserve. Mercy is when God withholds from us what we do deserve. Here, God comes graciously giving them what they don't deserve, and He has come with mercy withholding from them what they do deserve. Now He looks to the future as He says 'My house shall be built in it, which is the place I have returned, Jerusalem. It is the place I've returned you.'

God gives the message a second time to Zechariah in Zechariah 1:17 which says *[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.* I want you to think of prosperity here in this way; 'My cities shall overflow with covenant prosperity, not worldly. The prosperity you have is not measured by the metrics of the world. It's measured by the blessings of My covenant of grace that I am bringing to you and the greatest blessing of all is I'm with you all the days.'

I will not be able to finish this first vision in this study so there will be a part three in the next study on this vision. I will tell you that this temple will be built. Whenever God gives a prophecy, there is usually an immediate fulfillment and then an ultimate fulfillment. The immediate fulfillment in the Old Testament are called shadow for the temple that's going to be rebuilt in the next few years is a shadow pointing to another Temple. So again, whenever God makes a prophecy, there is an immediate fulfillment, then there is a Christological fulfillment in Christ, and then there is an eschatological fulfillment for eternity.

So it is on the House of the Lord. Yes, there will be Zerubbabel's temple, but wait till you see the Temple that's coming. The word becomes flesh and temples among us, full of grace and glory (John 1:14). Then comes the result of Christ in His Incarnation, and that is His Church, His temple, where He dwells for all eternity. Zerubbabel, Solomon, Tabernacle – those are shadows. I don't live for shadows. I have the real deal – Jesus and His church that He is putting together from the genetic pools of Africa, Scotland (boy, do we need it there), Asia, etc.

You ought to see this temple He is building upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and He dwells within her and He will never leave her, nor forsake her (Hebrews 13:5). I am with you always (Matthew 28:20). There won't be a day you will have to pray for Me to return for I am with you, then I'm bringing you to be with Me. In the next study I will show you all that with four passages of Scripture. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for this vision and the oracle that we're about to hear that You are telling us in this text. One thing that is clear about this is where in the nations that stand against You are apathetic and even when Your people falter, the zeal of the Lord will accomplish this. So, our hope is in You and may our God be glorified. Thank You for Your presence with us, in Jesus' Name, Amen.