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Zechariah 1

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



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Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Zechariah 1.

Topics.

- Return to me, says the LORD and I will return to you.
- Return from your evil ways and be not like the previous generation.
- Red, Sorrel and white horses patrolling the earth.
- A vision of horsemen, myrtle trees; red, sorrel, and white horses.
- The Angel of the LORD asks God, "When will He show Judah mercy."
- God's House will be built the measuring line will be over Jerusalem.
- God will again choose Jerusalem and Israel's cities will prosper.
- Four horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.
- Four craftsmen have subdued the nations who scattered Judah.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION

The following introduction is quiet long, but it does help understand the the background of Zechariah, (to skip the introduction scroll down to Zechariah chapter one). As Haggai encouraged the returned Jewish exiles to rebuild the Temple, Zechariah encouraged them to repent and renew their covenant with God. Such spiritual renewal would be necessary for the people to be ready to worship God once the Temple was rebuilt (about 515 B.C.). Zechariah accused them of doing the very things their ancestors had done before the exile. He was concerned about social justice for widows, orphans, and foreigners. As the people endured opposition from the non-Jewish inhabitants of Judea, Zechariah reassured them of God's abiding comfort and care and that He would continue his covenant with Israel.

The Messianic hope was rekindled during Zechariah's ministry by the ordination of Joshua as priest and Zerubbabel as governor. From Zechariah chapter one through to the end there is a beautiful message of comfort and encouragement for the people of Israel during the era of Zechariah and for those who are rebuilding the temporal Temple of God, but as the visions progress through the chapters the focus slowly shifts from the era of Zechariah and transcends time to a future age where God is building an eternal Temple in the Lord Jesus Christ. The visions then progress to Jesus returning in glory and climax's in the final chapter with Christ reigning from Jerusalem as King over the entire earth and ends with the promise that the Lord would establish his rule over all the earth (Zechariah 14:9).

The historical background: twenty years after untied Israel returned from their seventy years in captivity to Babylon, the Temple was still a blackened ruin and the discouraged people did not see how it could be restored. At this critical moment God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to encourage the Jews to rebuild the Temple. The prophecies of the two men were delivered almost at the same time. Zechariah gives a series of eight symbolic night-visions, to encourage the Israelites to complete the Temple.

ZECHARIAH 1:1-3

Return to Me, Says the LORD and I will return to You.

- **Zechariah 1:1-3:** 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. ³Therefore 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.

Zechariah is telling the people not to be like their rebellious fathers who brought the wrath of the God on themselves, but turn to the Lord their God and He will favour them. The word of the LORD came to Zechariah in the eighth month of the second year of Darius the king of Persia.

Darius: was a common name for Medo-Persian rulers. According to tradition Cyrus had selected Darius his descendant to succeed him. Sometime between the reign of Cyrus and his descendant Darius the Jews had been mistreated and work on rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple had stopped. An appeal was made to Darius and he made search and discovered the original written decree of Cyrus favouring the Jews, under his lenient reign the Jews restored the walls of the city and rebuilt the Temple (Ezra 4:1-6) (Ezra 6:1-15).

Zechariah: was a prophet as well as a priest and the eleventh of the twelve Minor Prophets. He returned from the seventy-year Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel.

Berechiah: means Jehovah blesses, he was the father of Zechariah.

Iddo: was the grandfather of the prophet Zechariah.

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ZECHARIAH 1:4-6

Return from your Evil and Be Not like the Previous Generation.

- **Zechariah 1:4-6:** 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. ⁵Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? ⁶But 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."

The LORD uses secular nations, kings, and people to achieve His plans and purposes, sometimes to bless and other times to bring judgment. God used Assyria and Babylon to bring judgment on the fathers of the previous generations of Judah and Israel. Many times, God through the prophets warned the fathers of the previous generations of Judah and Israel that they would be invaded by Assyria and Babylonian if they did not turn from their evil ways.

Israel: were the ten tribes in the land of Samaria called the Northern Kingdom.

Judah: were the two tribes at Jerusalem called the Southern Kingdom.

The following are some of the evil ways of Judah's and Israel's fathers that eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They

committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant.

The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

Sadly neither Judah nor Israel's fathers heeded the prophets' warnings: Israel set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God's prophets they rebelled against the LORD they turned to other gods and entered into gross sin so the LORD used Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon (who He called His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring the curses of the covenant upon them. The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years.

They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd (Isaiah 44:28) and took by His right hand (Isaiah 45:1) to conquer the Empire of Babylon gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. This new generation has now been at Jerusalem for twenty years and though they never turned to idols and pagan God's again, they were caught up in building luxurious homes for themselves and their own lives while the Temple of the LORD lay in ruins (Haggai 1:4).

ZECHARIAH 1:7-11

Red, Sorrel and White Horses Patrolling the Earth.

- **Zechariah 1:7-11:** 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 (Zechariah) 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. ⁹Then I said, 'What are these, my lord?' The angel who talked with me said to me, 'I will show you what they are.' ¹⁰So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, 'These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.' ¹¹And 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.'

Shebat: is the eleventh month of the Hebrew year, it corresponds to our February.

The first and second prophecies: the first time the word of the LORD came to Zechariah was the eighth month of the second year of Darius the king of Persia (Zech. 1:1) and the second time was the twenty fourth day of the eleventh month in the second year of Darius king of Persia (Zech. 1:7). The first prophecy was in the eighth month and the second prophecy was in the eleventh month so approximately three months have passed since the LORD spoke with Zechariah the first time.

Myrtle trees: myrtle means, sweetness, they are a large evergreen shrub with fragrant flowers and spicy-sweet scented leaves. All parts of the plant are somewhat perfumed. The following horses are all pictured resting peacefully in the beautiful aroma and the shade of these leafy bushes.

The man on the red horse: red is a symbol of blood, the Bible tells us that the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). The man on the red horse and the red horses behind him are therefore symbols of war.

The other horses: probably represent the events that follow war which are famine and death symbolised by the sorrel (or speckled) horses and peace symbolised by the white horses. These horses (symbolizing war) have previously marched over the earth against Judah, Israel and Jerusalem but now the Angel of the LORD gives Zechariah a vision of the same horsemen standing among myrtle trees, to assure Israel that it is safe for them to rebuild the Temple of the LORD, because these horses have patrolled the earth and at the moment all the earth is at rest (v11) meaning no nation is planning or plotting to invade or attack them.

ZECHARIAH 1:12

The Angel of the LORD asks God, "When will He show Judah Mercy."

- **Zechariah 1:12:** 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?'

How beautiful is this, since God is a God of love and of justice He is forced to judge Israel because of their gross sin and because they had set their hearts diamond hard against the word of the prophets and God himself and because their wicked behaviour the surrounding nations had no respect for the name of God. Now in these verses we see the Angel of the LORD asking God if He is going to show the inhabitants of Jerusalem and

Judah mercy or continue to be angry with them as he has been the past seventy years. The Angel of the LORD can be viewed as the Spirit of God the title, The Angel of the LORD and God are interchangeable titles in many Old Testament Scriptures. The pleading of the Angel of the LORD to show Israel mercy shines a light on the truth that God does not want to see His people suffer, but just as an earthly father must discipline their sons and bring justice upon them should they break the law no matter how much they love their sons, likewise our heavenly Father is forced to do the same when we deliberately and wilfully do harm to others and live a lifestyle that dishonours His name and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

ZECHARIAH 1:13-16

The Measuring Line will be over Jerusalem.

- **Zechariah 1:13-16:** And the LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me (Zechariah). ¹⁴So 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. ¹⁵And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. ¹⁶Therefore, 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.

The LORD answered the Angels question, "How long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem," (v12) by saying that He is exceedingly jealous for His people, meaning the LORD loves them exceedingly, but the people of Judah and Jerusalem are doing nothing to diminish the anger He has had toward them for the last seventy years. They have now been at Jerusalem for over twenty years and still the Temple of the LORD lays in ruins and it is not because they were unable to build it, but because they have been busy building luxurious homes for themselves (Haggai 1:4). God does not simply want the Temple built so there is a beautiful building in the city. The Temple was where the LORD met the people and the people met the LORD. It was to be the hub of Israel's life and the worship centre of their nation.

ZECHARIAH 1:17

God will Again Choose Jerusalem and Israel's Cities will Prosper.

- **Zechariah 1:17:** 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."

Zechariah is told to tell the people the following four things:

1. The LORD has returned to Jerusalem with mercy.
2. His House will be built.
3. Their cities shall again overflow with prosperity.
4. God will again comfort them and choose Jerusalem.

ZECHARIAH 1:18-19

Four Horns that Scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

- **Zechariah 1:18-19:** And I (Zechariah) lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns! ¹⁹And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" And he said to me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

Horns: speak of power and represent powerful kings and their nations. The four horns are a symbol of the nations that scattered Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah and most likely refer too: -

1. Egypt.
2. Assyria.
3. Babylon.
4. Edom.

Isaac and Rebekah gave birth to Esau and Jacob. The LORD promised Rebekah Esau and Jacob would be two great Nations. Esau was the father of Edom whose descendants were called Edomites. Sadly, when Judah was taken captive into Babylon the Edomites aided the armies of Babylon and mocked the people of Judah as they were being led in chains to Babylon.

ZECHARIAH 1:20-21

Four Craftsmen have Subdued the Nations who Scattered Judah.

- **Zechariah 1:20-21:** Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. ²¹And I said, "What are these coming to do?" He said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one raised his head. And these have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it."

The LORD shows Zechariah four craftsmen and tells him that they are powerful kings who have come to subdue the kingdoms that sent their fierce, powerful and terrifying armies over the land of Judah and scattered the people. The LORD is basically saying that Israel's enemies are now subdued so there is no reason why they shouldn't be building God's House.

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VISIONS

A vision can relate to a spectacle gazed at by the eyes or a movie played out in the mind. Sometimes the same biblical event or experience is spoken of as an actual and real event, while at other times the same event maybe recorded as a vision (an image or mental experience within the mind). A biblical vision communicates the God's will or future events and is always under God's control. It can appear as a movie played out on the screen of the imagination of the mind (similar to a dream) or it may appear as a hologram appearing in the air that is actually seen by the eyes of whoever God chooses to give the vision to. Those who have had such a vision tell the vision to the people, sometimes in their own words and at other times in the exact words that God has spoken to them in the vision. For further information see the title:

- Visions and Prophecy.
- In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
