

The Visions to Zechariah Zechariah 1:1 – 2:13

Lesson 1

In 536 BC, Cyrus the Great issued a decree that allowed all the Jews living in exile in Babylon to return to Jerusalem. Over the next twenty years, many took advantage of the opportunity and returned to Israel to start their lives anew. The work on the temple began shortly after but came to a halt because of the complaints of the non-Jewish people in the region. After Cyrus' death, his son, Cambyses, served as ruler until his death in 521 BC. Cambyses was childless, so the kingdom struggled as two men fought for the crown. Both Darius I and Guatama acted as the Ahasurus (king) in different parts of the empire but Darius ultimately won the position, and Guatama was considered a false ruler. It was Ahasurus Guatama who received the letter from the complainers in Israel and ordered the construction of the temple stopped. Guatama was also known by the name of Smerdis.

After Darius secured the throne, two prophets, Haggai and Zachariah, appeared to encourage the completion of the temple. Ezra confirms their activities in his book.¹ Haggai's prophecy acted as a catalyst to start the construction work on the temple without the approval of the Persian authorities. Zechariah's prophecy is quite different; it reveals God's continued plan to fulfill His promise to Israel and it starts with a call to repentance.

Return to Me

Zechariah 1:¹ In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo saying,² "The Lord was very angry with your fathers."³ "Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Return to Me," declares the Lord of hosts, "that I may return to you," says the Lord of hosts."⁴ "Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.'" But they did not listen or give heed to Me," declares the Lord."⁵ "Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?"⁶ "But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, 'As the Lord of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.'""

The Lord's interaction with Zechariah began just two months after His message to Haggai in August, 520 BC. Darius I, also known as Darius Hystaspes, was the ruler of the Persian Empire at the time. Sixteen years had passed since Cyrus had begun to let the Jews return to their home country and Zechariah's words from the Lord call for a return to Him. He had been angry with the past Jewish leadership because of their idolatry, sin, rebellion and ingratitude. Before they entered the Promised Land, the Lord had promised to exile them when they rebelled against Him and He kept His promise in their bloody encounter with Assyria and Babylon. In Zechariah, the Lord calls for the Jews of the post-exiles to return to Him and they did.

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¹ Ezra 3:1-4; 5:14-16

Man Among the Myrtle Trees

Zechariah 1:⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows: ⁸ I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him. ⁹ Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are." ¹⁰ And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, "These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth." ¹¹ So 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 is peaceful and quiet." ¹² Then the angel of the Lord said, "O Lord of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?" ¹³ The Lord answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words. ¹⁴ So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. ¹⁵ "But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster." ¹⁶ "Therefore thus says the Lord, "I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it," declares the Lord of hosts, "and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.'" ¹⁷ "Again, proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.'"

Three months later in November, 520 BC, the Lord spoke to Zechariah. In this vision, a man was riding a red horse which was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, sorrel and white horses which had returned to him from patrolling the earth. The man on the red horse was the angel of the Lord, also known as the pre-incarnate Christ. The horses had searched the earth and reported to the Lord that all the earth was peaceful and quiet in those days. Zechariah heard the words of the angel of the Lord as He mentioned His past 70 compassionless years. He was not speaking of the 70 years of exile because that was completed over 20 years before. He was speaking of the 70 years that the temple had been in ruins. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the temple in 586 BC and this vision was occurring in 520 BC.

Although 586 BC to 520 BC encompasses 67 Gregorian years, it is 70 Hebrew years.² A Gregorian year is 365¼ days per year; a Hebrew year is 354 days per year. Sixty-seven years convert into 24,471¾ Gregorian days; seventy years convert into 24,780 Hebrew days. The difference is less than a year which means the message from the Lord was occurring in the 70th Hebrew year from the destruction of the temple.

For 70 years the Lord's anger burned because His house was destroyed and lying in shambles while the whole world rested in peace. When will the Lord's compassion return to Jerusalem? It will come when the temple is completed. Once completed, the Lord will measure it with a line to determine its width and breadth.

² 586 BC to 520 BC is 67 years not 66 years. In real or natural numbers, 586 – 520 = 66; however, the whole number zero found in the year 520 acts as a place holder for the actual year. Therefore, because it is an actual year, we must add 1 to the count, making 586 – 520 = 67.

Four Horns and Four Craftsmen

Zechariah 1:¹⁸ Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *there were* four horns. ¹⁹ So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What are these?" And he answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem." ²⁰ Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen. ²¹ I said, "What are these coming to do?" And he said, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man lifts up his head; but these *craftsmen* have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up *their* horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it."

Throughout the Bible, the horn is a symbol of power and many times it refers to the power of a nation as in this passage. Four nations had been used by the Lord to scatter the Jews: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia. This passage prophesies that four craftsmen would come to overthrow each of these nations and they did. ³ The first was the father of Nebuchadnezzar who sent him to overthrow the Assyrians in 612 BC. The second was Cyrus the Great who sent Darius to overthrow the Babylonians in 536 BC. The third was Alexander the Great who took the power from Darius III in 331 BC. The fourth was Ptolemy, one of Alexander the Great's generals, who overwhelmed Egypt and proclaimed himself as Pharaoh in 305 BC. Thus, all of this passage has been fulfilled in history.

Man with a Measuring Line

Zechariah 2:¹ Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, *there was* a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² So I said, "Where are you going?" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is." ³ And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, ⁴ and said to him, "Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. ⁵ 'For I,' declares the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

The man with the measuring line was the Messiah who will direct Jerusalem's reconstruction. The angel speaking with Zechariah was met by another angel sent by the Angel of the Lord to tell Zechariah what was taking place. In the future, the Messiah will measure the city to determine the space outside its boundaries. When He controls the city and sits as the King of all, Jerusalem will not be large enough to contain all the people. Ezekiel expresses the same thought in his book.⁴ During the 1,000 Year Kingdom of the Lord on earth, when a person goes to visit Him each year on His throne, he will have to pass through a gate of the city where the walls are made of fire, not brick or stone. The flame will guard the city and the glory of the Lord Himself will literally live in that city.

Apple of His Eye

Zechariah 2:⁶ "Ho there! Flee from the land of the north," declares the Lord, "for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens," declares the Lord. ⁷ "Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon." ⁸ For thus says the Lord of hosts, "After glory He has sent me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye. ⁹ "For behold, I will wave My hand over

³ The four craftsmen are called the four chariots in Zechariah 6.

⁴ Ezekiel 38:11

them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.

In Zechariah's day, the return of the Jews from Babylon was not complete. More would come in Nehemiah's day, but even then, many Jews would stay in behind. The Jews are special to the Lord even today as they continue to rebel against Him as their Messiah. Who is the apple of your eye? Your wife? Your children or grandchildren? The Jews are God-selected children and He loves them completely and He will keep His promises to them. He promised to send them into exile when they forsook Him and He did. He promised to retrieve them from exile and He did. He promised to make them a special nation and He will. He promised to protect them and He will. In today's news, the Iranians are proclaiming the coming of the Twelfth Imam of Islam who will lead in the destruction of Israel and every Jew alive at the time. It will not happen. The Lord has promised to protect them from every nation that attempts to plunder them and He will. The efforts of Islam are futile and ultimately fatal for them.

I Am Coming

Zechariah 2:¹⁰ "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the Lord. ¹¹ "Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you. ¹² "The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem. ¹³ "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation."

In Zechariah, the Lord speaks of Himself as the Lord of hosts. As the Lord of hosts, he will send Himself, as part of His own plan, to dwell within His portion of Judah with His home in the city of Jerusalem. However, the Lord is not speaking of His first coming as a child in this passage as promised in several other passages. ⁵ Rather, He is speaking of His second coming as promised in Isaiah.

Isaiah 40:¹⁰ Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him.

For more than 70 years the course of God's grace with Judah had been interrupted as He poured out His vengeance on them. In this passage, the Lord promised that the Holy Land was still important to Him and that His covenant with them would not be set aside for any reason.

The final words of Zechariah 2:13 are similar to the last words of Habakkuk.

Habakkuk 2:²⁰ "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him."

When the Lord makes His appearance at His second coming, people from all nations will gather to Him in the 1,000 years that follow. Although the Jews are the apple of His eye, everyone who loves Him will have a place in His kingdom. Therefore, this final verse of Zechariah 2 is a promise to Jew and Gentile alike; both are to keep silent in awe of Him and reverently wait for His coming to reign over His people. From heaven He will come, out of His holy temple, to judge and avenge His people on earth.

⁵ Psalm 40:7; John 1:14; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16