

elementary fear of punishment; certainly not the loftiest, but nevertheless a very real motive for turning to God. It is very desirable to have the Lord of hosts as friend. It is a fearful thing to place ourselves in the position of an enemy to Him. (cp. *Hebrews 10:31*)

Their fathers had been similarly warned and had not heeded. Consequently, the punishment of Jehovah had fallen. Zechariah's plea is "*Be ye not as your fathers.*"

"*Where are your fathers?*" asks the prophet. It is a rhetorical question. A whole generation had been swept away. The prophets who warned them were also gone. These, their children, knew very well that that the warnings of God were not hollow threats. The sentences of Jehovah are executed. Whoever runs is overtaken by them and there are none who escape.

The justice of God is so well defined that even those against whom it comes must agree that He deals with them according to their ways.

Chapter XXVI—Questions

Introduction to Section I

1. Identify Zechariah the prophet.
2. Why does Zechariah remind the returnees of the pre-exilic sin of their fathers?
3. Which verse is the key note of the entire book of Zechariah?
4. Discuss the term "Jehovah of hosts."
5. What does Zechariah mean by "Be not as your fathers?"

CHAPTER XXVII

A VISION OF HORSES

ZECHARIAH 1:7-17

RV . . . Upon 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, I 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. Then 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. And 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, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then 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? And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words, even comfortable words. So 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. And 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. Therefore 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. Cry 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.

LXX . . . On the twenty-fourth day in the eleventh month, this is the month Sabat, in the second year of the reign of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zacharias, the son of Barachias, the son of Addo, the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man mounted on a red horse, and he stood between the shady mountains; and behind him were red horses, and grey, and piebald, and white. And I said, What are these, my lord? And the angel that spoke with me said to me, I will shew thee what these things are. And the man that stood between the mountains answered, and said to me, These are they whom the Lord has sent forth to go round the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood between the mountains, and said, We have gone round all the earth, and, behold, all the earth is inhabited, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord Almighty, how long wilt thou have no mercy on Jerusalem, and the cities of Juda, which thou hast disregarded these seventy years? And the Lord Almighty answered the angel that spoke with me good words and consolatory sayings. And the angel that spoke with me said to me, Cry out and say, Thus saith the Lord Almighty; I have been jealous for Jerusalem and Sion with great jealousy. And I am very angry with the heathen that combine to attack her: forasmuch as I indeed was a little angry, but they combined to attack her for evil. Therefore thus saith the Lord: I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; and my house shall be rebuilt in her, saith the Lord Almighty, and a measuring line shall yet be stretched out over Jerusalem. And the angel that spoke with me said to me, Cry yet, and say, Thus saith the Lord Almighty;

Yet shall cities be spread abroad through prosperity; and the Lord shall yet have mercy upon Sion, and shall choose Jerusalem.

COMMENTS

In verse 7, Zechariah begins the first of the series of eight visions which are resigned to remove the obstacles to Messiah's coming. He first records the vision and then the angelic interpretation of it.

WHAT THE PROPHET SAW . . . v. 8-11

In the night, the prophet saw a man riding on a red horse. He was riding among a grove of myrtle trees in a bottom, *ie.* a shady place. With him were other horsemen, some on red, some on sorrel, and some on white horses.

Seeing this dark and solitary scene, the prophet asked of the angel through whom the visions were given, what these things were and was immediately granted an answer.

These horsemen were they whom Jehovah had sent to walk to and fro in the earth. The angel who stood among the myrtle trees, probably the first horseman, reported that the horsemen have ridden to and fro through the earth, and that the entire earth was at rest.

WHAT THE VISION MEANT . . . v. 12-17

To clarify to the prophet the meaning of his vision, the angel of whom he had asked the meaning (v. 9) addresses Jehovah directly. His question is "*how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah?*" It has been seventy years since God's mercy was removed from them.

Jehovah's answer was not harsh, so the angel addresses Zechariah with the answer to his question.

The prophet is to pass along, to cry aloud, to the people the answer of Jehovah. God is very much concerned for both Jerusalem, the city, and for Zion, the city as capital of the covenant people.

Not only so, but He is displeased with the nations of the earth who are at ease while Israel suffers the humiliation of a vassal state. Even while these nations had helped with God's chastizing of His people, He had been "a little displeased" with them.

Therefore, Jehovah is returned to Jerusalem with mercies. The temple is to be rebuilt and the city itself will know the measuring line of the builder.

Not only so, His cities shall flow with prosperity, and God will comfort His people. Jerusalem shall yet be His.

Jehovah's message here might well have been made in answer to the objections raised in *Haggai 1:2-4*. There the people were complaining that it was not yet time to rebuild the temple. They had not been home long enough, there was drought in the land and other concerns must take precedent over the construction of God's house.

In fact, *Haggai* and *Zechariah* spoke to the same audience. The answer was directed to the objections. God recognizes the length of the punishment they have endured and re-assures them that His mercies are now returned. It is indeed time to build. Both the temple and the city will prosper, as will the outlying cities of Judea.

Seeing this entire passage as a unit, as well as verse by verse, will help us comprehend its meaning. Some have identified the rider of the red horse (v. 7) as the Messiah Himself. Others have said he is the angel of *Joshua 5:13-14* who in turn they see as the Messiah also. In each case, he is supposed to be standing ready to wreak swift bloodshed against the foes of Israel.

Neither of these seem to me to answer the historic context of *Zechariah*. Rather, it would seem the horsemen are symbolic of *Darius* and his hosts under whose iron rule the world languished "at ease" in a sort of *Pax Romana*.

The red color of the leader's horse does indeed represent bloodshed. The white implies death, as the pale horse of *Revelation*. The sorrel, (literally speckled) a combination of red and white, implies a condition in which some prosper and some do not.

This is a picture of the Persian empire under *Darius*. The enforcement of peace through military power and the inequity in which some prosper and some are in want has aroused to sore displeasure that which was formerly a "little displeasure." (v. 15)

The myrtle grove, among whom the horsemen are stationed is symbolic of the returned remnant who, far from being free are a humbled vassal state paying tribute to *Darius*.

It is the pointed reference to this historic situation which caused *Zechariah's* message to be couched in the hidden language of apocalypse. To have openly predicted the rising prosperity of the vassal state of Israel would have brought dire consequences indeed.

The first vision means simply that God is aware of the harsh occupation of the world and especially of Israel by Persian forces. Despite the apparent peace, the world was actually languishing under the stern discipline of military might.

In the midst of these circumstances, God wants His people to know that, if they will return with their hearts to Him, Jerusalem will once again be the city of His choice and the neighboring cities of Judea will also prosper. The enforced peace of Persia assures the opportunity to build without molestation. Just as God had raised up the Chaldeans to punish His people, so He has raised up Persia to protect them during the period of reconstruction. Thus the time is ripe for the rebuilding of the temple and the city.

Chapter XXVII—Questions

A Vision of Horses

1. The eight visions which begin with 1:7 are designed to _____.
2. Describe the first vision.
3. What was Zechariah's immediate response to this vision?
4. Who were the horsemen of the first vision?
5. What was the question of the angel to Jehovah?
6. Was Jehovah's answer harsh?
7. What was Zechariah instructed to do?
8. Why was Jehovah displeased with the nations?
9. God had returned to Jerusalem with _____.
10. How does Jehovah's answer here relate to *Haggai 1:2-4*?
- 11.^{OV} The horsemen are symbolic of _____.
12. What do the various colors of the horses represent?
13. What, in this first vision, is directly related to Zechariah's reason for writing in apocalyptic style?

CHAPTER XXVIII

A VISION OF FOUR HORNS AND SMITHS

ZECHARIAH 1:18-21

RV . . . And I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And Jehovah showed me four smiths. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head; but these are