

My Cities Shall Overflow With Goodness: Zechariah 1:7-17 Meaning

Scriptures for Today: The Meaning of Zechariah 1:1-6

Zechariah 1:7-17

Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, 8 I saw by 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 were there red horses, speckled, and white. 9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. 10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. 11 And they answered the angel of the LORD 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. 12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD 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? 13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. 14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. 15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. 16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. 17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

Introduction — The Book of Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is written to people who have come back from captivity, but everything is not right yet. Jerusalem had been destroyed, the temple had been torn down, and the people had gone through the judgment of God because of their sin.

Now they are back in the land, but they are discouraged. The work is not finished. The city is still broken. Things are not what they should be. God sends Zechariah to speak to them. This book is filled with visions that show what God is doing behind the scenes. Even when things look quiet or still, God is working.

This book does two things. It calls the people to return to God, and it shows them that God is not finished with them. Judgment was not the end. Restoration is coming. We get the judgment of God upon us, but that's not the end of us.

What Happened in Zechariah 1:1-6 Before This?

Before this vision, God calls the people to turn back to Him. He reminds them of their fathers who refused to listen to the prophets. The prophets preached, warned, and told them exactly what would happen, but they would not hear.

And what happened? Judgment came exactly like God said it would. They went into captivity. Everything fell apart. God asks them, where are your fathers now? Where are the prophets? They are gone. But God's words did not go away. Everything He said came to pass.

That proves something important. When God speaks, it will happen whether people believe it or not. Now the people finally admit that God was right. They acknowledge that He did exactly what He said He would do. God ALWAYS does what He says He will do.

That is the setup. They have just come out of judgment, and now God is about to show them what He is going to do next.

The Word of the LORD Comes at a Specific Time

Zechariah 1:7

Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

Back in verse 1 of this chapter, the word of the LORD came in the eighth month in the second year of Darius. Now we are in the eleventh month, the month Sebat. That means about three months have passed.

So time has moved forward, but we are still in the same period under Darius the king of Persia, after the return from captivity. God is still speaking to the same people, in the same situation, but now He is giving more detail. First came the call to return in verses 1 through 6. Now comes the vision showing what God is doing and what He is about to do.

This is not a different time. This is a continuation. God spoke, and now He is expanding on what He said.

A Vision in the Night — God Is Watching

Zechariah 1:8

I saw by 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 were there red horses, speckled, and white.

This vision comes at night, which shows darkness. That matches where the people are. They are not in a time of glory. They are in a low place. The myrtle trees are in the bottom. That shows a low condition. Jerusalem had been brought low.

The man on the red horse stands among the myrtle trees, and behind him are other horses—red, speckled, and white. These are identified in the passage as those whom the LORD has sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

So the key point is not the color first—the key point is their function. They are sent by God. They are moving throughout the earth. They are observing and reporting back. This is a picture of God's awareness and oversight of everything happening.

There are multiple horses, multiple colors, and that shows a variety within what God has sent out. It is not just one messenger—it is many. It is not just one limited view—it is full coverage. You have red, speckled, and white horses. Different colors, but all under the authority of the LORD. All sent for the same purpose. All reporting back to Him.

So what does this show? God's reach is complete. His awareness is not limited. He is not seeing one part of the world—He is seeing all of it. These are not wandering. They are not lost. They are sent. That means there is purpose, direction, and control behind everything. God is not reacting—He is actively overseeing.

And when they come back, they give a report. That shows accountability. God sends them out, and they return with information. So the focus is this: God knows exactly what is happening everywhere, at all times, through what He has sent out. Nothing is missed. Nothing is hidden.

God Has Messengers Watching the Earth

Zechariah 1:9-10

Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. 10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

Zechariah asks what this means, and God gives the answer. These are sent by the LORD to go throughout the earth. God is not disconnected. He is not unaware. He is watching everything that is happening.

The World Is at Ease While God's People Suffered

Zechariah 1:11

And they answered the angel of the LORD 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.

Look at the full report carefully. "They answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees." That shows there is structure and authority. These are reporting back. They are not independent. They are under command. "We have walked to and fro through the earth." That means full coverage. They didn't just check one place. They went everywhere. The entire earth has been observed.

"And, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." That is the key statement. The entire earth is sitting still. That means no disturbance. No shaking. No judgment happening to the nations at that moment. "And is at rest." The nations are comfortable. The heathen are at ease.

Now compare that to what just happened to Jerusalem. Seventy years of indignation. Destruction. Captivity. Judgment. So here's the contrast: God's people were judged, but the rest of the world is sitting there comfortable. That's what leads directly into the next verse: "How long?" Because from a human perspective, it looks like the wrong people are at rest.

But this verse shows something critical: God knows exactly what is happening everywhere. The condition of the whole earth is fully known to Him.

How Long Until Mercy Comes?

Zechariah 1:12

Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD 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?

Seventy years of indignation. Why? Because they refused to hear the word of the LORD. They deserved this. God sent prophets over and over again. He warned them. He told them exactly what would happen if they continued in their sin. But they would not listen.

Jeremiah 25:3-4

And I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. 4 And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

They didn't just miss it once. This was repeated refusal. God kept sending the message, and they kept rejecting it. Because of that, God pronounced the seventy years.

Jeremiah 25:11

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

So the seventy years were not random. They were a direct result of disobedience to God's word. And it goes even deeper than that. They were also refusing to keep God's commandments, including things like the sabbath for the land.

2 Chronicles 36:20-21

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: 21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

So the seventy years accomplished two things. It fulfilled God's word through Jeremiah, and it repaid what had been neglected. This shows you something very clear. God does not forget His word. When He says something will happen, it will happen. And when people refuse to listen over and over again, judgment comes exactly like He said it would.

And now the question is simple. How long until mercy comes? That is the same question people ask today. How long is this going to last? When is God going to step in?

God Speaks Good and Comfortable Words

Zechariah 1:13

And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

This is the turning point. God answers with good words and comfortable words. That means encouragement, assurance, and truth. Not fake comfort. Real comfort.

God Is Jealous for His People

Zechariah 1:14

So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

God is not indifferent. He cares deeply about His people. This is not weakness. This is strong, protective love.

God Is Angry with the Heathen That Went Too Far

Zechariah 1:15

I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

God allowed judgment, but the nations went beyond that. They added to the suffering. They enjoyed it. They pushed it further. And God says He is very sore displeased with them. God sees when people go too far.

God Returns With Mercy and Rebuilding

Zechariah 1:16

I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

God returns with mercy. Not more destruction. Not more judgment. And what comes with that? Rebuilding. "My house shall be built in it." God is restoring what was broken.

My Cities Shall Overflow With Goodness

Zechariah 1:17

Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

This is God speaking directly to those people right there who had just come out of seventy years of judgment. Their cities were destroyed. Their land was empty. Everything had been torn down because they refused to hear the word of the LORD.

And now God says, "My cities." They still belong to Him. Judgment did not cancel that. "Through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad." That means those same cities that were desolate are going to be rebuilt, filled, and expanded again. Not left empty. Not left ruined. People are going to live there again. Life is coming back.

"The LORD shall yet comfort Zion." That is a reversal. God afflicted them, and now He is bringing comfort. The same God who judged them is now restoring them. "And shall yet choose Jerusalem." That means He is establishing that place again as the center of worship with the temple being rebuilt. He is reaffirming what He had already set there.

This is not about guessing future timelines. This already began to happen when they returned and rebuilt. The point is simple. God judged exactly like He said He would, and now He is restoring exactly like He said He would. He tears down, and then He builds back up.

What Happened Before All of This?

Before this, the people were judged. They lost everything. They went into captivity because they refused to listen. But now God is showing them that judgment was not the end. Restoration is coming.

Practical Applications

1. God sees everything happening in this world.
2. God cares deeply about His people.

3. God brings mercy after judgment.
4. God rebuilds what has been broken.
5. God can take something destroyed and cause it to overflow.

Conclusion

This passage shows a complete turnaround. The people had gone through judgment, destruction, and seventy years of captivity because they refused to hear the word of the LORD. But God did exactly what He said He would do. He judged them, and then He restored them. Their cities were rebuilt. The temple was rebuilt. Life came back.

But the Bible also shows something beyond just that moment. There is a pattern all throughout Scripture. God judges. Then He restores. And that pattern does not stop in Zechariah. You see future restoration language throughout the prophets.

Isaiah 2:2

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

You see a time when God establishes His rule, and everything is set right. Not partial restoration like they had after captivity, but full restoration under the rule of the LORD. So what we see in Zechariah 1 is a real historical restoration—but it also shows you how God works. He does not leave things in ruin forever.

He tears down because of sin. But He also restores according to His word. And in the end, God will fully restore what sin has destroyed. Not just a city. Not just a temple. Everything. That is the hope you see throughout the Bible. God finishes what He starts.

Let's pray.