

## **The Divine Plan for Jerusalem, Part 1**

Zechariah 1:7-8

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Zechariah, the prophet, next to the last book in the Old Testament, a marvelous, prophetic record: we began to study it last time, and the very fact of your attendance tonight in such large numbers, and those of you who are in the chapel, is evidence that you are anticipating an exciting time as we continue through this tremendous book. It's really an adventure for me, because I am not really that familiar with doing in- depth exposition in the Old Testament, as I am in the New. And so it's a tremendous challenge to me, and what I've noticed about it is that it's so very, very different than the New Testament. The New Testament, so much of it is a logical progression of thought, whereas the Old Testament is just hammering, hammering, hammering on the same truth over and over and over again. You hear it, and then you see it in a symbol, and then it's in a metaphor, and then it's echoed by an angel and then God says it Himself, and it just keeps banging away. And so we're going to bang away through Zechariah on some of the marvelous things that God had in mind.

Now I've entitled the message tonight, "The Divine Plan for Jerusalem." Needless to say, Jerusalem is a fantastic city and has been through the years. I've made a couple of visits to Jerusalem. There's something about it that gives you goose bumps. When you come over the hills from the west, and you finally drop down into the valley, and then you ascend the mountains again, and you see in the horizon the city of Jerusalem, it just is an amazing and thrilling sight. As you stand on the Mount of Olives and you look across the Kidron Valley, and you see the tomb of Absalom below you, and you know that just behind you is Bethany and all of the scenes that are a part of your memory from Scripture, and you look at that city and you can see a wall that is made up of bits and pieces from many walls, because it's been knocked down so many times. There's something exciting and something fantastically thrilling about that city. The fact that it exists, and the fact that it exists in the way it does, speaks to the reality of God and God's unchanging, unending faithfulness. And that's what Zechariah is about, at least in particular the part we're gonna look at.

Now as we began the book last time, we noted that it is written in a crucial time in Israel's history. A remnant of Jews has just been released and returned from the Babylonian captivity. In 586 B.C., Judah, the Southern Kingdom, was taken into captivity and they had been there 70 years when Cyrus made a decree, releasing them and sending them back. This is about 18 years after that decree was made. They're back in the land. Within seven months we saw that they had built the altar. Just after the beginning of the second year, they had begun to rebuild the walls of the temple and the foundation was laid and the face of the wall was put up. But then because of opposition, they had stopped.

And so they're back in the land, at least a remnant of them, the ones that weren't so embedded in Babylonian society that they couldn't uproot. They're back in the land, they've got an altar which means they've got the sacrifices going, and they're on the way to build the temple, but opposition brings it to a grinding halt.

But God doesn't want it to stop. God wants that temple built, God wants that wall built, God wants that city built, and God wants that whole thing set up the way He prescribed it in the Old Testament, and so He raises a prophet up to stimulate them to finish the job. And the prophet's name is Haggai.

Two months after Haggai comes a man named Zechariah and between the two of them a revival breaks out in Israel and they begin to do what they started to do. They begin to move on rebuilding things. They get some action. They start putting the bricks again on those walls to build the temple. The message of the prophets is clear: there is to be a spiritual revival and there is to be a recommitment to do the work, to rebuild the city.

Now as we come to Zechariah, the revival has already begun, Haggai being the catalyst for it. And Zechariah just wants to encourage the people in the work. And so his is a book of comfort. It's tough for a people who are trying to repatriate a desolated country, especially when they're such a small group. And they realize that all around them are potential enemies who could undue everything they've done, just by deciding to do it. It's a fearful situation. There's a prosperity all over the world that's hard to understand, because why should everybody be prosperous and God's people be in such a state of poverty and desolation and degradation? And so along comes Zechariah and he just again, and again, and again, encourages the people that God is in their midst, that God is at work, that God has a plan, that wonderful things are going to happen, no matter what it looks like. So his message is a message of comfort. God is a God of comfort. The name Zechariah means "God remembers." God remembers His people. God doesn't forget.

Now this is to be a book of comfort but it begins with a very discomfoting thought in the first six verses, we saw last week, and that is the fact that God is a God of vengeance, and wrath, and judgment. And the reason that is at the beginning is simply to make sure nobody goes asleep in the concept of comfort and thinks that it doesn't matter what you are or what you do, God's gonna make sure everything's alright. God's just in the business of comforting everybody. No, not at all.

The first six verses show that God comforts the people that turn away from sin. You remember verse 4 said that, verse 3 said it. "Turn to me. Turn from your evil ways and your evil deeds or doings." So that there is a basic prerequisite to receiving God's comforting blessing and that is turning away from evil. It's only the people who repent of sin. It's only the people who turn away from it that receive the wonderful blessing of God.

So having laid down that prerequisite, we begin in verse 7, to hear the catalog of all the marvelous comforting blessing that God has for His people. Now, the prophecy falls into four sections. These aren't important in total, but right now I want to make at least one distinction. The first section is the "Call to Repentance," in the first six verses, 1:1-1:6, a "Call to Repentance." The second section begins in 1:7 and I call it "Comfort through Visions." You have a call to repentance, and then you have comfort through visions. God begins to comfort His people and He does so through a series of visions. The third section begins in chapter 7, and it's called "Counsel Regarding Fasts." "Counsel Regarding Fasts." And the last section, beginning in chapter 9, "Coming Events." So "A Call to Repentance, Comfort through Vision, Counsel Regarding Fasts," and finally "Coming Events." And summing it up, it's this: God has comfort, God has counsel, and God has some fantastic coming events for the people who have heard the call to repentance. That's the gist of the whole book. God's got some marvelous things laid out for people who repent.

And from 1:7 through 6:15, through the 15thverse of the 6thchapter, comes this comfort. And interestingly enough, it is given in a series of eight visions. And this is a mode that was used very frequently with the prophets. Eight visions. Now each of them is distinct, and yet basically they all say the same thing. But they come at it from different angles. In fact, as I looked at them, it's very clear that the first one is almost a summarization of the other seven, and the other seven put out the details. But these eight visions were designed to comfort God's people.

Let's begin at verse 7: "Upon the four and twentieth day," - now that's an important day simply because there have been so many interesting things that have happened on the 24thday. Five months before on the 24thday, work on the temple had begun. Two months before on the 24thday, Haggai received a marvelous revelation, and so there's something about the 24thday that's getting to be pretty hot stuff and about the time the 24thday rolls around, everybody perks up. "So on the 24thday of the 11thmonth, that is Sebat, the Babylonian name for the 11thmonth, in the second year of Darius," the second year of the reign of Darius the Mede who was the ruler of the Medo-Persian empire, the empire that really had the political control of Palestine, and this was the times of the Gentiles, it had already begun. It's still going on today where Gentile power has sway in land originally given to Israel. Even though Israel today controls its own Palestine, and its own city, do you realize that they were given by God everything from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates? And all the way down to the Nile and everything else, and they don't have all of that yet. And so it's still the times of the Gentiles and so their association then as a prophet is in the reign of Darius who was a Gentile king.

And at this time, the 24thday of the 11thmonth, the month Sebat, which is the Babylonian title for the 11thJewish month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord. And again I remind you that they are not giving opinions, and they are not giving whims, they are declaring the word of the Lord which is spoken to them. "And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet." You'll see the term "the prophet" at the end of the verse. It really should come after "Zechariah." "Zechariah the prophet who is son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." And it simply reminds us of what we've already noted about his heredity.

So "on the 24thday of the 2ndyear in the reign of Darius," this helps us pinpoint exactly when this was: they had just been back from captivity, and God speaks through this prophet and to this prophet in a series of marvelous visions. And verse 8 begins, "I saw by night, and behold," - stop right there. In one night he has all eight visions, apparently. We'll see that as we go. And I would remind you that a vision is not the same as a dream. A vision is given when somebody is awake; a dream is given when somebody is asleep.

Now there were many visions in the Old Testament. In fact, the word occurs 86 times in the Old Testament. It occurs 15 times in the New Testament, and I think occurs 22 of those 86 times in the book of Daniel. So Daniel had a lot of visions. But from back in Genesis 15:1, we have visions. And there it says, "After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision." So God, for a long time, has been communicating His Word through these visions. In Numbers 12:16, back in the Pentateuch, it says "If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision." God, historically from Abram on, has made Himself known to the prophets in a vision.

You say, "Well, what is a vision?" Well, I don't know, specifically; I never had a vision. But basically a vision is an awareness of reality beyond the senses. You might want to call it a sixth sense, only it's

more than just a premonition. It is the ability to see beyond the human senses. It is the ability to go beyond what the human senses can perceive. It is extra-physical sight. For example, the prophet will see something that cannot be seen by anyone else. To the naked eye it is totally invisible, but to this additional sense, God makes it revealed and clear.

So he has these eight visions. Now we're gonna look at vision No.1. Vision No.1 encompasses the divine plan for Jerusalem and the scary thing about this is that the subject is so broad that it's hopeless to try to cover it all at one time. So let's just get into the thing and see if we can't figure out the vision and see how far we get. But there's so much in the Bible for the future of Jerusalem, we'll never be able to cover it all; we won't attempt.

Now, Israel had gone into captivity and Jerusalem had been devastated. And the reason Israel had been taken in to captivity is simple: it's a one syllable word, starts with "s" and ends with "n." What is it? Sin. God said to Israel again and again and again, "If you keep sinning, if you keep sinning, if you keep sinning, I must have a holy reaction against it. You're going to pay a high price: captivity." And the major prophet, who constantly preached this message, just before the captivity, was a man name Jeremiah. Jeremiah was the one who proclaimed the coming captivity, over and over and over and over. He told them, "You're gonna have trouble, you're gonna have trouble, you're gonna have trouble. I'm gonna take you out of the land I brought you," in the second chapter He says, "into a fruitful land, into a prosperous land, and you have not turned to me, you have not worshipped me, and you're gonna get out, you're going to be taken out of this land." The whole book of Jeremiah is just loaded with the cataloging of Israel's sins that are leading to the Babylonian captivity. He was the key prophet before the exile.

But Jeremiah, among many of his prophecies, made one that is especially important. And it is in the 29th chapter of Jeremiah. And I want you to look at it with me, in the 10th verse. Jeremiah 29:10, because Jeremiah not only told them they were going to go to captivity, but he told them how long. And I think this is fascinating. Certainly indicates that Jeremiah was speaking divine revelation. He had no idea, humanly speaking, how long they'd be in captivity, but God knew exactly, because when the time was right, God raised up Cyrus, who wasn't even a believer, and God had Cyrus make a decree and the people had the freedom to leave, just at the time God prescribed.

Alright, Jeremiah 29:10, now all the time he's been telling they're going to captivity, but look what he said: "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years are accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you in causing you to return even unto this place." Verse 14, "And I will be found by you, saith the Lord, and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations and from all the places to which I have driven you, saith the Lord, and I will bring you again unto the place from which I caused you to be carried captive."

Now God says "I'm gonna bring you back at the end of 70 years. At the end of that period of time, there'll be a decree that'll send you back to the land. Now that is a prophecy that they heard. It was very, very explicit. Now keep it in mind, because it is the basis of the vision we're gonna see in Zechariah. Jeremiah said "You're going into captivity because God always, always, always, always, puts a price on sin, always. You can be sure your sin will," - what? "Find you out." So, when they were going into captivity, inevitable because of sin, but there is - and this is the beauty of it - there is a tolerance within God's judgment that turns to compassion. See? "God shall not always keep His anger," said Malachi. There is a turning, and God's compassion takes over after His chastening, and He says, "I'll bring you back." And that's the basis of this vision.

Now there are five elements to the vision, we'll notice them as we go. The first one is the picture scene, the picture scene in verse 8. And if there's anything that just comes out of this passage, loud and clear with neon signs, as tall as a ten story building, it is this: God is faithful. Boy when God makes a promise, He keeps it. God made them a promise: "You're going to captivity, but you're going to Babylon for 70 years and at the end of 70 years, you're coming back." And that is exactly when they came back. God kept His promise.

But by this time, they're back, but things aren't going like they thought. And in the midst of this situation, they're sort of sitting saying, "But the city is in desolation and we're in humiliation, and our enemies have stopped our building." And they need some comfort from God.

And so the first vision comes. And let's look at the picture scene in verse 8, "I saw by night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom," or better, that were in the hollow or the glen or the ravine even, "and behind him there were red horses, sorrel, and white." Now stop there.

Now, basically, that amazing picture is not really interpreted by the prophet. Apparently it was very obvious to the people what was being said, and as we look at it, we'll see how that becomes obvious as we put the pieces together. Now, Zechariah has what we would call an apocalyptic or prophetic vision. He is in an ecstatic condition. He is in a trance like situation, much like Peter would have been in on the roof of the house in Joppa when God showed him a sheet and all kinds of - a bunch of things like that. It isn't dreaming. It is an ability to see something beyond the human senses. It's a supernatural miracle. And he says, "I saw."

Now, remember when that term is used absolutely in reference to a prophet, it means "I received the revelation," because prophets were called "seers" and when he says "I saw" he means "I was given a revelation from God and the first thing I saw was a man." And that's all it says. His identity is not explained, but immediately we get the feeling that he's a super-human man. Something different about him. In fact, he is an angel in the appearance of a man. And the man that he sees is riding on a red horse. There is justification for translating that, in reference to a horse, as reddish brown, rather than a bright red horse. Such because the very same term is used to describe Esau, who was not bright red. He was just red head, like red heads are, not like a red dress. So it can be used in that sense.

So he sees this horse that is reddish brown, as a horse would be. And a rider on this horse. Now, we have to stop at this point and we get a little idea here of what we're seeing because we know what horses represented in visionary situations in the Old Testament. A horse normally represented war. A horse seemed to be a symbol of war. In Deuteronomy chapter 2 - now you can incidentally find that also in the book of Revelation where horses are representative of war. When Christ comes back at the battle of Armageddon, what is he riding? A horse. In Deuteronomy 32:13, this is also Old Testament, "He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields. He made him to suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock." And here again you have the idea of God, as it were, at war, and the horse riding across the hills, God carrying out His war-like purposes. And there's a couple of others. I'm just giving hints at them, we won't take too much time, but there are many of them. Another symbol of it you'd find in Psalm 66 and perhaps in Isaiah 58 and so forth. Horses appear as useful in war, and that's precisely what they were used for, and of course, they appear that way symbolically. But the best passage may be, and the closest one,

is in Zechariah 9:10, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem and the battle bow shall be cut off." And there you have the chariot, the horse and the battle bow all in the same verse, indicating that horses were used in situations of war. The 10th chapter, the 3rd verse, says at the end of the verse, "majestic horse in the battle." Again, assigning the horse the role of war.

So we can see then that a horse basically, in the Old Testament, and you can follow this through right into the New Testament, was a symbol of war. We find it all throughout the Word of God.

And I would add to that that red is also a symbol in the Bible and it's a symbol of blood and judgment and vengeance. Where you have red, for example in Revelation chapter 6, a rider on a red horse, there is war, and there is bloodshed, and there is death, because red speaks of blood and judgment and vengeance. As I recall there is a word in Isaiah 63, I might be wrong, but I think it's Isaiah 63:1, "Who is this that comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah?" This is the day of Messiah coming. "This that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Why art thou red in thine apparel, that thy garments like him who treads in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone and of the people there was none with me, I will tread them in mine anger and trample them in my fury and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments. And I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart and the year of my redeemed is come." When the Messiah comes, and that's almost a direct parallel to Revelation 19, when the Messiah comes, His garments are stained red with blood. That's the symbol of war and the symbol of death and vengeance and judgment.

So what we have here then is a war horse, prepared for battle, prepared for judgment, prepared for vengeance. And astride this is a ride. Now we can talk along time about who the rider is. Jewish commentators historically have said it was Michael, but I'm convinced it was other than Michael and we shall see in a moment who it was.

Now I want you to notice where this rider is in verse 8: "He stood among the myrtle trees," that were in the glen or the hollow. Now, if you've ever been to Israel, or if you've ever read or studied anything about Israel, you know that the myrtle is very common. It's not really a tree at all; it's a bush. And it grows everywhere. It's all over the place. It's just everywhere, very, very common. Not always beautiful but if it's growing along a stream or if it's growing in a hollow or a glen, which would be a low place where there would be much shade and perhaps much water, along a stream you find that these shrubs can grow to the height of eight feet, and they can have very glossy, shiny green leaves and be very lovely. In fact, the ones that really flourish develop a star shaped white flower and they're very beautiful. And when you bruise one of the leaves of a myrtle that is flourishing like that, it gives off its fragrance. But its fragrance is only given off when it is bruised.

And so all of the sudden we see here a whole lot of myrtles everywhere. They are common to the land of Israel; they are flourishing in this place. Incidentally, the word "myrtle" in Hebrew is "hedasa" and a synonym for it is Ester. The name Ester is actually hedasa in the Hebrew, which means myrtle. So that's a name, a beautiful name, to a Jew who would see something very lovely in a myrtle bush. In fact, it's interesting in Isaiah 41 - I don't want to get all into horticulture here, but this is kind of interesting - but in Isaiah 41, Isaiah 41:19 and Isaiah 55:13, it says that when the millennium comes, there will be tremendous flourishing of the myrtle. So God even likes it. There's gonna be plenty of it. God liked it enough to put it in Israel once and he likes it enough to fill up the millennium with them.

Now myrtle branches also were gathered with palm branches and willow twigs at the Feast of

Tabernacles, and myrtle branches were used to make the booths in which the children of Israel celebrated the wanderings in the wilderness.

Now, here he is, this rider, riding a war horse and in a bunch of myrtle bushes. Now you say, "Now what does it mean when it says they're in the bottom or in the glen or in the hollow or in the ravine?" Well, this is identified most frequently with a low place. That's obviously what it means. And the low place outside of the city of Jerusalem is the Kidron Valley. If you look directly east from say the - or let's say you're on the Mount of Olives to the east of the city. Between you and the Mosque of Omar and the Dome of the Rock, there is a valley, just goes down and up. There's no passage there, it's just a valley. That is the Kidron Valley, and as the Kidron Valley proceeds to the south, it makes a bend around Mount Zion, and connects up with another valley, known as the Valley of Henu. And where the Valley of Henu and the Valley of Kidron meet, there is the lowest place outside the city of Jerusalem. It was called "The Hollow" and the spot had always been a garden. In fact, in 2 Kings 24 it says "The King's garden was in the hollow, or the ravine where Kidron and Henu met." And most likely, that's what you have here. In a low place outside the city sits a red horse with a rider on top, amidst some flourishing myrtles, that would flourish in the shade and the water that would run in that area.

Now that isn't all. Further - the rate we're going we're just going to tell you what this is and you'll have to come back next week to find out what it means - verse 8: "And behind him there were red horses, sorrel and white." You have more riders. All of the sudden you don't just have one rider, you've got more. And notice there are red and white and sorrel. You know what a sorrel is? It's a mixture of what? Red and white. So you've got the red horse, the white horse, and the combination.

Now is there any significance to the colors? In visions, no question about it. Red means what? Blood, judgment and vengeance. What does white mean? What is a white horse a sign of? Victory, triumph. When a Roman conqueror conquered a city, he rode back into his own city riding a white horse, the sign of victory. When Christ comes, He comes on a white horse.

So what you have there is war that is going to end up in victory, and the mixture on some of the horses. So the scene is a scene of preparedness for war. It's going to be bloody but it's going to be victorious.

Now you say "Who are all these riders?" Well, it's clear. Who historically have been the agents of God's judgment? Who have they been? Angels.....angels. This is the God Squad. The angelic squadron, folks, and they are led by a confident leader on a red horse. The horses speak of battle and speed and swiftness and readiness to hasten to God's command. There are messengers of vengeance and messengers of victory, and the commanding angel is the rider on the red horse.

You say "But who is he?" Look at verse 11. Zechariah 1:11, "And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees." Who's the angel of the Lord? Christ. Now do you know who the rider on the red horse is? It's the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord. He's the commander in chief of the God Squad, about to embark upon the battle.

You say "But what are the myrtles?" Well, listen. Because of the lowliness, because of the commonness, because of the simplicity, because of the beauty, and because of the fragrance when bruised, the only possibility for the myrtle is that the myrtle represents Israel. The commons, they're

everywhere in the land, the people of God.

And what is the hollow? What is the deep place, the glen? That speaks of the suffering and the lowliness and the degradation and the baseness of their present condition. All the little lovely myrtles are sitting in the valley. They're looking up at their city and wondering if they'll ever rebuild it. And all of the sudden, standing in the midst, is the angelic army, led by the commander in chief, ready for battle. It's gonna be bloody, but it's gonna be victorious. Now that's an exciting scene isn't it? And you can hear all the Jews who were listening to Zechariah's sermon going, "Did you hear that? See? It's coming."

Tremendous vision. They are the covenant people. They are the eternally elect nation. They are loved by the Lord and they are the object of His unchanging purpose and the gifts and callings of God, Romans 11:29, are without what? Repentance. And God says "You may have been in captivity for 70 years and you may be in humiliation and degradation now and you may have a broken down wall and a broken down temple and a devastated land and you may be in the hollow, and you may be down here in the valley, but listen. There is a group of armed super-human personalities gathering to fight your war. Be encouraged."

Boy that is encouraging. The angel of the Lord, none other than Jesus Christ, no other than God Himself, the second person of the Trinity, taking on an angelic form. You say, "How do you know that?" Well, let me show you something. Genesis 16, just quickly. We're not even going to get past this verse.

You know, that's of the Lord, the Lord is gracious. Because if I had finished this, I'd have to spend all week doing another message, and I have to speak so many times this week, so many places, I was praying most of today, "Lord how am I ever going to get my work done next week?" Now I just don't have any work to do. This is terrific.

Genesis chapter 16, verse 13, well, we gotta back up. Verse 7, "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness." Angel of the Lord. Verse 9, "And the angel of the Lord said to her." Verse 10, "And the angel of the Lord said to her." Verse 11, "And the angel of the Lord said to her." Now we know here the angel of the Lord is identified, but who is he? Finally she says something, verse 13, "And she called the name of the Lord who spoke unto her, thou..." What? "God. Thou God." Who is the angel of the Lord? God. God manifest, and who is God manifest? God the Son, second person of the Trinity.

Look at Exodus chapter 3, verse 2, "And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in the midst of a bush." Now you know where you are, don't you? Moses and the burning bush. "The bush burned with fire but it wasn't consumed and Moses said 'I will now turn aside and see this great sight why the bush is not burnt.' And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see" - listen - "God called to him out of the midst of the bush." What is amazing is verse 2 says "The angel of the Lord appeared in the bush" and in verse 4 it says "And God called to him out of the bush." The angel of the Lord and God are the same.

God manifest, the angel of the Lord. And if you were to look at Zechariah chapter 3, verse 1, "He showed me Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord." Now watch, "And the Lord said to Satan 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan.'" Isn't that interesting? The angel of the Lord says,

and the angel of the Lord is God, now watch this one, the angel of the Lord, who is God, says, "Lord rebuke you." Here is the Lord asking the Lord. See the angel of the Lord is one person of the Trinity, unique and yet the same. Marvelous. This is God, the second person of the Trinity, in the form of an angel, riding a horse.

Now I just want to take it a step further. Do you know who the angel of the Lord in terms of his responsibility to Israel? Psalm 34:7, don't look at it, just listen. Psalm 34:7 says this: "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him." The angel of the Lord was No.1, the protector and deliverer of Israel. He was the commander in chief of the angelic force, and He is the protector of Israel.

Second, this is beautiful. He is the interceder for Israel, the interceder for Israel. You see that in chapter 1 as we'll see, and in chapter 3.

Thirdly, He is the comforter of Israel. Genesis chapter 16, you see three distinct ministries of the angel of the Lord, protector and deliverer, interceder or advocate, and comforter or counselor. That's who He is.

So here's the scene: a group of people in a state of humiliation, about to be delivered by their glorious protector, defender, interceder, comforter. He stands ready to fight for them. What a scene. The Lord is in the midst of His people, ready to defend, ready to protect, ready to advocate their cause, ready to comfort them in their time of need. He's outside the city, ready to judge the nations and put Israel back in the right place, the place that God intended all along. He's gonna fulfill God's promise. Jeremiah said, "God will bring you back in 70 years and God will give you back the land and God will rebuild the land." And this angel, this angel of the Lord, was there ready to guarantee the promise of God. Boy that's a beautiful scene.

And you know what's wonderful about it? We'll close with this. It's a beautiful parallel to the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to His church, isn't it? Here we are, and for this time, we suffer, yea all that live Godly in this present age shall, what? Suffer persecution. Who's running the world? Satan. Satan is the prince of this world. We're not in control. We're subjected to a satanic system, and we're, as it were, in the hollow. We're in the glen, in the deep place, in the ravine. We're like Israel. We're all gathered around and huddled in the deep place and saying "How long oh Lord?" like the people in the book of Revelation crying out under the altar, "How long oh Lord?" until things are made right. And yet there in the midst of us is not only the angelic host, but a great leader, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our defender, who is our protector, who is our advocate, who takes our case to the Father, who is our High Priest, and who is our comforter. And who comforts us in the fact that someday He will come and reign as King of Kings and what? And Lord of Lords.

Listen. God is a faithful God. If God says to His people Israel, "I'll keep my promise," then He sets the great defender in motion with the angelic host to keep Him. If God says to the church, "I will keep my promise," He sets the Lord Jesus Christ to the task of keeping that promise. I don't know how it would be to live in this world apart from God. But I know it would be terribly hopeless to feel that life was unfulfilling, that hope was really hopeless, and have no promise of anybody who is standing ready to take up your cause.

Do you know what happened in the story in Zechariah? Four years later, the temple was built. 80

years later, the walls were finished. Israel was back. God kept His promise beyond that? The fullness of that prophecy is still yet to be fulfilled. When God starts to gather His people from all over the globe and bring them back for the kingdom. But you know what's exciting to me? That four years later the temple was built. Those angels did the job, and the myrtle trees got out of the valley and up on the mount. And in the future, God is going to restore Israel, and you and I are alive in a day when we can begin to see it rumble, huh? Back in the land, 1948, and that's the first time in a long time. And they're holding onto that land, and God is beginning to work a work, a wondrous work, to prepare for the re-gathering in the Kingdom. God is a faithful God.

Beloved, that's the kind of God I want to put my life into His hands, don't you? That's the kind of God I can trust with my life. God saves sinners, \_\_\_\_\_ said. God takes them to be with Him, that's His promise. Paul says "Put on the helmet of the hope of salvation." God is faithful. He's faithful to Israel in the past. He'll be faithful to Israel in the future. He's faithful to the church now, and he'll be faithful to you as you commit your life to Him. We have a faithful God. He wants to fight your battles. He wants to fight your wars. He wants to win your victories. And He just wants you to tag along and praise Him for what He's doing. That's your high joy and great privilege.

Let's pray. Father we just barely got started, and there's so much, so much to say. And probably we didn't say it very well, even what we did say. But I'll tell you one thing, Father, the thing that makes me trust you for my life and the future is because I've seen how you've fulfilled the trust of everyone who trusted you in the past. It seems to me such a shocking thing to realize the angel of the Lord stood ready to defend your people Israel, so does the Lord Jesus Christ, that very angel, stand ready to defend me, even to the place where who shall lay any charge to God's elect? It is God that justifies, the interceding High Priest who doesn't let one charge be laid against me, who defends me against every accusation, who protects me against the onslaughts of Satan, who will ultimately win the victory and give to me the eternal reward. What a tremendous truth. God thank you for being faithful, thank you for being a covenant keeping God, thank you for giving me that rider on the red horse, the Lord Jesus Christ to be my defender.

Now I would pray tonight that if there is anyone in our congregation who has no such defender, no such advocate interceding, no such comforter, that before they pillow their head in sleep tonight, they might be brought to a place of conviction, a place of trust, receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We will praise you in Christ's name, Amen.

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