

The Divine Plan for Jerusalem, Part 2

Scripture: Zechariah 1:9-17

Code: 2155

Take your Bible, if you will, and look with me at the book of Zechariah. Zechariah's the next to the last book in the Old Testament. We're beginning a wonderful study in this marvelous book of prophecy, and I know the Lord is going to richly reward us as we continue to pursue the truth that is here. We began our message last week and I really had only plans for this to be one message, and it got split into two, so we'll just give you the remainder of it tonight.

We've entitled it "The Divine Plan for Jerusalem" and it deals with Zechariah 1:7 through 17, 1:7 through 17, "The Divine Plan for Jerusalem." I think it's most exciting and interesting that in the day in which we live, Jerusalem has again become the focal point in human history, in many, many ways. The topic of the news and our eyes are focused upon that little country in the Middle East, and that one particular, beautiful city of Jerusalem. And this is not an accident. This is as God had planned it in history and in prophecy, and we're beginning to see the fulfillment. From the beginning of God's dealing with His people, Israel, that nation has had a very unique place in God's plan. God chose Israel, purely out of His own sovereign love. It wasn't anything that they were, they weren't any better, any more intelligent, any more holy, any more anything really. It's simply that God sovereignly chose them, and Deuteronomy 10:14, "Behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord thy God, the earth also, with all that there in is." Everything belongs to Him. "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people as it is this day." There in the book of Deuteronomy, it says He did it because He delighted to do it in His love. He chose to set His love upon that particular nation.

Now many people throughout the church age have asked the question why? Why did God choose Israel, and why did He not choose another nation? Well, as I said last time, there's no way to determine why He chose them and not another nation, but there is a way to determine why He chose them. And that is because He had to have a nation. He had to have a people. You say, "For what intention, for what reason?" Let me give you several.

God needed a nation of people in the world, in order no.1, to proclaim the existence of the true God. There had to be somebody in human society who would declare the truth about God. And do you remember that Israel was told, "The Lord our God is one God." In Deuteronomy 6:4, and God said, "Talk about that when you lie down and when you rise up and when you stand and when you walk and when you sit. So talk about it all the time, and teach it to your children and to their children. Let it be known to the world that you proclaim the one true God." And so God needed a nation to do that.

In Isaiah 43:21, God said, "This people have I chosen for myself. They will show forth my praise." The chosen people to declare the true God.

Secondly, He needed a nation through whom He could reveal the Messiah. In Genesis chapter 12, verse 3, God said to Abram, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And it was truth. Through the loins of Abraham came the Messiah. That's what Jesus meant in John 4:22 when He said, "Salvation is of the Jews." He didn't mean salvation is for the Jews. He meant that the one who is the savior came through the seed of Israel. So God needed a nation to proclaim His existence and to reveal His Messiah.

Thirdly, God needed a nation to be a priest among men. You know that a priest is one who speaks to God on the behalf of men, who intercedes for men, and who, on occasion, will speak to men about God. He is an intermediary, and God needed a nation to be the intermediary between men and Himself. In Exodus 19:5 and 6, it says that "Israel was a kingdom of priests." The world could come to Israel and be introduced to God. That was God's plan, although, well, it didn't always work out like that. They were to represent God and the world. They were to be His priests.

Fourthly, God chose Israel to transmit and preserve Scripture. God needed a people who would be a depository in which He could place the Word of God where it would be protected, where it would be cared for, where it would be preserved. And that's again, in Deuteronomy chapter 4 and chapter 6, why God says, "What I have commanded you, obey it, keep it, maintain it, preserve it, because it is essential to the life of all the earth." So God needed a nation to proclaim His existence, to reveal His Messiah, to be His priest in the world, to preserve and transmit Scripture.

And then fifthly, and I think this is important, God needed a nation that could show that world that He was a faithful God. The one thing that God did not want the world to do was to lose their trust in Him, or that God did not want to lose His credibility in the face of the world. God did not want a bad reputation of being a God that you couldn't trust. He might say something and not carry it through. And so God had a nation, the nation Israel, and everything that God ever said to that nation, He brought to pass. When He said "Do this and I'll bless," they did it and He blessed. When He said "Do that and I won't," they did it and He didn't. And it's always been that way.

In Romans chapter 11, the apostle Paul essentially is saying that, in Romans 11, just suggesting to you verse 26-29, "And so all Israel shall be saved as it is written, there shall come out of Zion the deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob, for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the Father's sake." God determined to love them, God determined to elect them, God determined to save them, and God will do just that at the second coming of the Messiah. Israel stands for all time as proof that God is a covenant keeping God. He always keeps His promise, and the world needs only to look at the history of Israel to see that that is proven.

Sixthly, I think the reason God needed a nation was to show man His grace in dealing with sin. God wanted to show the world that He was gracious and there's no better proof of it than to see how He blessed Israel in spite of Israel's sin. No better way to prove it than to see that if Israel was simply obedient to carry out the acts of repentance and confession that were known as the sacrifices, God would forgive their sin no matter how heinous and how awful it was. The whole system of Levitical offerings was to show one that, and that was that God was gracious and God was forgiving and as Micah said, "Who is a pardoning God like thee? Whoever forgives iniquity and passes by transgression the way that you do? Whoever removes sin as far as you? As far as the east is from the west, and forgets it?" And so, a nation was needed to show His grace.

And seventh, a nation was needed to show God's anger in dealing with unrepentance. God wanted the world to see how He dealt with sin and unrepentance, and willful sin, and Israel is a perfect illustration of that. You look at their history, and whenever there was unrepentant sin, whenever there was unconfessed sin, whenever there was prolonged and protracted evil, without any conscience about it, there was war and there was death, and there was plague, and there was judgment.

And so God chose a nation for all of these reasons, that that nation might demonstrate to the world the messages that God wanted the world to hear and to see. And Israel then was that nation. And they have become to the world really the platform from which God speaks.

This last point I want to mention in some detail for a minute. God chose Israel in order to show the world His reaction against an unrepentant heart. Back in Leviticus 26:14 God said to them, "If you will not hearken to me and will not do all these commandments, and if you shall despise my statutes, if your soul abhor my ordinances, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, I will also do this unto you. I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, the burning fever that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart. You shall sow your seed in vain for your enemy shall eat it." That means your enemies will kill your children. "I will set my face against you, you will be slain before your enemies, and they that hate you shall reign over you and you shall flee when nobody is pursuing you. And if you will not for all of that hearken to me, I will punish you seven times more than that for your sins, and I will break the pride of your power." That's pretty clear language. God says, "You're going to be judged." In verse 32, "I will even bring you into the land which is desolation. Your enemies who dwell therein will be astonished at you. I will scatter you among the nations. I will draw out a sword after you and your land shall be desolate and your cities waste." You know something? That happened in Israel's history, and it's happened again and again, recurrently in their history, whenever they have been unrepentant, whenever they have been denying sin, whenever they have failed to bow to a holy God, they have found that that has come to pass again and again and again, even in modern times.

In Deuteronomy again, the same thing indicated in chapter 28 and verse 37. It says, "And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, a byword among all nations to which the Lord shall lead thee." In other words, there might even be a proverb like this: "He's as homeless as an Israelite. He's as chastened as an Israelite, because you will be the very byword for chastening, the very byword for homelessness, for wandering." In verse 64 of Deuteronomy 28, says "And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth to the other, and there thou shalt serve other gods which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone, and among these nations shalt thou find no rest, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart and failing eyes, and sorrow of mind and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee and thou shalt fear day and night and thou shalt have no assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say 'Would God it were evening' and at evening thou shalt say 'Would God it were morning,' for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see." God says, "It's going to be awful, it's going to be terrible, it's going to be fearful, when you're scattered among the nations because of your sin and your failure to repent and turn to me."

It is precisely at that juncture in the life of Israel that we enter the book of Zechariah. This nation had been in sin, and they had not repented of that sin. They had failed to acknowledge that sin to God. And as a result God said, "You're going to get scattered again." And they did and they were taken captive into Babylon and that Babylonian captivity, as we saw last time, lasted for a period of 70 years. Look in your Bible at 2Chronicles chapter 36, that's the last chapter in the book, 2 Chronicles chapter 36, verse 14, and here's the historical setting for what had happened in the Babylonian captivity. And by the way, the principle of judgment upon sin has not changed at all. God still reacts violently against sin. But notice 2 Chronicles 36:14, "Moreover all of the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the nations and polluted the house of the Lord which He had hallowed in Jerusalem." Now it's gotten pretty debauched at this point in the history of Israel. They have polluted everything possible. Verse 15, "And the Lord God of their Fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place." He sent messengers because He cared and the messengers were the prophets and God sent them in love but verse 16 says, "They mocked the messengers of God. They despised His words, misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of the sanctuary and had no compassion upon young men or maiden, old men or him that stooped for age. He gave all into his hand, and all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the King and of the Princes. All these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels." Pretty sad to see that great, magnificent temple into shambles. And those who had escaped from the sword, those who happened to live through the terrible siege, and the terrible killing that occurred, He carried away to Babylon. And you notice the "He" in all of these verses is God really. It's God doing it, using the Babylonians as His agents.

Well, they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the King of Persia. The King of the Chaldeans, of course, is the primary "he," but behind the scenes it's God. Why? To fulfill 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 fulfill three score and seven years. 70 years, the land would be desolate, they would be carried away into captivity. And God was chastening their unrepentant hearts.

Then after 70 years, you remember what happened, God said "That's enough. That's enough chastening." And then verse 22 picks up the story from there. 2 Chronicles 36:22, "In the first year of Cyrus, King of Persia, the word of the Lord spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished." You remember Jeremiah 29:10 prophesied that it would only be 70 years. So in order to fulfill that prophecy, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, and he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and putting it in writing saying, "Thus saith Cyrus, Kind of Persia, all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, God of heaven, given me. He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people, the Lord is God be with him, and let him go up." And there was the decree of Cyrus that sent the people who wanted to go back to the land.

As we come to Zechariah, they have come back. Now you can turn to Zechariah. They have returned to the land. They've been there now for quite a few years. They've had a difficult time getting the building going because they've been hassled and harassed by their enemies. And they are rather indefensible since there isn't any wall to their city. It's very difficult, and so they have kind of lapsed into invalids and lethargy. And it's at that point that God raises up two prophets. The first one was Haggai, and Haggai stirred them to start the work. Two months later came Zechariah, and Zechariah comforted them and encouraged them to keep the work going. And Zechariah's message was this: "Keep it up folks; God's on your side. Keep it up folks; God is going to bless you. God's got great plans for you. You can be confident in God. You can believe in God. He's going to take care of you." And he just kept comforting them and comforting them and comforting them. And he was a catalyst to keep them moving in the building.

Now, in his prophecy, the major theme of the first six chapters is the comfort that God wants to give to Israel. And it comes in a series of eight visions. Zechariah, like many prophets in the Old Testament, received visions from God that are interpreted into messages and the messages are all messages meant to comfort the people. They've been hassled for 70 years in captivity, they've been hassled since they got back to their land, things aren't like they should be, it's a very difficult time, and they are sort of under the weight of it, and so here comes this tremendous encouragement.

Now we're looking at the first of these eight visions, designed to comfort Israel as they prepare and endeavor to rebuild their city. And the first one that we looked at is the one that is in verses 7-17.

Let's remind ourselves of the vision by looking at verse 8 again. The picture seen, and I think this is as far as we got last time, the picture scene: "I saw by night and behold a man riding a red horse, and he sat among the myrtle trees that were in the hollow and behind him were red horses, sorrel and white." Now, Zechariah sees this vision. Now, let me remind you of what it is that he sees. The man riding the red horse was whom? Christ, known also in the Old Testament by what title? The angel of the Lord. Riding a red horse is a symbol of what? War and battle. So he's mounted for battle. Behind him were other riders on red horses and white horses and some that were mixed reddish and white, sorrel. The white we see in prophecy has to do with victory or triumph. So there is a war coming and the idea is there will be blood but there will be victory.

And as the angel of the Lord and all these hosts behind him, we called it the God Squad last time. All the angelic hosts that are assigned to this particular thing, they are all in a hollow. And we suggested that it most likely would be where the valley of Kidron and the valley of Henuk on the south part of Jerusalem meet together. It's the lowest place. It's the hollow, the glen if you will, the bottom as the old authorized might say. And it shows them in this place, amidst a whole group of myrtle trees. And we said that the myrtle trees represented whom? The Jews, Israel. And here is Israel in a low place, in a despairing place, outside their city, not really possessing their kingdom and wondering why they haven't, and all of the sudden Zechariah says, "You may be outside wanting to possess, and you may want to restore that beautiful city and that marvelous worship and all that God has given you in the past, and you may be wondering why you're in the valley, in the hollow, but look again because right in the midst of you is a rider on a red horse who's about to start a war, and it's going to be a victory for you, and He's going to reinstate you in the place of God's divine blessing."

So it's a fantastic picture. They are outside Jerusalem, they are waiting to take the city, they are waiting to move in. It's a picture of God's humiliated people, and their angelic defender, protector, who is ready to lead the battle and win the victory, and rebuild the city. What a tremendously comforting picture this must have been to that group of patriots that had come back to reestablish their land. Chastened for a time, but about to see the end of all chastening, as the angel of the Lord was ready to do some conquering. And so that's the picture seen.

Second point: we're gonna see five facets now. The perplexity solved...the perplexity solved. Now, Zechariah sees a thing like that and naturally it arouses his curiosity. So in verse 9, "Then said I, oh my Lord, what are these." Not who are these. I think he probably knew who was represented. But he was saying, "What is the significance of this? And the angel who talked with me said to me, 'I'll show you what the significance is'." Now, here we meet "the angel who talked with me." After a lot of thinking and reading this, I'm convinced that "the angel that talked with me" is not the same as the angel of the Lord. He's different. He's another angel. Let's call him "Interpreter Angel" okay? Because that's his function. He's a special angel, and his job is to explain things to Zechariah. So Zechariah's having this vision while he's awake, not asleep. He's given a sixth sense, as it were, to perceive things that are beyond the human vision and insight. And in order to understand them, God

sends along an interpreter angel who helps him to get things clear. This angel is mentioned 11 times in the book so he's important. "What are these? And the angel that talked with me said 'I'll show thee what these are.'" This says the angel is gonna help him to understand.

Now verse 10, somehow this interpreter angel directs his attention to the rider on the horse, and he says in verse 10, "And the man that stood among the myrtle trees," and who is that? That's the rider on the horse. "Answered and said, 'These are they,'" and he's looking out at the troops behind him, "these are they that the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." So he looks back and he sees the riders on the red, the white, and the sorrel horses, and he says, "These are the ones that God has sent to walk to and fro through the earth." This is God's reconnaissance crew. This is the divine patrol, if you will. The word occurs in a military sense. The word "walk to and fro through the earth" is used in a military sense, with the idea of reconnoitering or the idea of patrolling, ascertaining the state of the enemy. And so God has His squad, His patrol, moving through the earth, just to get the up to date information on what's going on among the enemy.

You know Satan does the same thing. In the book of Job, you don't need to turn to it, it says in 1:7, "And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Where are you coming from?' And Satan answered the Lord, 'From going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.'" He does the same thing. He's on a patrol, and he's got his patrol. Chapter 2, verse 2, He says again, "Where'd you come from?" and he says, "From going to and from in the earth and walking up and down in it." Satan's all over the place, checking everything out, and so is God with His heavenly host. And that's part of why the warfare between the angels and the demons goes on all over the place.

God is on patrol, all over the earth. The squadron of the Lord has been sent out on a world mission and they've come back to report to the angel of the Lord, like the Persian monarchs. This is very fitting in this time, because the Persian monarchs used messengers on swift horses to keep them informed on everything going on in their empire. And so the Lord knew everything about the earth because His angels were moving around it, in this vision. And they give the report, verse 11. Here's our report, they're reporting in now to the commander in chief, the angel of the Lord, none other than Christ, and they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and they said, here's their report, "We have walked to and fro through the earth and behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest. We've checked it all out, and everybody's at rest."

Now, I just want to give you footnotes. Verse 11 calls the rider, for the first time, the angel of the Lord. And the angel of the Lord is none other than Jesus Christ, none other than the second person of the Trinity. But every Jew knew the angel of the Lord was his protector and defender. Every Jew who knew anything about his Old Testament, every Jew who knew anything about the history of his people, knew that there was one special angel, one super angel, who was set for the defense of Israel, and it was the angel of the Lord. What is so wonderful is that the angel of the Lord had not appeared for 200 years in the history of Israel. And now all of the sudden the angel of the Lord is

back, and all the while of those 200 years while Israel was in wretchedness, and Israel was in sinfulness, their protector and advocate and defender was not around. But when their chastening was done and repentance had taken place, He was back, ready to defend His people. Great lesson, and can you imagine how excited those people got when they heard Zechariah describe his vision as incorporating the angel of the Lord and they must have whispered to each other, "But He hasn't been around for 200 years and now He's back." Victory is imminent. What a joyous vision.

There's a great truth here people. The Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord, is our defender and protector, isn't He? Isn't He the one who takes up our cause? Isn't He the one in Romans 8 who says, "Who shall lay any charge to God's elect?" Isn't He the one who says He has justified us? Isn't He the defender and the protector and the advocate? Yes He is, but I'll tell you something. He will not make Himself known in that fashion, when we are living in a state of unrepentant, unconfessed sin. In a sense, we forfeit His protection, don't we? And He turns us over to the consequence of our sinfulness. And the moment we repentant and the moment we confess, He's back, to defend.

And now He's back among His repentant people to take up their cause and He always will take up the cause of the people who are rightly related to Him, always. And here's their report, "Everything is still in the earth." Say, "Well that sounds terrific." What does the word mean when it says "The earth sits still and is at rest?" The term literally means "relaxed, peaceful, tranquil, free from war." Now this is generally speaking. There were some little squirmishes going on, we know, in the second year of Darius, but they were pretty well squelched. And the Persians had managed to pull off pretty much what amounted to a world wide peace in their world. Shaqat, the verb that is used there, is used repeatedly in the book of Judges, to express the peaceful interims enjoyed by the land of Israel. So it means "a time of political peace." And the conditions that the angels did report is known to have existed in general in the second year of Darius. They had accomplished a peace. There were a whole slew of rebellions that had been put down, a just a little flickering of some of them left by the second year of Darius. So the angelic report is really accurate. The world was pretty much at peace.

But that word also means something else. It is a word that is used, and this is where you really have to dig a little bit to find out what they're saying. When it says "The earth is at rest," that word is used several times in the Old Testament to refer to selfish inactivity...selfish inactivity. Such is its use in the case of Moab, in Jeremiah 48:11. Such is its use in the case of the city of Samaria, the country of Samaria, in Ezekiel chapter 16 verse 49. In both of those Scriptures, the term means not a positive thing, but a negative. It means these people, Moab, and these people, Samaria, are selfishly indifferent to the plight of somebody that has a need. It's like the little plaque that says "If you can be peaceful in this situation, you just don't understand the situation." In other words, some people's peace isn't really peace, it's indifference, right? It's indifference. If you're in a society plagued by poverty and pain, and you're totally blissful, that's not really peace, that's indifference. And that is the way Shaqatis used in Jeremiah 48:11, Ezekiel 16:49.

Incidentally this is a peace that isn't long to last. It is a peace that is doomed. In fact, Haggai, the other prophet of this time, said in Haggai 2:7, "'I will shake the nations and the desire of all nations and I'll fill this house with glory' saith the Lord of Hosts." And over in verse 21, He says essentially the same thing, "I'll overthrow the throne of kingdoms, I'll destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, I'll overthrow the chariots and the people who ride them, and the horses and the riders, etc., etc.," And Haggai kept saying, "There's coming a day when these so called peaceful nations aren't going to be at peace anymore, when God begins to shake the nations."

So the nations were at peace, but it was the peace of indifference. It was the peace of smugness. Here is the question, a question that's really in the mind of the Jews, the myrtle trees and the hollow, is this: "Why do the unrighteous prosper? And why is all the world at peace and so indifferent while we suffer humiliation and we are the people of God?" So you see the contrast of the earth's indifferent peace makes the state of Israel all the more distressing.

And when you look at verse 15, "I'm very much displeased with the nations that are at ease," that proves the point. It isn't the kind of ease that honors God. It isn't the right kind of peace, it's the wrong kind of peace. It's the peace of injustice, the peace of inhumanity, the peace of indifference that characterizes, I'm afraid, many of our lives much of the time. You see, the Jews had never assumed that they could have the financial wherewithal to build the whole city themselves. They were counting very strongly on loans from the Persian government. Read that, it's indicated in Ezra 6:4. They were counting on some wealth made available to them by other nations, to help them to rebuild. But Persian wealth had been distributed in other ways and they weren't interested. And the rest of the world powers were concerned with their own interests and they were unlikely to even bother with this insignificant group of patriots.

So all was well in the world for everybody but Israel. Isn't that amazingly like today? They do it on their own, don't they? Pretty much. Little aid from here and there, mostly America, a few other countries. But they have a kind of an independence. They kind of do it on their own. They're not too prosperous yet, and I'm not too sure that the angel of the Lord isn't in the valley again, among the myrtle trees, and about to set up His kingdom this time. The rest that they had been promised by God when they came back from the Babylonian captivity hadn't come to pass yet. They couldn't rest in that defenseless state. They were still under the yoke of Gentile power. Darius was their king and he was a Gentile. They were constantly hassled by the enemy nations and the building. They were defenseless because they had no walls, no army. The promise of God for the shaking of the nations hadn't happened. Their peaceful security was unrealized and they were shaking in that hollow, in that glen, waiting for God to do something.

And so when the angelic squadron came back and said, "The world is at peace," that just made them feel worse. Why should the pagan world rest and the covenant people of God be in unrest? Is God

gonna make things right? Is God gonna balance the scale for His people?

So the picture seen, the perplexity solved, thirdly the plea stated. Watch who takes up the defense, this is beautiful. Who speaks? Verse 12: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said," - listen, who is always before the Father pleading the cause of His people? Who? Who is the faithful high priest? Christ. There He is. "Oh Lord of Armies", what hosts means. He's calling on the troops now. "Oh Lord of Armies, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against which thou has had indignation these 70 years. How long?" And here is a fantastic scene. Here is Christ the intercessor. Here is Christ the advocate, Christ the defender, Christ the protector, Christ taking up the cause of His people. Isn't it exciting? It's exciting for me to know that when I get myself into a problem and the Lord has to chasten me and the chastening goes on a little while, that the great protector, defender, who knows all things and knows the plan and the mind of God, can cry out on the behalf of McArthur, "How long are you gonna keep your mercy from him?" He takes my case, intercessory prayer, the plea stated. "How long?"

Now the reason He asks this isn't because He's ignorant. He's simply crying out to reveal Himself as the defender of His people, and it is the cry of expectation. It is the cry of sympathy, not the cry of doubt. It isn't the cry of questioning. It isn't begging. It isn't doubting. It is believing, expectation, couple with sympathy. And so the intercession is made on the basis of God's promise. And the angel is praying in conformity to the will of God on the behalf of the people. So the picture is seen, the perplexity is solved as the interpreter helps him to see the picture better, the plea is stated.

Fourthly, the punishment is set...the punishment is set. I like this, verse 13, "And the Lord," what's the next word? "Answered." You see, the second person of the Trinity always knows when it's the right time to ask the first person of the Trinity, so that when the second person asks, the first person answers, because it's time. And look at the response, "And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me," and now again it's coming through interpreter angel, "He answered," listen, "with good words," - and what - "comforting words." Draw a little line under those, "good words and comforting words." That is the essence of the whole book. It's a book about good words and comforting words. The key to the book.

But specifically the good words and the comforting words come from verses 14-17 and what they say is God will keep His promise about His city. Look at verse 14, "So the angel that talked with me said to me," interpreter angel again, "Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies," I love this, "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy." Now this interpreter angel says to Zechariah, he says, "Zech, this is no private message, fellow. Yell." That's why cry means. "Yell, Thus saith the Lord of armies, I am jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with a great jealousy. This is a message everybody is to hear, to be proclaimed to all the people, that they all may be comforted, that they all may be encouraged. And what is it? God is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with a great jealousy. God is on your side and He's had it up to here."

The Hebrew root for jealousy is kina. It means "zeal, fury, jealousy" and it is a two sided word. Zeal means love and hatred together. I think we've explained it this way: I love my wife, I love my children so much that I hate anything that hurts them. And God loves His people so much that He hates anything that hurts His people. And so it's that mixture that becomes zeal. The actual word kinain the Hebrew comes from an Arabic word, and the Arabic word means "to turn intensely red or black," depending on what color it is, with dye. To make something black or dark red with dye is the root word. And by derivation, it is drawing its attention to the color of the face that is produced when somebody becomes furious. God is really getting upset. The Greek equivalent is zalao and it means "to boil." God is boiling. Intense zeal. Listen, God has a special place in His heart for Jerusalem. He has a special place in His heart for the people, and that isn't changing. In 2 Chronicles 6:6, I love this, God says, "But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there." Did you know that? And some day yet again in the future His name will be there, won't it? And His Son will be there, reigning in the Kingdom. He says, "I have chosen Jerusalem, and the gifts and calling of God says, 'All are without repentance.'" That city is still His city. I can't help but think of that every time I go there. It just takes my breath away to realize this is God's city. In Isaiah 31, verse 5, "As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also, He will deliver it and passing over He will preserve it." God's gonna take care of His town. It's His.

So God is jealous. I think it's significant that God is spoken of as being jealous at the giving of the covenant law in Exodus 20. As soon as God established a relationship with His people through His covenant, the possibility of Him being jealous came into existence. God's jealousy is a measure of His love for His people. God loves Israel. That's right. God loves the land, God loves the city, God loves the people, still, specially, uniquely, in His plan. And that isn't gonna change. There is yet a future and a fulfillment to God's love for that people. In Hosea chapter 11 and verse 7, "And my people are bent to backsliding from me," that's true. Just imagine how many centuries of unrequited love God has endured at the hands of the Jewish people. "My people are bent to backsliding though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt Him. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? Mine heart is turned within me. My compassions are kindled together. I will not execute the fiercest of mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not enter into the city." In other words, God says, "I can't do it. I can't ultimately destroy those people. I love them." God's got plans for the city. He can't be indifferent. And so He says, "I'm jealous for my people. And I'm going to act in judgment on those who have offended them." You remember back in Genesis 12, when God first gave the covenant to Abram, and He said, "Whoever blesses Israel will be blessed, and whoever curses Israel will be cursed." Remember that? And God never breaks His covenant, never, ever, ever. He promised to preserve His people. He promised if they repented He would give them the land. And here in the time that we're looking at in Zechariah, they had repented and God was going to fulfill His promise and give them the land. It's gonna come. And in order to do that, He's going to have to destroy the nations around them because they have been antagonists and vengeful toward

His people.

So His jealousy turns to anger in verse 15, "I am very much displeased with the nations that are at ease, for I was but a little displeased with Israel," that's the idea, "but they helped forward the affliction." Well what is he saying? He says, "I am angry with a great anger." That's the literal Hebrew. "With the nations." What nations? The ones He was talking about, Edom, Assyria, Babylon particularly who had offended His people. Because they are at ease. In eight places in the Old Testament, that phrase "at ease" is used in a derogatory way and it sometimes even means arrogance. Psalm 121:4 uses it to speak of pride. They are proud and indifferent and unfeeling and careless and carnal. And you know what happens? God says, "I was a little displeased and I wanted the nations to chasten them a little bit, but you have pushed it all out of shape," at the end of verse 15. "You helped forward the affliction. You went too far." You see the nations kind of reveled in Israel's suffering. They delighted in it, they prolonged it, they intensified it. They were back in the land, the 70 years was over. God's prophets had said it, "It was for 70 years and no more, and then you are to assist Israel, but you have prolonged the agony and because of that, I am much displeased with you and you sit in your smug indifference against Israel."

You see the nations didn't grasp that God's intention was to punish for a moment, and then show great compassion. That's always the word. So the punishment of the nations is set. It's gonna come. And it came. They rebuilt their city. They rebuilt their walls. And there's yet even a future coming as well. So we see the picture seen, the perplexity solved, the plea stated, the punishment set, and last, the promise secured.

Can you imagine how encouraged those Jews are after they've heard this first message from Zechariah? It's gonna get exciting folks. We're gonna see a victory. Long suffered by God's people are going to be compensated, don't you ever think anything else. They will be compensated. God will bring justice on the behalf of His people.

I love Isaiah 40, verse 1, don't you? "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. Cry to her that her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned, for she's received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. But that's enough," God's saying, "Comfort her now." And the nations had not done that. They had not, so God was angry.

And He says, "Alright, the promise is gonna be secured," verse 16. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, 'I am returned to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it,' saith the Lord of hosts. A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. 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.'" And that's the end of the first vision. The promise is secure.

Four things there, did you see them? No. 1, return. Verse 16, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercy or tender affection, or love, bowels," literally, "deep feelings of emotion. I'm back and I'm ready to occupy my temple again." This is God saying, "I have returned to my city." And you can just feel Jews getting excited. God's back, the temple's going to go up, the shkina's gonna come back, no more ichibod, the glory is departed. Return.

Second word that I see here is restoration. Verse 16, right in the middle, "My house shall be built in it." You want to know something? Four years after that prophecy, the temple was finished. It was done, four years later, and God occupied it.

And then I see reconstruction, a third word. "And a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." What does it mean a line shall be stretched forth on Jerusalem? They're gonna lay out the city to rebuild it. God says, "I am going to return, temple worship is going to be restored, the city is gonna be reconstructed" and do you realize that 80 years later, Nehemiah finished the wall and the thing was done?

And verse 17 says, "That my cities, through prosperity, shall be spread abroad." The place is gonna gush with prosperity, overflowing. And they rebuild it, and they had some wonderful years of prosperity.

And the last word I see is reassurance. The end of 17, "And the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and so yet choose Jerusalem." Comfort's coming. What a wonderful message for the troubled little remnant. God's gonna keep His promise to His people, no matter what the world is doing, no matter how indifferent they are, no matter how it looks. What a great hope.

Beloved it's a great hope for us, I think, from two angles. God is still dealing with Israel. God's gonna deal with His people. He's going to comfort Israel in the future, gonna bring His Messiah and redeem them. But I see this same characteristic of God in relation to the church, don't you? Isn't it great to know that Christ is in the midst of His church? In many ways, we're in the valley in the world, aren't we? We don't reign in this world, Satan does. We're the outcasts. We're the ones in the hollow outside the kingdoms of the world looking in. We're the ones that the world looks down on. We're the ones who exist in a kind of humiliation, but right in the midst of us is the living Christ. And He's saying, "It won't be long until we're gonna ride in and take over this world, and I'm gonna reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

Zechariah's vision came true in the total of 80 years, all of it. But we can't leave it there, because this prophecy has double character. The prophet was also looking at the Kingdom of Messiah to come many years in the future. The rebuilding under Zerubbabel and the temple and Nehemiah of the wall and the city were very temporary and very short lived, and the temple and the wall went down again. But there's a future yet and there's gonna be another temple, and Ezekiel describes it as the

millennial temple. Read Ezekiel 40-48. And God is gonna be in it, and Jesus Christ is gonna be on the throne and the people are gonna be gathered into the millennial Kingdom, and we're gonna reign with Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and the land is gonna flourish and all of the marvelous things described by the prophets for the Kingdom are going to come to pass. The future of Jerusalem is secured in the promise of God. He will rebuild His house, He will restore His Kingdom, He will reign upon it's throne, and you and I, along with the redeemed people of Israel will come to Jesus Christ and the tribulation who look on Him whom they pierced and mourned for Him as an only son, so gather together at the feet of the King and reign with Him forever and ever. That's the future.

I'll tell you something people. When I begin to see what's going on in Israel today, I can get excited about that, can't you? God begins to lay the ground work, to build His city, to build His Kingdom. The temples have been destroyed again and again in Israel. There isn't any one there. There's no temple. But in the great tribulation, Israel again will be in the hollow. Humility, degraded, outside Jerusalem. But then comes the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and establishes the new reign on earth. The Kingdom is restored, God reigns, the temple's rebuilt, the city is built, the cities are prosperous, Zion is comforted, the nations are punished. And we go into His wonderful Kingdom.

Well, I hope you can put this all together. There's history here that already happened. There's prophecy here that's yet to happen. Both of those are related specifically to Israel. In addition to that, there is the overall character of Jesus Christ that is manifest and He is in His character, manifests toward His church, the very same spirit, the same attitude and the same power that He manifest toward Israel. So the sum of all of this is that it's a tremendous, profound word for all of us. And we glory and rejoice in it. Keep your eyes on Israel. The myrtle bushes are in the hollow, and I think the rider on the red horse is there with them. And He may be pleading to God to take back the land and judge the nations, very soon. Isn't it interesting that it will probably be at a time when the world is at peace. And isn't that characteristic of the first three and a half years of the tribulation? But they're back in their land, the scene is set, and what a scene it is.

Well, let's pray. This is just the introduction. We're going to go over this tremendous future Kingdom of Israel again and again in detail so you'll understand that we spoke perhaps in generalities tonight, but in the days to come as we look at the rest of the visions and the rest of the book, it's going to become crystal clear what's happening.

Father thank you tonight for our fellowship, for the tremendous truth of your word and its power. Most of all, Father as we look at the Old Testament, we see not so much the character of Israel, but the character of God, your power, your righteous wrath in dealing with sin, your grace to forgive, your gentle chastening that is only for a time and then restores, your undying, unending love for your people, your unfailing promises, your sure word, your great victorious conquering power, your supreme sovereignty over history, it's all there. Thank you Father for showing it to us and thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, the angel of the Lord, the rider on the red horse, the savior, the conqueror,

the defender, the protector, the advocate of His people, not only of Israel but of the church which He loves and purchased with His own blood. Thank you that that Lord Jesus Christ is available to us by faith when we receive Him and that which He has done on our behalf. Thank you Father for the tremendous, just consuming, reality that you are on our side and the history is going to end up for those who love the Lord Jesus Christ to be absolute blessing and bliss forever. Thank you for making that available to us.

While our heads are still bowed, just a closing thought or two. If you're here tonight and you have never committed yourself to Christ, history is not gonna have a good ending for you. History's going somewhere. God is fulfilling history in the nation Israel right now, and preparing things for His Kingdom. All the signs are there. He could come any moment for His church and then begin the things that prelude to the setting up of the Kingdom. And the question is, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ, so that you'll be a part of that? At the end of the book of Revelation, after everything has been said that could be said about the future, it's all been laid out, the Bible says this, "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come' and let him that heareth say 'Come,' and let him that is of thirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." When it's all said and done, the message of God to you is "Come to me," and Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me, I will under no condition, turn away."

History's going somewhere. Are you a part of that wonderful plan that God has? You can be if right now you just open your heart to Christ, a simple prayer silently in your heart, acknowledging that you are a sinner and you need the Lord Jesus Christ, and you desire that He come into your life and save you and make you a part of this plan. That simple prayer will be enough to activate the power of God on your behalf. And you can be a new creation in Christ. If you pray that prayer, I hope you do if you don't know Him. There's a transformation like none that will ever occur in the rest of your eternity and it will take place tonight.

Father I thank you for the time that we've shared in the word and the good time that we've shared with Paul Ducort and the people that sang, and just a great fellowship all day today. Bless to our hearts your truth, and Father we just pray that no one would leave who hasn't settled in their own heart the matter of destiny, that it might all be resolved in Christ and we might be able to say with John, having heard that Jesus said, "Behold I come quickly, even so, come Lord Jesus." We will praise you in the name of our Lord, Amen.

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