Zechariah 1:7-16

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 1:7–17*** (ESV)  
**7** On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of YHWH came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, **8** “I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. **9** Then I said, ‘What are these, my lord?’ The angel who talked with me said to me, ‘I will show you what they are.’ **10** So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, ‘These are they whom YHWH has sent to patrol the earth.’ **11** And they answered the angel of YHWH who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, ‘We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest.’ **12** Then the angel of YHWH said, ‘YHWH of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?’ **13** And YHWH answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. **14** So the angel who talked with me said to me, ‘Cry out, Thus says YHWH of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. **15** And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster. **16** Therefore, thus says YHWH, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares YHWH of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. **17** Cry out again, Thus says YHWH of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and YHWH will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.’ ”

1. How much later is this first vision than the introductory word from Yahuah in the prior section?

Three months. Always ask if dates have any significance. In this case I don’t see anything.

1. What significance might there be in that we are told this vision took place “in the night”?

Perhaps night and darkness symbolize the current plight of the people of Israel, and Jerusalem. The implication is that daylight would soon follow. And these words of encouragement were words of impending light in the midst of their present darkness.

1. The first thing to try and figure out, is who are the different “actors” in this vision, and are any the same, or all they all different. Look carefully at the angels and people listed in this section:
2. the man riding on a red horse (1:8)
3. the man standing among the myrtle trees (1:8 & 1:10)
4. the “angel who talked with me” (1:9, 1:13 & 1:14))
5. the angel of Yahuah standing among the myrtle trees (1:11)

Which ones seem the same or different, and why do you think so? Consider also Zechariah 1:18, 2:3, 4:1, 5:5, & 6:4 regarding “the angel who talked with me”.

PROBABLY (although we can’t say for sure), a), b) and d) are all the same being. The man came riding a horse, and was then standing among the myrtle trees. We then find out that this “man” was actually an angel of Yahuah.

The “angel who talked with me” seems to be a different angel – one that is accompanying Zechariah on all his visions, and helping explain things to him.

1. What is an angel? The Hebrew word is מַלְאָךְ **mal’ak** ”angel, messenger”.

From the root “to send”. Literally a “sent one”. A messenger, a representative, a commissioned one. Could be human or divine, and sometimes it’s not clear which!

1. Look at a few examples of the Hebrew word מַלְאָךְ **mal’ak**, such as those in Gen 10:1, Josh 7:22, Judges 7:24, 1 Sam 19:11, 2 Sam 24:16, and Hag 1:13. What does **mal’ak** really mean? When your English Bible says “angel” or “messenger”, how do we know if it refers to a “human being” or a “heavenly being”?

***Joshua 7:22*** (ESV)  
**22** So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath.

***Genesis 19:1*** (ESV)  
**1** The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed himself with his face to the earth

***Judges 7:24*** (ESV)  
**24** Gideon sent messengers throughout all the hill country of Ephraim, saying, “Come down against the Midianites and capture the waters against them, as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.” So all the men of Ephraim were called out, and they captured the waters as far as Beth-barah, and also the Jordan.

***1 Samuel 19:11*** (ESV)  
**11** Saul sent messengers to David’s house to watch him, that he might kill him in the morning. But Michal, David’s wife, told him, “If you do not escape with your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed.”

***2 Samuel 24:16*** (ESV)  
**16** And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

***Haggai 1:13*** (ESV)  
**13** Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord’s message, “I am with you, declares the Lord.”

An angel is a messenger – either human or divine Sometimes we don’t know which. We can only tell by the context, and sometimes it’s not clear.

1. The horses were to patrol the earth. What was their report, and what did that mean? If you have time, research the Behistun Inscription which tells of King Darius bringing peace throughout his empire. Was Zechariah talking just about physical “rest” or also about spiritual “rest”? Why?

“at rest”, literally “living restfully”. Hebrew יָשַׁב “**yashav**” שָׁקַט **shakat** “restfully, quietly, satisfied”.

Probably both physical and spiritual. Physical since MANY Jews preferred to remain in Babylon, content to be slaves there rather than rebuild YHWH’s house and still be slaves in Jerusalem. But also spiritual rest / laziness. The people were not aware of their sins, or at least did not care about them enough to change. They were choosing to live in ignorant bliss. In spiritual laziness, without zeal for the Father.

Such a description of the Persian Empire is confirmed by the inscription and bas-relief that Darius had incised on a rock at Behistun (or Bisitun), 328 feet above the highway connecting Ecbatana and Babylon. The bas-relief portrays the surrender of those who had rebelled against the king, while the inscription tells in Persian, Elamite, and Babylonian the story of the political unrest in Persia during the first two years of Darius’s reign, praising his feats of valor. Darius boasted that in nineteen battles he had defeated nine rebel leaders and had subdued all his enemies. So the empire was again virtually quiet by 520 b.c. Copies of the Behistun Inscription were sent to all the nations of the empire in their own languages. A fragment of the Babylonian copy survived in Babylon, and a piece of the Aramaic text was found in the Jewish colony at Elephantine (Yeb) in Egypt. While the Persian Empire as a whole was secure and at ease by this time, the Israelites in Judah were oppressed and, of course, still under foreign domination, as the next verse makes clear. *(Frank Gaebelein, Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets.)*

1. What was Yahuah’s view of this report (verse 1:15), and why? Check out Jer 6:13-15 and note the relevance of that prophet’s words.

***Jeremiah 6:13–15*** (ESV)  
**13** “For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. **14** They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, ‘**Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace. 15** Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown,” says the Lord.

YHWH was angry because “all were at ease”. Hebrew שַׁאֲנָן **sha’anan** “comfortable, carefree, secure, self-confident”.

Jeremiah says they treated the wound of YHWH’s people lightly (as if it were a scratch and not a mortal wound). They said “peace, peace, when there is no peace.” They were not ashamed and didn’t even blush at how they were living.

1. What does the 70 years refer of verse 1:12 refer to? Note Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10.

***Jeremiah 25:11*** (ESV)  
**11** This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

***Jeremiah 29:10*** (ESV)  
**10** “For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

70 years in Babylon. The time was more or less up. Would the promise be fulfilled?

1. Read the command of Yahuah to His people in Lev 25:4, and then the punishment if they would receive if they did not walk in obedience in Lev 26:27-35. Now read 2 Chronicles 36:20-21. What does this tell us about the reason for the 70 years in Zechariah 1:12?

***Leviticus 25:4*** (ESV)  
**4** but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.

***Leviticus 26:27–35*** (ESV)  
**27** “But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, **28** then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins. **29** You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. **30** And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. **31** And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. **32** And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. **33** And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. **34** “Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. **35** As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it.

***2 Chronicles 36:20–21*** (ESV)  
**20** He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, **21** to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

They didn’t walk in his Torah, and so now YHWH was enforcing it. The Sabbath rest for the land for also symbolic of the Sabbath rest for his people, He wants us to follow this!

587 + 490 = 1077 BC. Saul’s reign starts ~1051. Samuel’s ministry ~1060. So approximately for all the days of the kings, they followed a human leader and not Yahuah.

The seventy years of the exile are the seventy years of rest which the land should have received since the time of the monarchy. 70×7 = 490 years which is roughly the beginning of Saul’s reign (ca. 1040 B.C.)… The Chronicler may have intended an actual counting back to the period of the Judges. Perhaps, just as with the Passover (cf. 2 Chr 35:18 where Samuel is a reference point), Israel had not celebrated the sabbath year since the days of Samuel. If the Edict of Cyrus and the return to the land in 539/538 B.C. is the end of the seventy years, then 490 years would be roughly the early reign of Saul *(Hicks, 1& 2 Chronicles, College Press NIV Commentary).*

1. How did Yahuah’s people “further the disaster” in verse 1:15?. Consider Jeremiah 7:24, 8:5-6 & 15:6.

***Jeremiah 7:24*** (ESV)  
**24** But they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and the stubbornness of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward.

***Jeremiah 8:5–6*** (ESV)  
**5** Why then has this people turned away in perpetual backsliding? They hold fast to deceit; they refuse to return. **6** I have paid attention and listened, but they have not spoken rightly; no man relents of his evil, saying, ‘What have I done?’ Everyone turns to his own course, like a horse plunging headlong into battle.

***Jeremiah 15:6*** (ESV)  
**6** You have rejected me, declares the Lord; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you— I am weary of relenting.

They didn’t heed the prophet’s warnings. They went backwards. Instead of turning, they kept going forward, plowing ahead on their own path.

1. What was the nature of Yahuah’s words in reply to the question about when he would have mercy on Jerusalem again? (verse 1:13). And why was His response this way?

They were gracious and comforting. He is jealous of his people (1:14).

1. What does it mean to be jealous (1:14)? How is Yahuah jealous of his people? In what ways is He jealous of us?

It is a desire for **exclusivity** in the relationship. He doesn’t want to share our devotion with anyone or anything else.

1. What are Yahuah’s words of comfort? What will He do for Jerusalem and His people? What is “his house”?

He will return to dwell in Jerusalem with His people - in His house (his temple).

1. In verse 1:16, Yahuah says he will **return (Hebrew shuv)** with mercy. Reread verse 1:3. Who seems to be making the first step to **shuv** here in 1:16, the people or Yahuah?

It seems like Yahuah is taking the first step. That is his mercy. He wants us back so badly.

1. What is the meaning of the “measuring line stretched over Jerusalem”?

The measuring line is symbolic of building; of measuring for construction. And not just the House, but also the entire city shall be rebuilt.

1. See what you can learn about myrtle trees? Is there any significance in the fact that this vision takes place in the midst of myrtle trees? Note Zech 8:15 which refers to the use of myrtle trees in the making of “booths” for the Appointed Time of Sukkot. Recall that Sukkot symbolized God’s presence and His provision. Note also the reference to myrtle trees in Isaiah 41:19 and 55:13, where they are included as a description of the future Messianic kingdom blessing.

***Nehemiah 8:15*** (ESV)  
**15** and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”

***Isaiah 41:19*** (ESV)  
**19** I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together,

***Isaiah 55:13*** (ESV)  
**13** Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

Myrtle was an evergreen. Fragrant spicy oil used for perfume. Leafy branches to provide shade. **Since it was used for Sukkot it would have been an immediate reminder of God’s presence and provision, which is the point of this vision.**

A fragrant, decorative shrub that sometimes reaches the size of a tree, it was used in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles and in postbiblical times in betrothal celebrations. Its perpetual greenness and aromatic and other qualities provided a suitable setting for the inauguration of YHWH’s dominion, which is everlasting and pleasant in every way. (*Eugene Merrill, An Exegetical Commentary – Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.*)

In Nehemiah 8:15 myrtle trees, which are evergreen, are associated with the Feast of Tabernacles for making booths; and in Isaiah 41:19 and 55:13 they are included in a description of messianic kingdom blessing. Perhaps, then, they speak of the hope and promise of the future, the restoration from Babylonian exile being but the initial stage in the progressive fulfillment of that promise. The trees are situated in a ravine. At the foot of the Mount of Olives are myrtle groves in the lowest part of the Kidron Valley. *(Frank Gaebelein, Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Daniel and the Minor Prophets.)*

1. What are the three colors of the horses? The significance of the colors is not clear. Do you have any thoughts on what these colors may symbolize?

red אָדֹם **adom**, sorrel (brownish) שָׂרֹק **sarok**, white לָבָן **lavan**. Adom (liked Edom, Adam, dam, (land, blood) – picture reddish brown, like the red clay soil of southern USA. The **sarok** is not so clear although the meaning of sarok is certainly **“ruddy, sorrel, brownish”.**  The problem is that the LXX has “dappled gray and spotted” and the Peshitta and Vulgate have “variegated”. However there is no textual evidence for this. It seems the ONLY reason for it is to try and harmonize the horse colors with those of the vision of Zechariah 6:2-7.

Colors: red, brown, white. I don’t know what these colors symbolizes!! Blood (war), purity (righteousness), and a mixture of the two??

1. What is the final word of encouragement proclaimed in 1:17? Remember that this is prophecy. These are words directly from Yahuah to His people – a people that are weighted down with the worries of life. How should this message motivate them?

My struggles are not in vain. I am part of something big, that is really going to happen. Don’t give up. Keep pushing forward. There will be victory. There will be a reward.

1. Given that Zechariah is a prophetic book (and if we have read ahead, we know that parts of it CLEARLY prophesy of the Messiah and the last days), is it possible that this first vision is also a picture of the Messiah? If so, in what way?

The man on the red horse – described first as a man, and then as “the messenger of YHWH”. This could be a picture of the Messiah. Both seem to have the purpose or bringing the judgment of God upon all the nations, and allow the Presence of YHWH to dwell with man once again.  
See also John 1:1. Yeshua was the **Logos** of God. The Word – this is what a messenger (angel) brings. The word from one who sent him.

Also, Yeshua was born in a “sukkah” (probably a cave). The vision shows the man/messenger of YHWH standing in the myrtle trees, which symbolized sukkot. So there is another possible picture / connection here. Furthermore, many believe Yeshua was born during the festival of Sukkot, in which case it is possible that the sukkah he was born in could have even been decorated with myrtle at this time of year.

1. How do we see ourselves in this passage? What does Yahuah want you to learn about HIM? What does He want you to learn about YOURSELF?

Yeshua said “destroy this temple and I will rebuild it in 3 days”, referring primarily to his body, but also to the ekklesia (church) that He was building. Paul tells us that we are the temple of Yeshua, and should be living appropriately with that in mind. Therefore, WE are called to be in the process of building His church (rebuilding His temple). The mission and ministry of the people Zechariah was prophesying is a picture of our mission and ministry today – we are to all about the business of building his church (rebuilding his temple). But we have lost of focus. We are sidetracked and are pursuing our own needs – busy building our own houses instead of the temple. So these words should remind us that He is returning, and should help keep us focused on the task He has given us.