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Our True Rest/Comfort

Zechariah 1:7-17

Most of us are familiar with the story of Joseph, how God raised him up to be second in command in Egypt, and through his God given wisdom, saved countless lives! Yet have you ever taken in what Joseph went through before all his success?

- As a child, God gave him a series of dreams which indicated that one day he would be head over all his brothers (Genesis 37:5–11). That was saying something, as Joseph was the eleventh born son of Isaac and headship was

based on birth order!

- Imagine receiving such a promise from God- that you'd be powerful, obviously rich, and maybe even famous. Hopefully, you would stay humble, BUT what expectations would arise as it related to your future? You'd no doubt think of easy street... temporal blessing... the good life!
- Yet for Joseph, God's promise resulted in incredible hardship and trial.
 - His brothers resented him so much that when he was 17, they wanted to kill him (Genesis 37:18)! And when that wasn't feasible, they sold him into slavery (Genesis 37:27-28)!
 - As a slave in Egypt, initially he rose to some power in Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:1-6) only to be accused and declared guilty of attempted rape (Genesis 39:7-20).
 - As a result, he was thrown into an Egyptian prison (Genesis 39:20) where according to some, he would remain for twelve years. Here he continued to receive dreams and visions from God as well as continued neglect and misfortune (Genesis 40:23-41:1).
 - In fact, it wouldn't be until he was 30 years old before the promise God gave him as a youth would *start* to come to true (Genesis 41:46). In fact, in Genesis 44 Joseph was 41 when his brothers bowed before him!

For the majority of his life up to that time, God's promised blessing primarily resulted in pain, suffering, betrayal, persecution, and misery! I think we fail to appreciate this!

We know the story from the end- perhaps even looking with envy upon the 69 years Joseph spent in Egypt as second in command. Yet we rarely consider the brutal years Joseph spent seemingly under the disfavor of God!

That no doubt is how those zealous servants of God felt in Zechariah's day when after leaving what had become by comparison the easy life of Babylonian captivity to live as strangers and aliens in the land of Palestine — where:

- The local inhabitants clearly were against them.
- The temple was in ruins... the city in disrepair.
- Their crops had failed time and time again under a horrible drought.

I can just imagine the doubts that must have entered into their minds — for I have thought them many times, *"God! I thought You cared about me! You know my desire is simply to serve You and this is the thanks I get?"*

It was against this backdrop that God gave to Zechariah The vision we are looking at is a vision which was given to disheartened servants of God! Notice the setting.

Zechariah 1:7, "On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came¹ to Zechariah the

prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo.”

The time indicators in this verse date this vision to February 15, 519 BC — two months after the close of Haggai’s prophecy. As this is the only time indicator for this section, it is believed that Zechariah received the eight visions of Zechariah 1-6 during this one night!

It is noteworthy that the Visions of this section are said to have occurred in “the month of Shebat” (שֶׁבַט [šəbāt]).² You will note that Zechariah did NOT indicate the Jewish month in 1:1; yet here he does.³ It may very well be that this was intended to be a pun based on the Hebrew word for “sabbath”- שַׁבָּת (šabbāt). Iain Duguid explains:

Although spelled differently, ‘Shebat’ sounds like šabbāt (Sabbath). It thus poses the question: ‘Is this pagan month of Shebat really going to be the month of true “rest” for God’s people?’ (Duguid, 2010, p. 76)

This first vision revolves around the question of “rest”/“comfort”! Though God’s people were living in a dark and sinful world, where would their true comfort/rest be? Notice, the vision.

The Vision, vv. 8-11.

Zechariah 1:8, “I saw at night [that is, ‘in the darkness’ when men are unable to see what is going on.^{4,5} This is where we live as Christians! There is much in this world and in God’s kingdom that we do NOT see. It was in light of this that God gave this Vision to His people...], and behold, a man was riding on a red⁶ horse⁷ and he was standing among the myrtle trees⁸ which were in the ravine [most likely, the lowest part of the valley⁹], with red, sorrel, and white horses [in other words, three different groups/regiments] behind him.”

There have been many attempts to understand the significance of the different colored horses... all of which are speculative. If there was an intended significance to the color of the horses, the text as well as the rest of the Bible is silent.¹⁰

We do know that the vision involved angels on horseback arriving in one of the four valleys which surround Jerusalem¹¹ (the language is active, the angelic horseman had just arrived). Most likely the valley referenced here is the Kidron valley which we know could sustain Myrtle trees¹² which were large (up to eight feet tall), fragrant evergreens which flourished in Palestine at this time.¹³

Zechariah 1:9-10, “Then I said, ‘My lord, what are these?’ And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, ‘I will show you what these are.’ And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, ‘These are those whom the

Lord has sent to patrol the earth.” - we have two identified figures here. First is “the angel” who served as Zechariah’s host throughout The Visions.¹⁴ Then there is a Second Individual here who “stood among the myrtle trees.”

In v. 11 is identified as “the Angel of the Lord” whom we know to be the preincarnate Christ!¹⁵ So, though Zechariah asked his angelic guide the significant of the angelic horsemen, nevertheless it is Christ who answered him, “These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.”

The word for “patrol”¹⁶ is significant, for Persia under Cyrus was known for its “secret police” or spy network of horseman who collected and distributed information from the far corners of the Empire.¹⁷ The horsemen¹⁸ of Zechariah’s vision are the divine counterpart of the Persian secret service.¹⁹ Notice their message.

Zechariah 1:11, “So they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, ‘We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet.’”

On the surface the report sounds good. The realm of God’s Kingdom — which would have been the entire world — seemed to be at peace.²⁰ Yet in truth it was NOT! For from v. 15 it is clear that the earth’s peace was simply the absence of conflict, for injustice and inhumanity ruled the day.

In fact, the word for “ease” (שָׁאָן [shaanan]) in v. 15 speaks of a peace which arises from injustice. And the two words in v. 11 translated as “peace” and “quiet” are NOT always positive; they can be used negatively.²¹ For example, Peace (שָׁקָט [shaqat]) is used of the selfish inactivity in Moab (Jeremiah 48:11) or the “prosperous ease” of Samaria (Ezekiel 16:49). Quiet (יָשָׁב [yashab]) is used derogatorily of Egypt (Isaiah 30:7) in connection with her failure to honour international treaties.

Taking vv. 11 & 15 together, we understand that the report of “peace and quiet” in fact is NOT a good one. God’s people had been attacked and oppressed, and those perpetrating the violence were fat, sassy, unrepentant, and at ease! That no doubt is what led to the question posed by Christ.

[An Important Question, v. 12.](#)

Zechariah 1:12, “Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years?’”

The focus is on Jerusalem and its surrounding cities. Now, what makes this such a fantastic question is the knowledge of who asked the question. It is NOT the angel

accompanying Zechariah, BUT “the angel of the Lord” – the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!²² Upon the report of the angelic agents whose job it was to patrol the earth, Christ — your Savior, your Lord whom you at times get angry for His seemingly indifference to your cry — He is the one who asked, “How long?”

From this you must see that Christ truly is your Advocate! We read in this in the New Testament.

Hebrew 4:15, “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin.”-

Recall, in the Greek there are two primary words behind “compassion” and “sympathy.” The word for “compassion” is *σπλαγχνίζομαι* (*splagchnizomai*) and refers to being deeply moved- as in Matthew.

Matthew 9:36, “And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”

This facet of Christ speaks of understanding His people as they really are. Because of this, Christ “knows our frame” and “is mindful that we are but dust” (Psalm 103:14)! As such He genuinely understands the struggle we have as sinners living in a sinful world!

The word for “sympathy” as used in Hebrews 4, is *συμπαθέω* (*sumpatheō*) and goes one step beyond compassion. Biblically speaking, “sympathy” denotes NOT simply *feeling sorry* for another person BUT *involving yourself* in their struggle — which is why we read that when Christ came to this earth, “...He was tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

Now because of this — because of Christ’s sympathy and compassion — notice the call.

Hebrews 4:16, “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.”

That no doubt is the intended effect of v. 12. It is Christ who cries out to God for our justice, well-being, and care! It is NOT that the Father is indifferent; for we know He is the one behind our salvation (cf. John 3:16). RATHER, it is that Christ is a sympathetic advocate!²³

And so it was on behalf of these people whom Christ here interceded! Assyria and Babylon destroyed “God’s vine” (Psalm 80:14-15). The Edomite and Persian’s hands at this time were covered with blood. As nations, they sat back in their wealth and plenty and laughed as they attacked God’s people. This brings us to an important message.

An Important Message, vv. 13-17.

Zechariah 1:13, “And the Lord [God the Father] answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words [the word is onomatopoeic, נִחַם (*nichum*). It is the sound of relief, like getting into a hot bath after a long, grueling day of physical work!).”

Zechariah is filled with biblical references. Here he is alluding to Isaiah 40. Isaiah wrote 40-55 for the generation of believers who went into the exile. What was/is God’s message to His people living in dark times?

Isaiah 40:1-2a, ““Comfort, O comfort My people,” says your God. ‘Speak kindly to Jerusalem...””

Now, lest you think that this message is confined to the people of God in 586 BC, Zechariah makes it abundantly clear that this is God’s message to any and every generation who is mistreated by this world! So, what is the message? What is God’s word of comfort? What is it that ought to make us go, “Huh-ahh!” as we live in this dark world? It is threefold.

God Has and Will Always Care for His People, v. 14.

Isaiah 1:14, “So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, ‘Proclaim, saying, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion²⁴.”””

Note, that “Jerusalem” and “Zion” are one in the same. “Zion” is the pre-Davidic name of the city. “Jerusalem” — the city of peace — is what it would become under David (as he moved his capital there)²⁵ and under Solomon (as he moved the ark there)²⁶! It is for these reasons that “Jerusalem” became the focus of God’s redemptive work throughout the ages! To this day, it still has biblical importance.

Yet the point you must see from v. 14 is the little expression, “I am”! It speaks of what God is when it comes to His people. In other words, this is NOT what God was and could be if someday His people cleaned up their act. RATHER, this is God’s disposition toward His people at all times and from eternity!²⁷ It is this disposition that God’s people could NOT see which God revealed to Zechariah in the darkness! And what is that disposition? His “jealousy”!

When used of the creature, “jealousy” almost always carries with it negative connotations. To be jealous is to long for something which we have no right to! That is NOT God!

- Because God created us, He has the right to be worshipped and served by us. We call this The Doctrine of Creator Rights (Revelation 4:11). Yet when used of

God, the word goes beyond a statement of His rights.

- In the Bible, it also encompasses the language of love, attachment, and commitment²⁸

George Klein observed:

While jealousy strikes many moderns as a negative emotion, jealousy comprises a fundamental part of the vocabulary of love and often describes God's relationship to Israel. Jealousy describes the intensity of God's love toward his people. (Klein, 2007, p. 103)

Because God loves us, He did NOT create us to be vassals over which to tread; RATHER He created us to be His bride! And because of that, the text says that God is "Jealous for us!" — He wants our best!

Do you understand what this means? It means that though we live in dark and difficult days... though our road might be rough, God has never nor could He ever forsake us!

In other words, the story of Joseph is the story of our lives! In eternity future we, with Joseph, will speak of the difficult days which mired our beginning. Yet in eternity we will look back and confess that through it all, God was there in our midst — guiding, protecting, comforting, directing, and loving us (cf. Romans 8:38-39)! Why? Because He is jealous for us!

[Evil Men will Never Escape God's Notice/Wrath, v. 15.](#)

Zechariah 1:15, "But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry [with the theocracy], they furthered the disaster."

This is reflective of what God said in Isaiah.

Isaiah 10:5-7, "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hands is My indignation, I send it against a godless nation and commission it against the people of My fury to capture booty and to seize plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets. Yet it does not so intend nor does it plan so in its heart, but rather it is its purpose to destroy, and to cut off many nations."

God raised up Assyria to be a disciplining rod for His people. Yet, Assyria's power, sovereignty, and success corrupted the nation such that it went way beyond God's intended purpose. NOT ONLY did Assyria ravish nations near and far, BUT it took pride in the suffering it inflicted.²⁹ And so, God punished it.

Isaiah 10:12, "So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, *He will say*, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the

king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness.”

That is the same message here. The “nations at ease” are the “four horns” which in vv. 18, 19 are said to have “...scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.” These are the nations/peoples whom God raised up to discipline Judah. Yet in their discipline, they went too far NOT only in their treatment of God’s people, BUT in their resulting arrogance and pride.

The second truth God wanted His people to see was that while serving God in this world is difficult, there is accountability for any and all who make it difficult for God’s people!

It is as the Parable of the Importunate Widow who cried for justice. Do you recall the point?

Luke 18:7-8a, “Now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily...”

So Christian, don’t ever think that God is indifferent toward you or the evil our day. Currently He is being patient to allow time for repentance (cf. Romans 2:5). But the day is approaching when justice will come about swiftly (which is the idea behind “speedily” in the Bible)!

Jerusalem Will Continue to Remain at the Heart of God’s Redemptive Program, vv. 16-17.

Zechariah 1:16, “Therefore, thus says the Lord, ‘I will return to Jerusalem³⁰ with compassion; My house will be built in it,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.’”

What a beautiful promise. NOT ONLY is Christ said to be compassionate, BUT so is God the Father! He likewise “knows our frame and is mindful that we are but dust” (Psalm 103:14).

In terms of the promise here, God told Zechariah to proclaim two things:

1. That the temple would be rebuilt- which means this time God’s people would succeed; they would not be stopped or delayed! Second, the city also was part of God’s plan.³¹ In fact, “the leveling lines”- the first stage in any building project in which string is used to plot out the construction area- were already up! So even though God’s Temple and the City had been razed to the ground, the Lord still had plans for it! What were they?

Is this still God’s work today? Does He still have plans for Jerusalem — the City of Peace?

To answer this, we must understand, the way Zechariah uses this word throughout this prophecy. You will note that “Jerusalem” is NOT the literal city in which he was living at the time of this prophecy, BUT the Jerusalem above — the glorious city in which we already dwell and will dwell for eternity in the New Heavens and Earth! God said speaking of His people:

Zechariah 8:8, “And I will bring them *back*, and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem, and they will be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.”

When did this ever happen in Redemptive or world history? It hasn’t, unless we understand “Jerusalem” as the city into which we are brought through a saving relationship with Christ!

Zechariah 8:22, “So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord.”

Again, when did this ever happen in Redemptive or world history? It hasn’t, unless we understand “Jerusalem” as the city into which we are brought through a saving relationship with Christ! If that is the case, then we see this happening today! Speaking of the Messiah:

Zechariah 9:10, “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the [war] horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”-

Again, when did this ever happen in Redemptive or world history? It hasn’t, unless we understand “Jerusalem” as the city into which we are brought through a saving relationship with Christ!

Zechariah 14:8, “And it will come about in that day that living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.”

Again, when did this ever happen in Redemptive or world history? It hasn’t, unless we understand “Jerusalem” as the city into which we are brought through a saving relationship with Christ! That is the city which in the New Heavens and Earth a stream will flow out from unto “the healing of the nations” (cf. Revelation 22:1-2)

Clearly Zechariah’s reference to “Jerusalem” here is NOT the literal city, BUT the entity/body which the God established in Christ! If there are lingering doubts, consider the commentary of the New Testament on God’s perspective when it comes to

“Jerusalem”. Clearly, it was NOT the city which was rebuilt at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, which would be decimated again in 70 AD. RATHER, it is the “Jerusalem” described by Paul in Galatians. Paul is writing to a church molested by Jews whose boast was that they were the “true children of Abraham” — as if Christians were not! Now amazingly, Paul here did NOT debate the fact that apostate Judaism were children of Abraham. What he did do was explain their current lineage before God,

Galatians 4:21-26, “Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. [Do you see where Paul is going? Yes, current Jews are children of Abraham, BUT their mother is NOT Sarah, BUT Hagar!] This is allegorically speaking: for these *women* are two covenants, one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But [when it comes to the genuine child of God- whether they be Jew or Greek] the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.”

Do you understand the point? Just like “the promised land” whose ultimate reference is NOT Palestine BUT the New Heavens and Earth, so it is with “Jerusalem.” In so many of the Old Testament promises the focus is NOT the physical city, BUT the body of Christ — the New Jerusalem — of which today all in Christ are citizens! Ian Duguid put it this way:

The rebuilt Jerusalem of 515 BC was a mere shadow of the good things that are as yet still to come. God is building a new Jerusalem, a place of fulness of blessing, where every tear will be wiped away, every pain eased and every sorrow comforted. (Duguid, 2010, p. 84)

That is why this prophecy is the favorite of persecuted believers! For the hope it extends is NOT that everything is going to be O.K. BUT that Christ has overcome this world!

With this as the referent of our text, listen to the glorious promise of v. 17.

Zechariah 1:17, “Again, proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “My cities will again overflow with prosperity [this is talking about cities beyond Jerusalem], and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.””

The repetition of “again” is the language of hope! God’s plan for His people was NOT over!³² The glory and grace enjoyed by previous generations in Christ would again be enjoyed by God’s people — yet, as we have seen, in a different way! Think of it:

- If we take this as a physical promise relating to the city of Jerusalem and the

surrounding district, this promise has never come to pass. From 586 BC onward, God's people living in Palestine lived as aliens and strangers under oppressive governments. Never have they enjoyed a sustained peace in that land- not even today!

- But if we understand "Jerusalem" as did Paul in reference to "the Jerusalem above", we rejoice for this promise has and is being fulfilled right now in Christ!

In this regard, and in fulfillment of this text, "the New Jerusalem" throughout Church History has spawned mini cities/communities in which Christ is proclaimed, the peace of the Lord is enjoyed, and righteousness dwells!

In fact, notice the word "overflow" (פִּיּוּץ [puts]). In its most fundamental form, it speaks of an irresistible force working centrifugally, like a cyclone, for good or ill. Here it is used positively with the implication that Jerusalem will be like a spring of water which will overflow to bring to anyone in its vicinity the "blessing" [טוֹב (tov)] which results from God's favor.³³

Regardless of how you take the promise regarding Jerusalem, the overall point and the message given to Zechariah in this first vision is that in and through all things, God has and continues to care for His people regardless of what we might see or perceive. Clearly, ours is a glorious future in Christ! I love how Iain Duguid put it:

Things around us are not always as they should be, whether for us or for God's opponents. We don't always understand what God is doing, or why he works in the way he does: we see faithful missionaries taken from the field through cancer while partying pagans exhibit the best of health. We see churches that preach a false gospel of health and prosperity filled with worshippers, while faithful ministries often seem to attract few adherents. In situations like these, we too are often tempted to doubt God. Like Zechariah's hearers, we have a light to hold onto in the midst of general darkness, the Word of God. For us this word is made more sure, since it is now written down and attested by the witness of the Spirit. If we abandon that light and trust instead in our feelings, we shall be left floundering in the darkness. It is still true in our day that God sees, God cares and God answers. (Duguid, 2010, p. 83)

What an important message to any and all who on account of this darkness have lost their view of God! The question of the hour is: will you live in light of this truth? Will you live by faith?

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End Note(s)

¹ In terms of the 8 Visions of this section (Zechariah 1-6), they were not dreams as we think of dreams. Zechariah was awake and able to interact throughout the visions with the angel who accompanied him.

² The eleventh month in the Jewish religious calendar.

³ "The date formula given here, 'the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius,' represents the fullest date formula found in the book of Zechariah." (Klein, 2007, p. 94)

⁴ "It is perhaps significant also that the visions are received at night. The night is the time when it is dark and hard to see anything, and yet the prophet sees clearly God's revelation. In the world in which the exiles lived, it was hard to see God at work with their eyes. The prophet, however, assures them that there is more happening behind the scenes than they can see." (Duguid, 2010, p. 77)

⁵ "Night was a time associated in the OT with heightened spiritual activity, whether longing for and seeking God (Isaiah 26:9), praising (Job 35:10; Psalm 42:9[8]), meditating (Psalm 77:7), being tested by God (Psalm 17:3), and especially receiving revelation from God (Genesis 20:3; 31:24; 46:2; 1 Kings 3:5; Job 4:13; 33:15; Daniel 2:19; 7:2, 7, 13). The association with night points to the secretive nature of this revelation, especially relevant for the first vision report which presents the report of a reconnaissance team..." (Boda, 2016, p. 118)

⁶ The horse is described as 'āḏōm, a term whose chromatic range cannot be equated with the English term "red." The term is used both here and in the final vision report (6:2) to describe horses, but elsewhere to describe blood (2 Kings 3:22), grape juice (Isaiah 63:2), lentil stew (Genesis 25:30; cf. 25:34), a cow (Numbers 19:2), and human skin (Song of Solomon 5:10). The association with lentils, cow, and skin reveals that this term can be used to describe something with a reddish-brown or pinkish tone. Reddish-brown or chestnut is a common color among horses, and here, due to the fact that it appears alongside šārōq (light chestnut), most likely refers to a dark chestnut." (Boda, 2016, pp. 119-120)

⁷ "Horses feature not only in the visions but also in the symbolism of the second half of the book (9:10; 10:3, 5; 12:4; 14:15, 20, 21). They stand for domination in war (10:3), and for prestige (1 Kings 10:26). It is fitting therefore that the angel of the Lord should have at his disposal horses (and chariots, 6:1-3), to supervise the Lord's worldwide domain." (Baldwin, 1972, p. 99)

⁸ "The myrtle trees are identified as being by the deep (meṣulâ). The term meṣulâ (meṣôlâ, meṣûlâ) is used elsewhere in the OT always to refer to watery depths, whether in the sea (Jonah 2:4; Mic. 7:19; Pss. 68:23; 69:3, 16; 88:7; 107:24; Job 41:23), the Reed Sea (Exod. 15:5; Nehemiah 9:11), or the Nile (Zechariah 10:11). This definition, however, appears inappropriate in this context in 1:8, which seems to depict a scene on land, something reflected in the versions which suggest that the word here should be placed in the semantic range of words similar to the root ṣālal ('to be or grow dark') and the noun ṣal ('shadow'), that is, a shadowy or shady place. In this approach, even if the trees did not cover the rider and horses, the shadows, possibly along with the color of the ground cover, would have hidden them from others. This would then highlight further the secretive and private character of this scene where reconnaissance reports will be delivered." (Boda, 2016, p. 124)

⁹ Cf. (Baldwin, 1972, p. 101)

¹⁰ “However, such an approach, which easily slides into allegory, seems to miss the fact that the prophet’s question is not left unanswered. Zechariah receives a response to his query from the angel, who promises, ‘I myself will show you what these are’ (1:9). Yet the conversation that follows, which must be understood as giving Zechariah the essential message of the vision, sheds no light at all on the significance of the various colours of horse or the particular variety of tree, and that suggests that these details are not important.” (Duguid, 2010, pp. 77-78)

¹¹ Either the Kidron Valley, Jezreel Valley, Valley of Elah, or Valley of Gehenna (Topheth).

¹² In preexilic times, the Kidron Valley sustained a garden, cf. 2 Kings 25:4.

¹³ Boice added the following to our understanding, “...the myrtle trees of the vision probably represent Israel and are so interpreted by most commentators. The myrtle is a small evergreen that never gets above eight feet tall. It has dark green leaves and white, star-like clusters of fragrant flowers, the petals of which emit a rich fragrance when crushed.” (Boice, 2006, p. 494)

¹⁴ Cf. Zechariah 1:18; 2:3; 4:1, 5; 5:5; 6:4.

¹⁵ “The subsequent question, the identity of the angel of the Lord (mal’ak YHWH), represents one of the more important questions regarding God’s self-disclosure in the Old Testament.⁴⁷ These references to the angel of the Lord have long intrigued Old Testament students for several reasons. For one, the angel of the Lord always stands in the foreground in every scene in which he occurs, underscoring his importance. For another, he sometimes appears to be distinct from the Lord himself and at other times he seems to be one and the same with God. Perhaps the most striking example of identification with God himself occurs in Gen 16:7–12 since the angel of the Lord speaks for God in the first person singular in v. 10. Furthermore, the Old Testament contains numerous other examples where the text seems to speak of God and the angel of the Lord interchangeably.” (Klein, 2007, p. 99)

¹⁶ “The verbal root is *hālaḵ* (‘go’), the verb that appears alongside *šālaḥ* (‘send’) in those contexts where prophets (Exodus 3:10, 11, 13, 16; Isaiah 6:8; Jeremiah 1:7; Ezekiel 3:1, 4) and one military leader (Judg. 6:14) are commissioned. Unlike these other contexts, however, here the Hitpael of *hālaḵ* is used, which has a slightly different nuance, meaning ‘to go about.’ It is used to describe activity which covers an area rather than merely activity that moves from one point to the other... In the military context of 1:8–11, the verb *hālaḵ* Hitpael refers to the activity of a military person or group carrying out a reconnaissance mission or patrol in an assigned territory.” (Boda, 2016, pp. 129-130)

¹⁷ “The troops of horsemen were emissaries of the Lord sent on a world mission. Like the Persian monarchs who used messengers on swift steeds to keep them informed on all matters concerning their empire, so the Lord knew all about the countries of the earth, including the great Persian state.” (Baldwin, 1972, p. 101)

¹⁸ “The exact number of these subordinate horses is not given, although there is a multiple number of each color. Differentiation of colors suggests different groups, which in the present context would indicate martial organization.” (Boda, 2016, p. 120)

¹⁹ “Horses are associated in the ancient world most commonly with the military. Bovine animals were the principal draft animal for ancient agriculture and the donkey was used for ancient transportation (Genesis 42:26), but horses were mainly used to draw chariots (Exod. 14:9; Josh. 11:4; 1 Kings 20:1; although Isaiah 28:27–28).” (Boda, 2016, pp. 121-122)

²⁰ “The historical note in 1:7 places this prophetic section in 1:8–6:15 in the context of the Persian Empire in the wake of one of its most unsettled periods, as the monarchy shifted from one key Persian elite dynastic family, that established by Cyrus, to another, that established by Darius (see commentary on 1:1). The transition was prompted by a major revolt at the center of the empire while Cyrus’s son and successor, Cambyses, was in Egypt.¹³⁹ In March 522 B.C., a magi in the Persian court variously named Bardiya or Gaumata rebelled against his master Cambyses, claiming to be Smerdis, the younger brother of Cambyses who had been eliminated by the new king prior to his expedition to Egypt. Promising tax relief, this pseudo-Smerdis was able to gain the support of the core of the empire, prompting Cambyses to return to Persia. Cambyses, however, would never reach Persia, dying en route through a supposed accident. One of his generals, Darius, would take control of the Persian army, return to Media where Bardiya/Gaumata had taken up residence, and along with “the Seven” co-conspirators kill the rebel magi in September 522. The uncertainty at the core of the empire prompted rebellions in

many regions, each of which was put down by Darius in order, as celebrated on his famous mountain inscription at Behistun. A key rebellious region was Babylon, which revolted at the outset of Darius's rule under a native aspirant, Nidintu-Bel, self-styled as Nebuchadnezzar (III). Darius would crush this rebellion by December 522. Although Darius remained in Babylon until June 521 to establish his authority, the moment he left, the region again erupted in a revolt under Arakha (also self-styled as Nebuchadnezzar [IV]), who was not defeated until November 521. Darius's treatment of these rebels was far harsher than that of those who rebelled at first: he impaled Arakha, his nobles, and twenty-five hundred supporters in the city of Babylon. Revolts would erupt later in 519, prompting Darius to move against Egypt in 519–518 and bring that key region back into his empire. Following this expedition, the western area of his empire appears to have been secured, freeing him to move east to solidify his power as far as the Indus valley. ¶ The date provided in 1:7 comes early in 519 B.C., a period of relative peace within the Persian Empire, after the initial spate of rebellions and before the final phase of revolts which would begin later that year with the Egyptian rebellion." (Boda, 2016, pp. 108-109)

²¹ "The idiom that the NIV renders 'at rest and in peace' must connote oppression here because we know the political situation in Persia at this time was not altogether secure. Further, the peace that God's people 'enjoyed' was the type of tranquility that emerges when a vanquished nation submits under the heavy hand of her oppressor. The peace the angelic warriors observed was not the peace that would come in fulfillment of God's promise to restore Israel's well being in an idyllic fashion. Rather, the peace Zechariah described was the divinely imposed peace. In other words, this peace was tantamount to the people's resignation to endure the judgment God had foretold, completing the sentence the heavenly Judge had issued." (Klein, 2007, p. 101)

²² "The first appearance of the angel of the Lord is in Genesis 16:7, in the story of Hagar's flight from Sarah because of hard feelings between the two women. He instructs Hagar to return to Sarah, promising that she will have a child who will be named Ishmael. Then we read, 'She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me"' (v. 13). In this verse the angel of the Lord is surprisingly but clearly identified with Jehovah. ¶ The same thing is even more apparent in the next incident. In Genesis 18 Abraham is seated at the entrance to his tent near the great trees of Mamre. There "the LORD appeared" to him (v. 1). The story identifies the figures who appeared as three men. One of them has special significance and later converses at length with Abraham. He tells Sarah that she will have a son by the same time the next year (v. 10), speaking as God. Then in verse 13 we read, 'The LORD said to Abraham ...' Again, in verse 17 the text reads, 'Then the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?'" These references, and the fact that the angel of the Lord is consistently recognized as divine by those to whom he appeared, cause us to think of this figure as a preincarnation manifestation of the Second Person of the Trinity. ¶ Joshua provides us with another example. After the crossing of the Jordan River on the way to the conquest of the Promised Land, a figure appeared to Joshua standing with a drawn sword in his hand. He identified himself as 'commander of the army of the LORD' and was then worshiped by Joshua (Josh. 5:13–15). This person required Joshua to remove his shoes because the ground on which he was standing was holy, a clear throwback to Moses' earlier meeting with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5)." (Boice, 2006, pp. 494-495)

²³ That being said, don't miss that which is behind the question here: "How long wilt Thou have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been indignant these seventy years?" When Moses organized God's covenant people into a Theocracy, the Lord made it quite clear that the nation's existence was predicated upon national obedience (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28)! If as a nation Israel/Judah rejected God, God would reject- NOT His people- BUT the nation! And that is exactly what happened when in 722 BC the Northern Kingdom of Israel was wiped off the face of the earth and in 586 BC the Southern Kingdom of Judah was wiped off the face of the earth. Yet in both instances, it was the children of God who suffered individually!

²⁴ Though in 8:3 and 9:9 Jerusalem and Zion are synonymous, here the prophet appears to intend some distinction. Zion, the pre-Israelite name of the hill David captured (2 Samuel 5:7), is often preferred in cultic and religious contexts (1 Kings 8:1; 2 Chronicles 5:2; Psalm 84:5, 7), and it sometimes stands for the people of Jerusalem in their religious privilege and responsibility (Psalm 97:8; Isaiah 1:27; 33:5). This last may be the distinction here (cf. verse 17)." (Baldwin, 1972, p. 105)

²⁵ Cf. 2 Samuel 5:6-10.

²⁶ Cf. 1 Kings 8:1.

²⁷ You know that (1) before the world began, God chose us in Christ, Ephesians 1:4, (2) before the foundation of the world, it was already planned that Christ would die on a cross for our redemption, Revelation 13:8; 1 Peter 1:20, and (3) prior to the creation of this world, it was God's plan to co-reign with you over a redeemed world in eternity future, Romans 8:30.

²⁸ "Unrequited love involved God in deep emotion which the Holy Spirit was not afraid to express in terms of human emotions, anger, jealousy, love. Nowhere in the Old Testament is God portrayed as impassive, aloof, uninvolved with our world. The utter holiness of his love only intensifies the suffering involved when that love is rejected, and his desire to save men from the death towards which they are heading is something we only dimly appreciate (Ezekiel 18:23, 31, 32)." (Baldwin, 1972, p. 105)

²⁹ We see it in another text, Isaiah 47:5-9, speaking of Babylon, "Sit in silence, go into darkness, daughter of the Babylonians; no more will you be called queen of kingdoms. I was angry with my people and desecrated my inheritance; I gave them into your hand, and you showed them no mercy... You said, 'I will continue forever- the eternal queen!'... Now then, listen, you wanton creature, lounging in your security and saying to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me. I will never be a widow or suffer the loss of children.' Both of these will overtake you in a moment, on a single day: loss of children and widowhood. They will come upon you in full measure." Isaiah delivered a similar warning to Assyria in Isaiah 10:5-19!

³⁰ This "would recall Ezekiel's vision of the departure of the Lord from the temple (10:18, 19; 11:23) and of his return (43:5)." (Baldwin, 1972, p. 106)

³¹ Though it would not be completed for another eighty years (Nehemiah 7:4; 11:1).

³² "Four times in Zechariah 1:17, we hear the word 'again' ('ôd), highlighting the fact that what is in view is the fulfilment of all the old covenant promises. In place of the present curse, God's people will experience the blessings of the former covenants, because of God's sovereign will to bless his people." (Duguid, 2010, p. 82)

³³ "The picture here is not just that of prosperity filling the city, but actually spilling over into the surrounding region because of the excessive amounts. The verb here is pûš ('overflow'), one associated with broad dispersal of people throughout the earth (Genesis 11:4; Ezekiel 46:18), a land or region (Numbers 10:35; 1 Samuel 11:11; 2 Samuel 20:22; Ezekiel 34:5; Zechariah 13:7; cf. Psalm 68:2), or a crowd (1 Samuel 14:34)." (Boda, 2016, p. 153)