

Jesus Prays; God Moves (Vision 1)

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[0 : 00] Well, we turn to Zechariah chapter 1, second to the last book of the Old Testament. We read verses 7 through 17 tonight.

So Zechariah 1 and verse 7. The living and abiding word of God. On the 24th day of the 11th month, the month of Shabbat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, the son of Edou.

During the night I had a vision, and there before me was a man riding a red horse. He was standing among the myrtle trees in a ravine. Behind him were red, brown, and white horses.

I asked, what are these, my Lord? The angel who was talking with me answered, I will show you what they are. Then the man standing among the myrtle trees explained, They are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth.

And they reported to the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees, We have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace.

[1 : 17] Then the angel of the Lord said, Lord Almighty, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and from the towns of Judah, which you have been angry with these 70 years?

So the Lord spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. Then the angel who was speaking to me said, Proclaim this word.

This is what the Lord Almighty says. I am very jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, but I am very angry with the nations that feel secure.

I was only a little angry, but they added to the calamity. Therefore, this is what the Lord says. I will return to Jerusalem with mercy, and there my house will be rebuilt, and the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem, declares the Lord Almighty.

Proclaim further. This is what the Lord Almighty says. My towns will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.

[2 : 30] Well, 2,535 years ago, last Monday, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah. February 15th, 519 B.C.

And in the night, visions came into Zechariah's mind. Zechariah nailed it down to the very day. And that tells us that the Lord, our God, breaks into history, and our time, and our world, and he speaks.

It's not just our imagination. It's not just our ideas. It was 2,535 years ago this past Monday. Three months had passed since the word of the Lord had come to Zechariah for the first time.

And that was probably the last word, or it's the last recorded word that we have. And in that very first word, Zechariah had told, or the Lord had told his people to return to me.

That's where he began. Return to me. And you remember the situation as Zechariah is preaching. Little Judah, only slightly bigger than Marshall County, with the same population as Marshall County, is stuck, and they're depressed.

[3 : 57] They're stuck in their circumstances, stuck in the past, stuck in their low spiritual state. And God's first word to them, in their low condition, in their sad situation, is return to me. Have dealings with me. Come and speak with me. Get right with me. So they needed to repent. And they needed to show their repentance in getting to work on the temple. You remember they had built the foundation stones of that temple, and then opposition had come, and they weren't able to continue it. And so that temple, with its foundation stones, was a picture of their spiritual situation. They were low. And they needed to get to work. They needed to be revived. And Zechariah says they needed to repent. And last week, it said that they did repent. And they repented. And so this big rock started moving. So they had been stuck, and now they're getting going.

[5 : 04] And I think you know, as much as anyone, as much as I do, that sometimes the hardest part of doing something is the very first step, is actually getting started on it. Because when you're first starting out, it can be so hard, and so frustrating to change momentum, and the going can be so slow, and we can really start to ask, is it worth it? Is there any point to doing this when it's so difficult? And so that's about two, two and a half, three months later, the word of the Lord comes to Zechariah to encourage God's people, because those very first steps can be the hardest ones. So there was a man back in the 40s who borrowed some money from his father-in-law to open up a Ben Franklin five-and-dime store. And that first year, he worked really hard, lots and lots of hours, and he made a whopping \$4,000. So should he give up? Should he quit?

[6 : 08] Because he only has one little store, and it's making just a little bit of money. Well, Sam Walton was going places. And he was going to do a lot more than just run a five-and-dime store in Arkansas. And so a day of small things can be discouraging. It can be very discouraging. And that's where Judah was, and that's when the word of the Lord came to Zechariah. And what an encouraging word it was. So imagine going to Sam Walton when he's running that little five-and-dime store in Arkansas and telling him, one day you are going to be the richest man in the whole world. And this is how it's going to be.

And you're going to have this. And you're going to grow and grow and grow until there's thousands of, not Ben Franklin's, but Walmarts named after you. Well, that would be an encouragement to Sam, wouldn't it?

And that's what we get. That's what Judah gets. The word of the Lord comes and says, this is what is going to happen. And they're going to be a transformed people, a spiritually revived people, a forgiven people, a spiritually empowered people, a prosperous people.

[7 : 17] God was going to come to them and bless them in such a way that later on, we're going to say, he's going to say, the walls of Jerusalem, it's going to be too big to even contain your city. It's going to be so big. God would come and live with them and sin would leave. And the very last picture of chapter six is there is a high priest and he has a crown on his head. Well, that's what you see in chapters one through six of Zechariah. It's a series of eight connected visions with a dramatic play, a divine play, a prophetic picture at the end. So Ebenezer Scrooge, you remember, he had three visions this one night and it changed him forever. Well, he never saw anything like what Zechariah saw.

And so these eight connecting visions that all happened on this one night, they are connected. There's this clear story. There's this clear progression from the beginning to the end.

[8 : 35] And so what we read today is, this evening, is the horses, it started out with horses surveying the earth. The eighth vision, the very last one, it shows horses, this time attached to chariots, and they're leaving the temple of the Lord, not going to get the lay of the land, but going to make war and to make peace, to establish peace on this earth.

So the first and the last have to do with horses. In visions two and three, God comes to Jerusalem and builds it up. And then in visions six and seven, so next to the last two, sin leaves, evil leaves the land.

And in the middle, the two longest visions, visions four and five, sin is dealt with, and the Spirit empowers God's people.

So what's driving this great change? What's going to drive this whole situation and this whole experience? Well, it's those visions in chapter four and five, or the fourth and fifth visions of sin being dealt with, cleansed and washed, and then the Holy Spirit coming and changing these people.

This was going to be something that God was going to do for Israel. And then that last, that last of all, that it's not a vision, but it's this real life prophetic act where Joshua the high priest is given a crown to wear.

[10 : 11] And the Lord says, behold, here is the man whose name is the branch. Now, do you remember that the old Christmas hymn?

It's in our hymnal. It begins, here is the, it begins, behold, a branch is growing. Behold, a branch is growing.

And Isaiah hath foretold it in words of promise sure, and Mary's arms enfold it.

A virgin, meek, and pure. So Isaiah hath foretold it. Isaiah had foretold that out of a stump would come a branch. And this branch would come from the stump of Jesse, and it would bear fruit.

And it says that the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him. Spirit of power, counsel, and wisdom. And he is going to judge the nations with righteousness. And he will strike the earth with a rod of his mouth.

[11 : 22] And when his kingdom comes, when this branch, when his kingdom comes, the wolf will lie down with the lamb, and the same little child will have, lead a lion with one hand and a baby calf with another.

He's going to bring peace upon the earth. That's the branch. That's the branch that Zacharias sees. That's what God is saying. This is what's going to happen, and this is who is going to come. And so out of this stump, and we've been talking about this, the people in Zacharias' day are stuck.

They're hardly going anywhere. And what is more stuck than a stump? But out of a stump will come a branch that will bear fruit, and that fruit will spread across the whole world.

So, Judah is stuck in the day of small things, but they are going places. They are going places. God's going to break in, and he does break in, and he encourages his discouraged people.

And look at how he does it. Just as we're getting this survey look of these eight visions and this ninth vision, look at what he's going to do.

[12 : 30] Or look at how he encourages his people. He says, look at him. Look at Jesus. Look at who's coming. Look at what my, that my kingdom is coming.

So how does God encourage people? He shows them Jesus. And he says, look at his kingdom. Look at what he is going to do. The king is on his way, and he's going to deal with sin, and he's going to bring the spirit.

So, we learned about Barnabas today. How can you be a Barnabas? How can you be an encourager? Well, how does God encourage people? He tells them the truth.

He tells them the gospel truth. See, again, we don't have to have some sort of power inside of ourselves to encourage other people.

We have the truth. Truth about Jesus. Truth in season. How do you encourage people? Truth in season. Truth winsomely presented.

[13:32] Truth with compassion. Discouraged people don't need blunt force trauma with the truth. They need encouragement. But, whatever the case, it's gospel truth, and that is the, what God uses to encourage his people.

So, that's the big picture of Zechariah 1-6. These eight connected visions with a divine play, a prophetic act at the end, saying, the kingdom of God is coming. And so, the whole of Zechariah is teaching God's people who are stuck to begin to pray, your kingdom come.

Because when your kingdom comes, then I will be what I want to be, and I will be where I want to be, and the world will be what it ought to be, and people will be doing what you want them to do.

And so we, so Zechariah teaches us to pray that your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, because when your will is done on earth, it is a beautiful thing.

So let your will be done. And so now, this evening, we come to the first vision. We had it read. I had it read.

[14:48] And so let's, first of all, meet the main, the characters. The characters. And of course, the first character is Zechariah. We don't want to miss him. He's the prophet.

He's standing in for God's people. He's the one who's going to go from scene to scene, from vision to vision. And he's there on our behalf so that we can see what God has planned.

So Zechariah is one of the characters. Another one of the characters in the vision is the angel who was talking to me. The angel who was talking with me. Now, he's an interpreting angel.

An interpreting angel. One of the, an angel to lead Zechariah and explain these things to him. Now, if you read Revelation, the apostle John had an angel to lead him through the whole revelation, through the, all the different visions to explain things to him.

Ezekiel, in the very last chapters of his book, he gets this, a prophetic view of the temple to come and it's this heavenly picture and there's an angel that leads Ezekiel through the whole temple.

[15:56] A tour guide of the temple to come and Ezekiel can talk to him and the, and the angel explains it to him. When Daniel had visions, Gabriel came and explained them to him. And so here is Zechariah.

He is being led by an angel through these visions and he shows up again and again and he's usually referred to as the angel who was speaking with me. So there's Zechariah, there's the interpreting angel and in verse 8 you meet the main character of the first vision.

there before me was a man riding on a red horse. Well who is this man? Well verse 11 says he's the angel of the Lord.

He's the angel of the Lord. So he is the Lord but he also speaks to the Lord. Who is that? Verse 12 says the angel of the Lord said, Lord, how long?

So this angel who is the Lord is now praying to the Lord. Well who is that? Who is the Lord who prays to the Lord? In chapter 3 Joshua, the high priest is standing before the angel of the Lord and now the angel of the Lord is the judge.

[17:15] And on one side is Satan and on the other side is this angel of the Lord and Satan is accusing Joshua and verse 2 says the Lord said to Satan the Lord rebuke you Satan.

Let me repeat that. The Lord said to Satan the Lord rebuke you Satan. So the Lord says the Lord rebuke you. So in chapter 1 the angel of the Lord is praying for God's people and in chapter 3 he's defending them against the accusations of the devil.

So who is the angel of the Lord? It's Jesus Christ. He's the Son of God before he became a man. And so here he is a man yet the angel of the Lord and he's riding on a horse.

You remember he showed up in the book of Joshua before they were going into the land he meets the commander of the armies of the Lord and it says Joshua fell down on his feet and the angel of the Lord said take off your sandals Joshua the ground you're walking on is holy.

So now here he is the commander of the armies of the Lord and he's outside of Jerusalem and he's on a horse and he's waiting.

[18:26] So it's a military picture of a commander on his horse waiting and Zechariah looks around and he finds himself in this vision in a dark gloomy valley.

The myrtle trees are overhead and they're casting their shadows down and the hills are looming overhead so it's a dark place it's a gloomy place and behind the man on the horse are more horses and some are red and some are brown and some are white and maybe the colors mean something.

They probably don't. A lot of people have guessed and probably most of them have guessed wrong. It doesn't say and so to say is just to speculate.

But Zechariah tells us what we need to know. He says, who are they? Who are these horses? These are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth. They're the reconnaissance unit of the Lord's army.

They've gone out. They've had a look around. They've got the lay of the land. And where have they gone? They've gone to the whole earth. So back then in Persia if the king of Persia wanted to know what's going on he would send out his reconnaissance unit.

[19:47] If he had a messenger to send he would put a man on a horse and send that messenger across to some far away place in his kingdom. But now and we get something similar here.

Here's the Lord. He's the king. He's ruling over all. And does he have soldiers on the earth? Is he aware of what's going on? Yes he is.

And where does his kingdom stretch? Where are its boundaries? Where can he send his messengers? Well they're going throughout the whole land throughout the whole earth. And so our Lord rules in the midst of his enemies.

Where is his kingdom? He's exercising its authority even here. So the angels range through the whole earth. So God tells us about angels not so that we could worship them and not so that we could pray to them and not so that we could get caught up thinking about them all the time but he tells us about them to ensure us that there are more for us than there are against us.

And he tells us about them so that we can understand that his power and his authority and his care is there. It's here for us.

[21:10] So we've met the characters. You have Zechariah. You have the guiding angel. You have the angel of the Lord the son of God who loves his people. You have the angelic scouts who have now gone throughout the whole earth and now they're coming back to report to their commander and now we get to listen in on the writer's report.

The writer's report. And they say we have gone throughout the earth and found the whole world at rest and in peace. Well that sounds like good news, doesn't it?

Sounds like good news. Men are prospering. The nations are secure. People are thriving. Everything is at peace. Sounds like good news. Well it is good news if this world is the only world you care about.

And it is good news if you're happy with the kingdoms of men. The nations are strong. The people of God are weak. The nations are getting what they wanted but here's the city of God forgotten.

Abandoned. Apparently abandoned. Apparently forgotten. And so that's the report. It's good news if you're the world but it's bad news if you're God's people.

[22:30] And as soon as the angel of the Lord hears the report he breaks out in prayer. He breaks out in prayer. And so now we've come to the third place.

The third point. We see Jesus' prayer. We see Jesus praying. Jesus praying. And he says Lord Lord Almighty how long?

How long? Now when do we pray how long? When does David pray how long oh Lord? Is it when you're happy? Or is it when you're sad and you want something to change?

How long? Well that's the great prayer of God's people throughout the ages. Hasn't it been that? David prayed how long Lord? Will you forget me forever?

The martyrs under the throne in Revelation are saying how long? How long? Well before it was in any of their hearts it was in Jesus' heart.

[23:35] How long oh Lord? Someone once said that prayer is God talking to himself through us. And there's all sorts of bad ways that that can be taken.

and in all sorts of ways that it's not true. But at least hits on this one truth that what we pray for is something that God has put into our hearts.

It's so much of the time it's his desires that he's now put in us. It's the spirit of Christ in us teaching us to pray of a father. And so before we ever prayed how long it was in Christ's heart.

How long until you bless them Lord? How long until you do them good? And so when we're stuck when we're spiritually depressed and in this whole time of living here and our groaning Jesus' heart is sympathizing with us.

He's sympathizing with us and he prays for us. And so Jesus cries out with all the pain that's in our hearts and all the pain that are in God's people's heart as they're sitting there in the broken down city how long?

[24:47] So he isn't just sitting in heaven ruling serenely over all and unaffected by his people's sorrows. He is our priest and he prays for us.

He is our advocate the one who goes to the Father in our defense and for us. And what an encouragement when we can hardly pray for ourselves when we can hardly pray for ourselves Jesus prays.

And when we can hardly hope or dream for anything greater than what we have now Jesus prays for us. And when Jesus prays God answers.

When Jesus prays God answers. And then you see it right away in verse 13 and so the Lord answered. So the Lord spoke kind and comforting words to the angel who talked with me.

When Jesus prays the Lord answers. And when Jesus prays for his people the Lord answers immediately. So the Lord talks to the angel and the angel talks to Zechariah.

[25 : 56] So we've heard Jesus' prayer and now we hear the Lord's response. How is the Lord going to respond to a praying Jesus? To a pleading Jesus? Well first the Lord tells us how he feels.

And that's good. Because we want to know what's going on in someone's heart. What's going on inside of them? How are they responding to me? And so the Lord tells us how he feels.

He says I am very jealous for Jerusalem. I am jealous with jealousy. It's like my jealousy is filled up with jealousy. It's something like that idea.

So does God feel anything for his people? Does God feel anything for you? He feels jealousy. He feels jealousy. These are his people and here are his people.

They're broken. They're suffering and he feels jealous. He's going to save the day and he wants to save the day. These are his and he loves them. And that's us Christian. That's you.

[26 : 53] So the Lord says these are mine. I'm going to bless them. I'm going to do them good. And so he isn't content. He isn't satisfied with the way things are and he's not content to leave his people stuck.

If you are stuck in your spiritual situation it's not because the Lord is just completely happy with that. He is jealous. They're his and he is theirs.

And then he says I'm angry. And those two things go together. Jealousy and anger are often found together. And he is jealous because of the way the nations have been treating his people.

I'm very jealous for Jerusalem but I'm very angry and the idea is I'm angry with anger with the nations that feel secure. So here the nations are. They feel so secure.

They feel so untouchable, so strong. And isn't that our world? Click on any news channel. Look at the politics and the whole news cycle.

[27 : 54] So untouchable, so unconcerned with God. They've mauled God's people and they are sure that there's nothing to fear.

Isn't that our world? Show me the nation that fears the Lord. they don't need God's help. They don't need God's word.

Who is going to bring them down? Well the world thinks it has a lot of problems. And it names them poverty and inequality and terrorism.

And those are all problems. They're all man-sized problems. But do they fear God? Do they count God as one of their biggest problems?

What are we going to do about him? And he is one of their biggest problems because God is going to, the Lord Jesus is going to crush the nations with the iron scepter and dash them to the ground like pottery.

[29 : 00] And they go on their way and they're smug and dependents. Unconcerned, treating God's people however they want. God's side.

And again, from our side, we can begin to think, does God even notice? Does God care about this? Does he see what's happening to us? And God says, I am very angry. I am very angry. Now just to put that into context, when he had the Babylonians come in and destroy Jerusalem and burn the temple to the ground and burn the walls to the ground and destroy everything and send his people packing out of the country?

That's what he says in verse 15, I was only a little angry when I did that. Does that put context in what kind of anger he has?

I was a little angry. If that's a little anger, what does very angry look like? Well, he's angry because they feel secure.

He's angry because they added to Jerusalem's calamity. They ganged up on her. They took it too far. God used them to discipline Jerusalem, but they took it too far.

[30:18] They delighted in evil. They delighted in the pain that they were giving. And now when God sees what they did to his children, he is very angry. And so he opens up his heart and he says, yes, I know the circumstances.

Look, like, I don't care. But this is how I feel. This is what's really going on. And in the next part of the Lord's response, he tells us his plan.

Because feelings without actions, they're not good enough. The apostle John says, let us love not with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth.

And so God is going to put some actions and some truth behind what he said. And he says, I'm going to come and I'm going to bring mercy. So here comes the Lord and he's carrying huge baskets of mercy to Jerusalem.

So the city is going to be rebuilt. What was broken down, I'm going to rebuild it. And what was thrown to the ground, I'm going to build it back up. I'm going to put it back up. And so now there's not going to be any more disgrace, no more shame.

[31:25] The measuring line will be stretched out. The idea is we're going to have a great building project. If you've ever built anything, if you've ever laid out the land or a foundation, you know you have to stretch out the measuring line.

You have to decide where the walls are going to be. And God's saying, I'm going to stretch out the measuring line. And what was no construction going on, the city's going to be built up.

I'm going to do them good. And so God says, I'm going to come to them and I'm going to lift them right out of their low state. I'm going to lift them right out of their sorrow and their misery.

And I'm going to take them right out of their stuckness and get them moving. And so then he says, that's my plan and this is now how I'm going to bless. This is now how I'm going to bless them.

So how does God respond to Christ's prayer? He opens up his heart. He says, now I have a plan. And then he says, this is how I'm going to bless. Verse 17 says, it's going to be overflowing prosperity.

[32:26] prosperity. And Haggai, which is the twin book to Zechariah, they said, you've been going to the grain pile and you've looked for 20 measures of wheat and you've only found 10 and you've gone to the wine and you look for 50 and you only found 20.

And he's saying, no more of that. It's going to be overflowing. Your vats of wine will overflow. No place to put it all.

And then he says, I will once again comfort and choose Jerusalem. in a way the Lord had turned his back on them when they went into exile.

He had treated them like they weren't even his own. And now God says, I'm going to once again come to them and comfort them and choose them. I'm going to turn my loving attention on them.

So once again, God says, I'm going to shower my love on her. I brought them sorrow. I let them go into exile. But now I'm going to bless her again.

[33:32] So if I could just boil this vision down to just a few lessons, it would be this. Lesson number one, God knows where we are. God knows the situation.

That's what's pictured with these angelic writers. they're going out throughout the whole land. And so God knows where you are.

He knows your heart aches. He knows your sorrows. He knows the sins that so easily entangle you. He knows the circumstances you're in. He's completely aware. He knows.

Lesson number two, if you're a Christian, you have a Savior who prays for you. You have a Savior who prays for you. We saw, didn't you see Jesus' heart for his poor, stuck, distressed people.

He prays how long? And so we can go to him. We can go to him and pour out our hearts to him.

[34 : 35] And he's sympathetic. He has an open ear. He has an open heart. And he prays. Lesson number three is this.

God isn't sitting on the sidelines. God isn't sitting on the sidelines watching you struggle all alone. When they repented, he began to comfort them.

He told them how he felt. He told them what he was going to do. He told them the blessings he was going to bring them. And so he doesn't want us. He didn't want them, and he doesn't want us just struggling along thinking that it's just me versus the world.

No, he's invested. invested. He's invested in you. How can you tell if someone's invested in you? Well, they get jealous.

They're jealous for you. And they get angry when you get hurt. And there he is. He's jealous and he's angry. He has mercy for his people. He's in it for them.

[35 : 39] And he's saying, my king is coming to bless them. And so where does this series end up? Well, again, it ends up with Jesus.

And didn't the king come? He came gentle, riding on a donkey, bearing the sorrows and the griefs and the sins of his people. And he came and he took all of our sin, and he came and he won us heaven, and he won us home.

So he came gentle, riding on a donkey, but he also came as a mighty warrior to crush our enemies underneath our feet. And so he is coming, he did come, and he's coming again, and to finish what he started.

And he's coming to shake the smug world to its knees. So when you see the world acting like there is no God and there's no fear of God before their eyes, just realize that's the way it is now.

It's not the way it's always going to be. God is very angry, and he's coming to bless his people with prosperity and love forever more. And so you aren't stuck.

[36 : 46] And you aren't stuck for this one main reason. Because the Lord isn't done with you. He's not done with us. And he's not done with this world.

Things aren't set in concrete. They are moving to the end. They are moving to Jesus' second coming. And so as Hebrews says, therefore, strengthen your weak arms, your feeble arms, and your weak knees.

Strengthen them. Be strong in the Lord and his mighty strength. And if you're stuck, it's time to get moving, and you can get moving, because the Lord is not done with you yet.

The Lord is not done with this world yet. Let's pray. Our great God, we thank you that you are the king of all of history, and you know where we are on the timescale.

You know where we are in our country, in our nation. You are aware, and you are active, and you are bringing all things to pass, and you are working out your plan, and you are ruling in the midst of your enemies, and we thank you for that.

[37:58] If we didn't have that, if we didn't have your sovereignty, and your power, and your promises to hold on to, we would be the most miserable of all people. But you are for us, and your heart is for us, and your plan is for us, and your purposes, and your power are all for us.

And so, we thank you that we don't have to stay where we are, but we can be encouraged, we can strengthen our arms, and strengthen our feet, and get moving again.

I pray for my brothers and sisters who are discouraged, and who might be stuck in a certain place. Oh, revive them, Lord. Lord Jesus, pray for them, and powerfully intercede for them, and pour out your spirit upon them, and give them strength to get going.

And I pray that for each one of us, you know the places in each one of our hearts where we are wrestling, and hardly making any ground against sin, and against the world.

Will you please come and empower us? And please come and rescue. Thank you again for that picture of Saul of Tarsus. Pray that you would work powerfully salvation this week.

[39:13] Bring your truth into the minds of unbelievers, and may your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That is our great hope.

That is what we want, because your will is wonderful, and your will is good, and your will is wise, and kind, and gracious, and so we want your will to be done.

And we long for the day when heaven and earth will be one. Please give us grace and faith to persevere to that day.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.