
ZECHARIAH 1: 1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the LORD's word came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying,

Zechariah, the eleventh of the twelve minor prophets, was son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo. He returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel: and began to prophesy in the second year of the reign of Darius, son of Hystaspes, in the year of the world 3484; before Christ, 516; before the vulgar era, 520; in the eighth month of the holy year; and two months after Haggai had begun to prophesy.

These two prophets, with united zeal, encouraged at the same time the people to go on with the work of the temple, which had been discontinued for some years.

The time and place of the birth of Zechariah are unknown. Some will have him to have been born at Babylon, during the captivity; others think he was born at Jerusalem, before the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were carried away. Some maintain that he was a priest; but others affirm that he was no priest. Many say he was the immediate son of Iddo; others believe, with much more reason, that he was son of Berechiah, and grandson of Iddo.

He has been confounded with one Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, who lived in the time of Isaiah; and with Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist; which opinion is plainly incongruous. Lastly, he has been thought to be Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom our Savior mentions, and says he was killed between the temple and the altar; though no such thing is anywhere said of our prophet. A tomb is shown to this day at the foot of the Mount of Olives, which, it is pretended, belongs to the prophet Zechariah. Dorotheus maintains that he was buried in a place called Bethariah, one hundred and fifty furlongs from Jerusalem.

Zechariah is the longest and the most obscure of all the twelve minor prophets. His style is interrupted, and without connection. His prophecies concerning the Messiah are more particular and express than those of the other prophets. Some modern critics, as Mede and Hammond, have been of opinion that the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of this prophet were written by Jeremiah; because in Matthew, Mat 27:9, Mat 27:10, under the name of Jeremiah, we find quoted Zechariah; (Zac 11:12); and as the aforesaid chapters make but one continued discourse, they concluded from thence that all three belonged to Jeremiah. But it is much more natural to suppose that, by some unlucky mistake, the name of Jeremiah has slipped into the text of St. Matthew instead of that of Zechariah.

The prophet Zechariah exactly foretold the siege of Babylon by Darius, son of Hystaspes. This prince laid siege to that rebellious city at the beginning of the fifth year of his reign, and reduced it at the end of twenty months. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had foretold this calamity, and had admonished the Jews, that inhabited there to make their escape when they perceived the time draw nigh. Isaiah says to them, "Go ye forth to Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans; with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob." And Jeremiah says, "Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks." And elsewhere, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul; be not cut off in her iniquity: for this is the time of the Lord's vengeance, He will render unto her a recompense." Lastly, Zechariah, a little before the time of her fall, writes thus to the Jews that were still in this city: "Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of heaven, saith the

Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you, for he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me." It is probable that the Jews took advantage of these admonitions, and returned from Babylon into their country; or, at least, withdrew into a place of more security till the city was taken. We do not hear, either from the history or the prophecies, that they suffered any thing by this siege, or that Darius, son of Hystaspes, bore them any grudge for the revolt of Babylon; which seems to indicate that they had no part in it.

The Mohammedans do not distinguish between the prophet Zechariah, and Zachariah the father of John the Baptist. Some of them make him to be descended from David; and others, from Levi. By an anachronism that is still more insupportable, these confound Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, with Mary or Miriam, the sister of Moses, which they derive even from the Koran itself.

The author of Tarik Montekhib relates that, when Jesus Christ was born of the virgin the prophet Zechariah could not believe that a child could be born without a father; and that, declaring his sentiments upon this point, the Jews entertained a suspicion of him, and obliged him to betake himself to flight. He withdrew; and hid himself in a hollow oak, which the Jews sawed in two.

Such is the ignorance of the Mussulmans as regards the history both of the Old and New Testaments.

The prophet earnestly exhorts the people to repentance, that they may escape such punishments as had been inflicted on their fathers, Zac 1:1-6. The vision of the horses, with the signification, Zac 1:7-11. The angel of the Lord successfully intercedes in behalf of Jerusalem, Zac 1:12-17. The vision of the four horns, and of the four carpenters, Zac 1:18-21.

Verse 1

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius - This was Darius Hystaspes; and from this date we find that Zechariah began to prophecy just two months after Haggai.

Son of Iddo - There are a number of various readings on this name, ידִי Iddo, and אִידוֹ Iddo, both in MSS. and in editions; but they are only different ways of writing the same name.

ZECHARIAH 1: 2 "The LORD was very displeased with your fathers.

Verse 2

The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers - For their ingratitude idolatry, iniquity, and general rebellion.

ZECHARIAH 1: 3 Therefore tell them: Thus says the LORD of Armies: 'Return to me,' says the LORD of Armies, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD of Armies.

Verse 3

Turn ye unto me - This shows that they had power to return, if they would but use it.

And I will turn unto you - I will show you mercy and grant you salvation, if you will use the grace I have already given you. Men are lost, because they turn not unto God; but no man is lost because he had not power to return. God gives this, and he will require it.

ZECHARIAH 1: 4 Don't you be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying: Thus says the LORD of Armies, 'Return now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings;' but they did not hear, nor listen to me, says the LORD.

ZECHARIAH 1: 5 Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?

Verse 5

Your fathers, where are they? - Israel has been destroyed and ruined in the bloody wars with the Assyrians; and Judah, in those with the Chaldeans.

The prophets, do they live for ever? - They also, who spoke unto your fathers, are dead; but their predictions remain; and the events, which have taken place according to those predictions, prove that God sent them.

ZECHARIAH 1: 6 But my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, didn't they overtake your fathers? "Then they repented and said, 'Just as the LORD of Armies determined to do to us, according to our ways, and according to our practices, so he has dealt with us.'"

Verse 6

Did they not take hold of your fathers? - Every thing happened according to the predictions, and they were obliged to acknowledge this; and yet they would not turn from their evil way.

ZECHARIAH 1: 7 On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the LORD's word came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, the prophet, saying,

Verse 7

Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month - This revelation was given about three months after the former, and two months after they had recommenced the building of the temple.

Sebat - Answers to a part of our February. See Hag 2:18.

ZECHARIAH 1: 8 "I had a vision in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in a ravine; and behind him there were red, brown, and white horses.

Verse 8

I saw by night - The time was emblematical of the affliction under which the Jews groaned.

A man - An angel in the form of a man: supposed to have been the Lord Jesus; who seems to have appeared often in this way, as a prelude to his incarnation; see Jos 5:13; Eze 1:26; Dan 7:13; Dan 10:6. The same, probably, that appeared to Joshua with a drawn sword, as the captain of the Lord's host. Jos 5:13-15.

A red horse - An emblem of war and bloodshed.

Among the myrtle trees - This tree was an emblem of peace; intimating that all war was shortly to end. But some think these trees are emblematical of the true followers of Christ.

And behind him were there red horses - Probably pointing out the different orders of angels in the heavenly host, which are employed by Christ in the defense of his Church. The different colors may point out the gradations in power, authority, and excellence, of the angelic natures which are employed between Christ and men.

ZECHARIAH 1: 9 Then I asked, 'My lord, what are these?'" The angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what these are."

Verse 9

O my lord, what are these - The angel here mentioned was distinct from those mentioned in the eighth verse; he who talked with the prophet, Zac 1:13.

ZECHARIAH 1: 10 The man who stood among the myrtle trees answered, "They are the ones the LORD has sent to go back and forth through the earth."

Verse 10

The man that stood among the myrtle trees - The angel of the Covenant, as above, Zac 1:11.

Whom the Lord hath sent - Who are constituted guardians of the land.

ZECHARIAH 1: 11 They reported to the LORD's angel who stood among the myrtle trees, and said, "We have walked back and forth through the earth, and behold, all the earth is at rest and in peace."

Verse 11

All the earth sitteth still, and is at rest - There is general peace through the Persian empire, and other states connected with Judea; but the Jews are still in affliction; their city is not yet restored, nor their temple built.

ZECHARIAH 1: 12 Then the LORD's angel replied, "O LORD of Armies, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which you have had indignation these seventy years?"

Verse 12

Then the angel of the Lord - He who was among the myrtles - the Lord Jesus.

O Lord of hosts, how long - Jesus Christ was not only the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," but was always the sole Mediator and intercessor between God and man.

These threescore and ten years? - This cannot mean the duration of the captivity for that was nearly twenty years past. It must mean simply the time that had elapsed from the destruction of the temple to the time in which the angel spoke. As the temple was destroyed in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, and this vision took place in the second year of Darius, the term of seventy years was completed, or nearly so, between these two periods.

ZECHARIAH 1: 13 The LORD answered the angel who talked with me with kind and comforting words.

Verse 13

The Lord answered the angel - And the angel told the prophet that the answer was gracious and comfortable. This answer is given in the next verse.

ZECHARIAH 1: 14 So the angel who talked with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of Armies: "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

Verse 14

I am jealous for Jerusalem - I have for them a strong affection; and indignation against their enemies.

ZECHARIAH 1: 15 I am very angry with the nations that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, but they added to the calamity."

Verse 15

I was but a little displeased - I was justly displeased with my people, and I gave their enemies a commission against them; but they carried this far beyond my design by oppression and cruelty; and now they shall suffer in their turn.

ZECHARIAH 1: 16 Therefore thus says the LORD: "I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it," says the LORD of Armies, "and a line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem."

Verse 16

I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies - Before, he came to them in judgments; and the principal mercy is, the house of the Lord shall be rebuilt, and the ordinances of the Lord re-established.

And a line shall be stretched forth - The circuit shall be determined, and the city built according to the line marked out.

ZECHARIAH 1: 17 "Proclaim further, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of Armies: "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem."'"

Verse 17

By cities - shall yet be spread abroad - The whole land of Judea shall be inhabited, and the ruined cities restored.

ZECHARIAH 1: 18 I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, four horns.

Verse 18

And behold four horns - Denoting four powers by which the Jews had been oppressed; the Assyrians, Persians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians. Or these enemies may be termed four, in reference to the four cardinal points of the heavens, whence they came: -

1. North. The Assyrians and Babylonians.
2. East. The Moabites and Ammonites.
3. South. The Egyptians.
4. West. The Philistines.

See Martin.

ZECHARIAH 1: 19 I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" He answered me, "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."

ZECHARIAH 1: 20 The LORD showed me four craftsmen.

Verse 20

Four carpenters - Four other powers, who should defeat the powers intended by the horns. These are the same as the four chariots mentioned Zac 6:1-3, Zac 6:6, Zac 6:7. The first was Nabopolassar, father of Nebuchadnezzar, who overturned the empire of the Assyrians. The second was Cyrus, who destroyed the empire of the Chaldeans. The third was Alexander the Great, who destroyed the empire of the Persians. And the fourth was Ptolemy, who rendered himself master of Egypt. Some of these had already been cast down; the rest were to follow. Calmet gives this interpretation, and vindicates it at length.

ZECHARIAH 1: 21 Then I asked, "What are these coming to do?" He said, "These are the horns which scattered Judah, so that no man lifted up his head; but these have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it."

Verse 21

These are come to fray them - To break, pound, and reduce them to powder. Fray, from the French, frayer, to rub. חרשים charashim signifies either carpenters or smiths; probably the latter are here intended, who came with hammers, files, and such like, to destroy these horns, which no doubt seemed to be of iron.

From a sensible correspondent I have received the following note: - "The word we translate carpenters, חרשים charashim, is a root which, according to Mr. Parkhurst, denotes silent thought or attention; and in kal and hiphil, to contrive, devise secretly, or in silence; hence applied as a noun to an artificer of any kind, and to any work which disposes to silent attention. Thus, to potters' ware, Lev 6:28; Job 2:8; and in many other places. So also to ploughing, Deu 22:10; Pro 20:4, which requires constant attention to make 'the right-lined furrow.' Let it be remembered that in ancient times such works were more esteemed than the useless ones we have learned to admire. So again, in Gen 24:21, and elsewhere, it implies to be silent, as in deep thought or great attention. "Now it is evident that the purport of this vision is the same with the gracious declarations which precede it, viz., to express the return of the protecting mercies of God to his people, delivering them from their enemies. I should therefore be inclined to render חרשים charashim here, watchers or inspectors, in the sense which our translators have rendered the Chaldee עיר ir, a watcher, in the fourth chapter of Daniel, Dan 4:13; understanding thereby 'spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth,' Zac 6:6, and are described in the first vision as 'sent to walk to and fro through the earth.' This gives to the whole narrative a sublime and important sense, affording us some glimpse of the Divine government by the ministration of angels, such as Jacob was favored with in his vision at Beth-el, and which our Savior himself informed Nathanael constituted part of the glory of his mediatorial kingdom." - M. A. B.