

Comforting Words

- 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 the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.'
- ¹¹ And 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 remains at rest.'
- ¹² Then the angel of the LORD said, 'O LORD 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 the LORD 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 the LORD 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 the LORD, I have returned to [Jerusalem](#) with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over [Jerusalem](#).
- ¹⁷ Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose [Jerusalem](#).'"

Zechariah 1:8-17

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479 B.C. FORTY-ONE YEARS after Zechariah's night visions. Darius the Mede is dead. Xerxes the Great has risen to power, and he has his eyes set squarely on Greece. The battlefield would be near the small town of in Boeotia. **Dilios**, based on the real life battle hero **Aristodemus** stands poised on the front lines to encourage the men with **comforting words**:

"Remember us." As simple an order as a king can give.

"Remember why we died." For he did not wish tribute or song nor monuments, nor poems of war and valor. His wish was simple.

"Remember us" he said to me. That was his hope.

Should any free soul come across that place in all the countless centuries yet to be, may all our voices whisper to you from the ageless stones.

Go tell the Spartans, passerby
that here, by Spartan law, we lie.

And so my king died and my brothers died, barely a year ago.

Long I pondered my king's cryptic talk of victory. Time has proven him wise. For from free Greek to free Greek the word was spread that bold Leonidas and his 300 so far from home laid down their lives not just for Sparta, but for all Greece and the promise this country holds.

Now, here on this rugged patch of earth called Plataea, Xerxes' hordes face obliteration!

Just there the barbarians huddle sheer terror gripping tight their hearts with icy fingers knowing full well what merciless horrors they suffered at the swords and spears of 300.

Yet they stare now across the plain at 10,000 Spartans commanding 30,000 free Greeks! The enemy outnumber us a paltry three to one. Good odds for any Greek. This day, we rescue a world from mysticism and tyranny and usher in a future brighter than anything we can imagine.

Give thanks, men to Leonidas and the brave 300.

To victory!¹

¹ From the movie *300*, Directed by Zach Snyder (Burbank, CA: Warner Bros, 2007.), DVD.

One historian writes of the battle, “The Greek hoplite, as at Marathon eleven years before, once again proved more than a match for the Persian invader, and a victory was won which would not only guarantee freedom from foreign rule, but also permit an astonishingly rich period of artistic and cultural endeavour which would lay the cultural foundations of all future Western civilizations.”²

Who is the LORD?

WHO IS THE LORD? THE QUESTION seems obvious enough. “The LORD is God.” Isn’t that what the Scriptures say explicitly (see Deut 4:35, 39; Josh 22:34; 1 Kgs 8:60; 18:21; Ps 118:27, all in the ESV)? Yes they do, and I would never dispute the point. But listen to the following passage before we examine our question in more detail. This is a question that Pharaoh asked Moses, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go?” (Ex 5:2). He didn’t know the LORD, and so he refused to listen to the LORD’s voice through his prophet

² Mark Cartwright, “Plataea,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia* (11 May 2013): <http://www.ancient.eu/Plataea/>, last accessed 6-25-2015.

Moses. The thing is, Pharaoh was very religious. If he thought for even one second that “LORD” were merely a synonym for “God,” then he would never have asked such a thing. Or try going up to someone in ISIS and tell him it is nice that you both worship the LORD. Odds are, you wouldn’t like the result. They know that Allah and LORD are not identical terms. The point is, it is very possible to believe in “g-o-d” but not the “LORD.”

For this reason, all of the passages that in the ESV say, “The LORD is God” are translated as things like “The LORD is *our* God” in some other translations. Each time the phrase occurs it is literally “The God.” The idea is that the LORD stands out among all other gods. He is utterly unique. He is God of gods. He is so unique that he is The God. This is a terribly important point for Christians to understand, not the least reason being that we do not know the LORD, we may very well miss the Lord Jesus Christ in places where must be seen.

Today we want to try to make sense of Zechariah’s first night vision. In order to do that, we need to get it clearer in our mind who the LORD is. Let’s go to Exodus

to see the first time the name is ever explained. It comes at the **Burning Bush** event. It says, “And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush” (**Ex 3:2**). After Moses turns aside to see this strange sight it says, “The LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush” (4). Something too many people miss here is that the Angel of the LORD is “The LORD” and “God.”

Next, the LORD tells him to take off his **sandals** because the **ground** is **holy** (5). This is exactly what the **Commander of the Armies of the LORD** tells Joshua, who is frightened out of his mind by the man standing before him (**Josh 5:15**). This is because the Angel of the LORD and the Commander are the same person. At this point, the LORD says, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (**Ex 3:6**), thereby showing himself to be the God of the covenant, which is exactly what the Angel tells Israel years later in Judges.³ Finally, a few verses later, Moses asks for this God’s Name (13). Again he says, “**I AM**” but adds, “**I AM**

³ For time’s sake, compare **Ex 3:7-8** with **23:20-23** and **Jdg 2:1-3**.

WHO I AM” (14). LORD (all caps) is the Hebrew YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah) and means “I am.” “Yahweh” is God’s covenant name.

This is important for our story, for when we move to Zechariah 1, we again see “**The Angel of the LORD**” (11, 12). So this links us back at least as far as the Burning Bush (actually much earlier, as he is found throughout Genesis). Now, his presence has been very rare for many years. In fact, the last time he showed up was in king Hezekiah’s day 200 years earlier (2 Kgs 19:35), and before that he appeared with this title last to David, 200 before that (1 Chron 21:12-30)!

We saw last week that this Angel is also called a “man” (*ish*) who stands among the myrtle trees (8, 10) which represent God’s people. But when the vision begins to unfold, something strange happens in vs. 12. “**The Angel of the LORD said, ‘O LORD of hosts, how long will you have no mercy on Jerusalem...’**” So wait. Here we have the Angel—who is the commander of the hosts of the LORD—crying out to the LORD of hosts. So is the Angel the LORD or isn’t he the LORD?

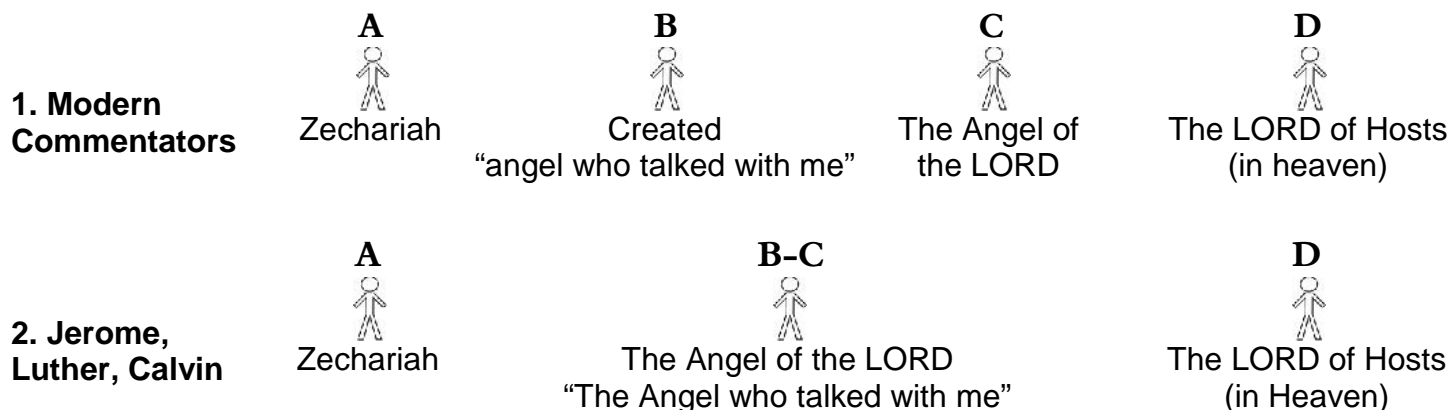
It gets even more interesting and perhaps even confusing in the next verse. It says, “The LORD answered gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me” (13). Who is this angel that talked with Zechariah, and who is the LORD that speaks with him? This gets a little tricky. Most modern commentators believe that the angel talking to Zechariah is simply a created angel, an intermediary between Zechariah and the Angel of the LORD who is riding the horse. However, Jerome,⁴ Luther,⁵ and (probably) Calvin⁶ all believe that

⁴ “You perceive that God does not speak in the ears but in the heart, as Zechariah says: ‘The angel who spoke in me answered me.’ The angel is understood to be our Lord, who is proclaiming the will of the Father and who, in Isaiah, is called the angel of the great counsel.” (Jerome, *Psalms, Alternate Series* 64) in Alberto Ferreiro, “Introduction to the Twelve Prophets,” in *The Twelve Prophets*, ed. Alberto Ferreiro, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 234.

⁵ “I believe that the angel who is riding the horse (in its idiom the Hebrew says he is a man mounting a horse, but the Latins say it differently) and the angel who speaks with the prophet are the same person. But I consider it insignificant if anyone believes they are two different people.” Martin Luther, Comments on Zech 1:8 in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 20*, 15.

⁶ “The prophet now shows that the angel who was his guide and teacher, became even a suppliant before God in behalf of the welfare of the Church. Hence the probable opinion is, that this angel was Christ the Mediator. For they who say that it was the Holy Spirit, who forms prayers in our hearts, seem to depart very far from the meaning of the Prophet: and it is nothing new, that Christ should exercise care over his Church. But if this view be disapproved, we may take any one of the angels to be meant.” John Calvin, Comments on Zech 1:7-11.

“the angel who was talking to me” *is* the Angel of the LORD.



There is no definitive way of figuring out if Zechariah has a created angel talking to him or not. This ambiguity continues on into the next visions as well.

This matters because whoever you understand this “angel who is talking” with Zechariah to be determines who “the LORD” in **vs. 13** is. If the Fathers are right, then someone else called “the LORD” is talking to the Angel of the LORD in answer to the Angel of the LORD’s prayer to him. If most others are right, the LORD who answered gracious and comforting words could be the Angel of the LORD. Nevertheless, the Angel of the LORD did call out

a prayer to the LORD, and so he would be speaking on behalf of the other LORD. Confused yet?

You need not be. For all I am saying is that there are **two Yahweh's** in **vs. 12**. Not two Gods, but two LORDs. To put this in NT terms, there is the Son and he is praying to the Father. Both the Son and the Father can be called LORD of Hosts, both can be called LORD, but only the Son is the Angel of Yahweh. In **vs. 13**, it is not clear if the Father gives gracious and comforting words to the Son who then conveys them directly to Zechariah, or if it is the Son giving gracious and comforting words to a mediating angel who then speaks to Zechariah with the Father's words only being implied. Kind of surreal, isn't it?

One of the reasons people have such problems understanding that the Angel of the LORD is the Second Person of the Trinity (as we saw last time) is because of this very ambiguity. They should, but can't, wrap their minds around it. One of the problems almost all modern Christians have when they come to the OT, is that they simply don't care about this kind ambiguity. One of the reasons they don't care about it, is because no one has ever

taught them that you can actually see more than one Person of the Godhead in the OT, more than one Yahweh.

For all practical intents and purposes, we have been lead to believe that the NT just invented the doctrine. It was revealed to the Apostles through their Master that somehow out of this Unitarian OT, a guy named Jesus claimed that he was God, that he was distinct from someone called the Father, and all sorts people believed him even though that went against every grain of theological training they had been given for the last few thousand years. Not only is this absurd, but it undermines the defense of their faith that the NT Apostles are giving. If they were making it all up, no one would have followed them. If there were no plurality of a Godhead in the OT, there would have been no NT Christians. Beloved, It is time that the Church awakened to the teaching of the Church Fathers (and even many very early Jews), that there is more than one LORD in the OT, that this LORD is God, but that there is only One True God in the OT. When we understand this, suddenly, the prophecy and it fulfillment make perfect sense.

Unpacking the Vision of the Rider among the Myrtles by the Deep

Recap

So with that, let's move into the vision. We will look now at Zechariah 1:8-17. We looked last time at the scene that Zechariah sees. Vs. 8 sets the scene. It is night. Suddenly, he sees a man riding a red horse. This man is none other than the Angel of the LORD. The horse he is riding is a horse of war. And he is among a group of other riders on horses of colors that represent the fiery brilliance of heaven. The Red Rider is seen, for the moment, standing among a group of tall, well watered myrtle trees. These trees represent God's people—*The Rider's* people. They are well watered because they are near a place called the Deep. The Deep represents the chaos, evil, and death that comes from evil nations and the supernatural entities that lay behind them. So this is a beautiful picture of the Second Person of the Godhead standing in the midst of his people protecting them from evil. But how will he do this? The explanation of the vision unpacks this in great and wondrous detail.

In **vs. 9**, Zechariah is befuddled. So he asks, “**What are these, my lord?**” It then tells us that he spoke to “**the angel who talked with me.**” Unfortunately, the word he uses (*Adonai*), can refer simply to a human superior, or like David and others, to Christ Jesus. So the title “lord” (with no capital letters) is not helpful in identifying this angel. **I simply can’t decide** who I think it is.⁷

Perhaps, and I’ll say this here, but probably also in later passages in Zechariah, this is all cryptic in order to make it more difficult to decipher. Why would God want this to be hard to figure out? It is because it speaks of very important things to come. Those things were directly related to the plans that the Father had designed for his Son to undergo. And he kept it cryptic, deliberately, as the Apostle says, “**None of the rulers [a term that designated both human and preternatural persons] of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**” (**1Co 2:8**). You see, making it hard to figure out ensured

⁷ In favor of it being a created angel is the strange language and use of the third person. If it was Christ, why would he keep talking about himself in the third person, not just here, but in even stranger passages later to come? In favor of it being Christ himself is the question of why, as the Angel of the LORD who came in days gone by directly to people without a mediator, he needs a mediator between himself and the prophet at this time?

that the plan would not be fully uncovered and therefore stopped before it could ever play itself out. I find this explanation most remarkable and humbling.

At any rate, the angel speaking with Zechariah says that he will show him what it all means (**Zech 1:9**). It then says, “**The man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered**” (**10**). So he says he will show, and then the man answers. Perhaps this is why Luther believed the angel talking to the prophet was the Angel of the LORD? The angel speaking is also the man. But it is still unclear.

Nevertheless, this is what he said. “**These are they whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth**” (**10**). Who is “the LORD” here? It is the man himself talking in the third person? The man is the LORD and he sent them? Probably. Is the Angel of the LORD speaking on behalf of the Father in heaven? Probably. In other words, we don’t have to pick and choose, because both Persons are of One Essence. The Father has a plan. The Son carries it out to perfection. The Son is the Captain of the Armies of God, and yet he prays to the Father of the Heavenly Lights.

But we want to unpack the vision. He refers to the other riders. These riders, he says, were sent to patrol the earth. They were on a **reconnaissance mission**. They were sent out as scouts for the LORD of Armies. Now, as soon as the Red Rider explains this to the prophet, one of the troops speaks up and “**answered the Angel of the LORD ... ‘We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth remains at rest’**” (11).⁸ **What does this mean?**

Return in your imagination if you will to the Deep. Picture a brooding chaotic storm, tall waves, heavy rain, much like Peter finds himself in before the LORD calms the sea. This is how the nations should be pictured if a sea monster is rising out of the depths.⁹

But here they see that **the Deep is calm**, like the way we find the sea of glass in heaven or the Sea of Galilee after Jesus speaks and saves Peter. While we might tend to think of this as a good thing that the nations are not at war (in

⁸ The ESV translates two words (*yashab* and *shaqat*) as simply “at rest.” Most other translations give two words for something like: “peaceful and quiet” (NAS) or “still and at rest” (KJV).

⁹ Jude refers to the wicked who come into the church as “**wild waves of the sea**” (Jude 1:13). Closer to Zechariah, Isaiah and Jeremiah use the same word for “rest” that Zechariah uses, and it is of the wicked and the sea, “**But the wicked are like the tossing sea; for it cannot be quiet, and its waters toss up mire and dirt**” (Isa 57:20); “**They melt in fear, they are troubled like the sea that cannot be quiet**” (Jer 49:23).

one way it is), we need to think redemptively, and not just with our physical eyes. Many commentators run to Persia to try and see if Darius' violent overthrow of the Empire had settled down. This is historically improbable. But even if it were true, it misses the point.

The answer can be found by going to **vs. 15**. “I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease (*shaanan*); for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster.” This is Yahweh's answer to the patrol's findings. The problem is, the nations have been **totally complacent**, even worse than complacent, and Israel is the backdrop. Cyrus had issued a decree to rebuild the temple. But after his death, the Persian Empire couldn't have cared less about carrying out that edict sent from heaven. Because of this, Haggai had just prophesied months earlier, “**For** thus says the **LORD** of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the **LORD** of hosts ... and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy

the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother” (Hag 2:6-7, 22). Zechariah’s concern is also the temple and Jerusalem and God being in its midst. And his prophecy is also set on the nations.

The fact that in this case it is not good that the nations are at rest is what gives context to the Angel’s cry, “O LORD of hosts, how long will have no mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which you have been angry these seventy years?” (13). One more time, this time quoting from H. C. Leupold, “Some interpreters think it strange that the Angel of the Lord should pray to God, especially if He Himself is considered divine. This is no more strange than the fact that Christ prays to the Father in the days of His flesh (John, chapter 17).”¹⁰ Exactly.

Now, as Prince of Israel, The Angel also represents God’s people who in Revelation say, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge

¹⁰ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956), 40.

our blood on those who dwell on the earth” (Rev 6:10)?¹¹ Curiously, this is the same chapter that the various horsemen carry out God’s wrath in John’s vision.

The “how long” cry of the Angel of the LORD corresponds to “seventy years.” Seventy years is how long God gives a person to live. “The years of our life are seventy” (Ps 90:10).¹² Therefore, seventy years is a long time. But the number specifically refers to the seventy years of Babylonian captivity which itself corresponds to the seventy nations idea of Genesis.¹³ You have to remember here that the exile had ended some 20 plus years ago when Zechariah sees this vision, and still no temple, thus not presence of God in their midst.

Comforting Words

¹¹ See G. K. Beale, “Revelation,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, edited by G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1104.

¹² Herodotus said the same thing. Seventy is “the limit of man’s years” (*Histories* 1.32.2-3).

¹³ **Going Deeper:** See my sermons “Seventy Nations” on Gen 10:1-32 and “A Nation of Seventy” on Genesis 46:1-35. In regard to “seventy” and the nations and warfare note that the “black stone” of Esarhaddon (681–669 b.c.) says that the god Marduk should have been angry with his land until “seventy years had been accomplished.” (See Ralph L. Smith, *Micah–Malachi*, vol. 32, Word Biblical Commentary [Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998], 191.) It was also a symbolic number used by the Greeks for times of both peace (Isokrates, *Panegyrikos* §§ 100–106) and war (Lysias, *Epitaphius* 53; Demosthenes, *Third Philippic* 25).

It is at this moment that the **beatific vision** of the LORD in the midst of the myrtles begins to lighten all around it. For at the cry of the Chief Angel, the LORD answered “**gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me**” (13). This is an amazing thing. First, the Hebrew words are *tov* and *nichum* (from which we get the name Nahum the prophet). They appear again in vs. 17. Therefore, vs. 17 explains what these gospel words are, “**Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity (*tov*), and the LORD will again comfort (*nacham*) Zion and again choose Jerusalem.**”

Do you see how this comforting, gracious news concerns the very epicenter of God’s coming to earth in the OT? We will look more at that **in a moment**. But first, I want to point out something fascinating about the language “**comforting words**” in the Greek translation (LXX). I opened this morning with a story about the Greeks being encouraged with a war speech prior to their great victory at Plataea. Greek generals would give “**comforting words**” or literally an **exhortation** to the men

prior to battle.¹⁴ The phrase used to describe it is amazing. It is the same phrase used by the Warlord Angel of Zechariah.

The word “comforting” is the word *parakletikos*.¹⁵ It is related to the noun *parakletos* which means “advocate” or “comforter.”¹⁶ You have heard of the Paraklete from the

¹⁴ See Joseph Sievers, *Josephus and Jewish History in Flavian Rome and Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 186-87, especially n. 14.; Cristina Pepe, *The Genres of Rhetorical Speeches in Greek and Roman Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 268-270. From Kittel: “To exhort.” This sense occurs in Xenophon, *Anabasis* 5.6.19 ... In military contexts it is common for encouragement of soldiers, e.g., Philo Byzantius,⁶ [“Philonis Mechanicae Syntaxis libri quartus et quintus, ed. R. Schöne (1893), 101, 38; 98, 35. For the λόγος παρακλητικός as the commander’s word of encouragement and admonition before a battle cf. J. Albertus, *Die παρακλητικοί in d. gr. u. röm; Lit., Diss.* Strassburg (1908), 1–16”] and often in Polybius. (Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–], 775).

¹⁵ “As regards the use of the verb πᾶρκαλεῖν, it has the sense of *comfort* in the LXX ... But its original meaning was to *send for, summon to one’s aid*, corresponding to the Latin *aduocare* ... The usage of the Septuagint corresponds. In Zec. 1:13, πᾶρκαλεῖσθαι is used to translate the Hebrew אָמַרְתִּי, רִמְּתִי אֶל־יְהוָה.” Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 23-24. [From Jude 3]: “καταπαύειν, here translated *exhorting*, properly signifies to call to one, or vehemently to call out to another upon some urgent occasion; but it is in Scripture translated several ways ... Sometimes it signifies to comfort and encourage, as 1 Thess. 4:18, ‘Comfort one another.’ Acts 20:12, ‘And were not a little comforted. Rom. 1:12, ‘That I may be comforted together with you.’ Matt. 5:4 ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’ And καταπαύειν is a consolatory speech, Zech. 1:13.” William Jenkyn, *An Exposition upon the Epistle of Jude*, ed. James Sherman (Edinburgh; London: James Nichol; James Nisbet & Co., 1865), 61.

¹⁶ *Encyclopaedia Biblica* Vol. 3 (1903), “Paraclete,” p. 3567. https://archive.org/stream/Encyclopaedia_Biblica_Vol_I_to_IV/EncyclodaediaBiblica_Vol_II

NT where it refers to Christ (1Jn 2:1) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). It is also related to the verb *parakaleō*, meaning “to console.”¹⁷ This consolation was a comforting word, and this word, in turn, is the positive message of the famous Kyrgma—“my gospel (*euaggelion*) and the preaching (*kerugma*) of Jesus Christ” (Rom 16:25).¹⁸ “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing (*parakaleō*) to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 1:3).

[I#page/n463/mode/2up/search/paraclete](#) . Also this book posted at the St. Takla Coptic Church in Alexandria Egypt (but can't find enough info to cite, also translated by Google): <http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=ar&u=http://st-takla.org/Full-Free-Coptic-Books/FreeCopticBooks-005-Is-there-a-New-Prophet-After-Jesus/Is-Muhammad-After-Jesus-13-Chapter-12-History-n-Meanings-of-Barakleet.html&prev=search>

¹⁷ “[Meyer, in a footnote, p. 515, urges against this meaning the *passive* form παράκλητος, instead of the *active* παρακλητικός (Plat. *Republ.* p. 524 D.), in accordance with ἐπικλητικός ἀνακλητικός, *etc.* But it should be remembered that in the N. T. παρακαλέω does not mean *to call for*, but always *to exhort* or *to comfort*.—P. S.]” in John Peter Lange and Philip Schaff, *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: John* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 441. ¹¹

¹⁸ The imperative element in π (‘‘to admonish’’) is always more or less plainly accompanied by the indicative (‘‘to console’’) and *vice versa*. To this degree V 5, p 780 there is reflected in this key term and its pattern of meaning the twofold character of the ‘‘Word,’’ in which the imperative of exhortation constantly grows out of the indicative of the *kerygma*. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 779–780.

So the Greeks would shout out this “word of comfort” in the form of a speech to get the troops ready for battle. And what is the word for “word” here? It is *logos*. How amazing is it that you have in Zechariah the Red Warrior standing crying out “**how long, O LORD of Armies**” only to hear the reply, “*Logos Parakletikous*” (literally *logous parakletilous*)—two words that so closely identify with Christ and the Holy Spirit in a speech of comfort that he will fight against his enemies and bring peace to Jerusalem! (In fact, the Holy Spirit is explicitly present in Zech 1:6 LXX which says, “But do ye receive my words and mine ordinances, all that I command by *my Spirit* to my servants the prophets.”)¹⁹

Comfort Part I: I Will Defend You

¹⁹ “And if further a man peruse all the books of the Prophets, both of the Twelve, and of the others, he will find many testimonies concerning the Holy Ghost; as when Micah says in the person of God, *surely I will perfect power by the Spirit the Lord* (Micah 3:8), and Joel cries, *And it shall come to pass afterwards, saith God, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh* (Joel 2:28), and the rest; and Haggai, *Because I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts* (Hag 2:5); and *My Spirit remaineth in the midst of you* (2:6); and in like manner Zechariah, *But receive My words and My statutes which I command by My Spirit, to My servants the Prophets* (Zech 1:6); and other passages.” Cyril of Jerusalem, “The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem,” in *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. R. W. Church and Edwin Hamilton Gifford, vol. 7, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 122

So the two parts are the war and the comfort. Together, they constitute the Gospel for the myrtles. First, the war. Vs. 15, “I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster.” This returns us to the first few verses of Zechariah where the LORD was so angry with Israel. But now his anger against them has been turned aside because they have repented (vs. 6).

The literal translation, like it did in vs. 2, helps us feel the language better, “And *with* great wrath I am wroth against the nations who are at ease, For I was a little wroth, and they assisted -- for evil” (Zech 1:15 YLT). The LORD isn’t just “angry,” but “greatly (*gadol*) angry (*qatsaph*).” This is in comparison to him previously only being a “little (*meat*) angry (*qatsaph*).” Again, this causes us to think about the doctrine of *impassibility* which refers to God having no passions (anger) whatsoever.

While it might very well be true that God in his essence has no anger (i.e. the essence of God does not get angry; cf. LBC 2.1), Zechariah keeps telling us with nouns and adjectives that emphasize them, that “the LORD” is

getting angry. Not “God,” which is curious. But the LORD. Who is the LORD? Why, it is the Commander of the Armies of God. It is the Person of Christ as the Angel of the LORD.²⁰

What is amazing to me is that we know that the Lord Jesus in the Flesh experienced “passions.” He got angry. He wept. And so on. However this works with relation to his divine nature, I’m not sure. I do know that the One Person called Jesus experienced these things. I also know that, when he is in contact with human beings, the Holy Spirit can be “grieved” (**Eph 4:30; Isa 63:10**). Again, how this works with regard to the divine essence, I’m not sure. I do know that the Holy Spirit is both God and a Person, just like Christ.²¹

How do we know what God is actually like? Well, it isn’t through speculation or philosophy or reason or experience. Rather, it is through revelation. General

²⁰ Again, it is possible that “LORD” here refers to the Father (or to both Father and Son), but it is more probable that it refers to the Angel who is “returning” (**vs. 16**) to Jerusalem and who will stretch out the measuring line over it (**vs. 16; 2:1ff**).

²¹ It would therefore not be unreasonable to assume that the Father may very well be said to have such passions as a Person, at least when he comes into contact with his physical creation as well. For the takes on created attributes such as having a voice that can be heard, and perhaps some kind of form that can be seen (Dan 7:9).

revelation or nature teaches us a few things. The Bible teaches us many other things. But the Perfect Image of God—the Lord Jesus Christ, he is how we know the Father. To see him is to see the Father. As he taught us, he is the grid through which we read about and understand God most personally and intimately.

He shows us this by way of analogy, and the analogy is his humanity. Thus, as our analogy to know God, he became one of us in order to communicate that to us. As he did so, he took on our own nature and became susceptible to everything that is good and bad about it. In the OT, he did the same thing, except it wasn't a human nature, but an angelic nature he assumed. Why? So that he might communicate to us what God is like. And this is why we must know who the LORD is.

It isn't just "G-O-D," for everyone believes in a god. It is **God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity**. If you say you believe in God but not Jesus, then you do not believe in the LORD. The Angel of the LORD here is telling the prophet that he is angry. He is the General. He has seen what the enemy of the Deep has done to his people. He has

seen their complacency. He has seen their refusal to help. He has seen their vengeance and guile and brutality against his own people when he was angry at them. And so these visions will return to the theme of Christ's anger, even as we find John doing in Revelation.

How is this good news? Because we have a Rider who carries a flashing sword which devours his enemies and a stallion that tramples them under its feet. Those who wage war against the Living Christ shall know no victory. He cannot be defeated. Death couldn't defeat him. Satan couldn't stop him. Herod couldn't destroy him. So if he is angry at his enemies, then it doesn't matter "how long" it takes God in his sovereignty, he will show himself to be the great victor over his foes through Christ. But we should know that this "how long" is for the sake of his showing his mercy and grace to those who do not deserve it.

Comfort Part II: I Will Return to You

Thus, the other piece of the comfort is what surrounds this verse of anger against his enemies. It is his [zeal for his chosen people](#) and for [Jerusalem](#) where he has chosen to place his Name. Thus, sandwiching his anger in the verse

previous, “So the angel who talked with me said to me, ‘Cry out, Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion’” (14). This has its roots in the Ten Commandments, “I the LORD your God am a jealous God.” The other nations had their gods. But the LORD’s portion is Israel. Though he be angry for a moment, his lovingkindness is for a lifetime (Ps 30:5; Isa 54:8). It is his jealousy that will bring the war upon the nations.

But it will also bring about mercy to Jerusalem. So the verses after his anger say, “Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.” (16-17).

Remember how the book began. “Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts” (Zech 1:3). The people returned to him (vs. 6), and so he is now returning to them (16). He is a God

of his word. Of course, the house that will be built is the Second Temple that is the focus of Ezra and Nehemiah, contemporaries of Zechariah. When the temple was rebuilt, the Jews had an identity again. Their God had returned to them in power and the glory was present in their midst.

But beloved, do you think after all of this talk about Christ that the house **only refers to brick and mortar**? Do you think that all of this is only yet to come? You are familiar with Jeremiah's new covenant? **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his

brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” The NT tells us that this finds its initial fulfillment in the First Coming of Jesus Christ (**Heb 8:8-12**).

But did you know that in that same place it gives the timing, “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when the city shall be rebuilt for the LORD from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. And the measuring line shall go out farther, straight to the hill Gareb, and shall then turn to Goah” (**Jer 31:38-39**). In other words, Jeremiah and Zechariah are talking about the same thing. This is a new covenant promise. That is why commentators tell us,

The new Jerusalem he speaks of is a messianic product, the eternal holy city of God’s Glory-Presence provided in the cosmic re-creation at the consummation of the ages. Just as it was the Lord God who stretched the line over the earth in the beginning, so it is he who does so again as he builds the New Jerusalem in his creating of

the new heaven and new earth, the event which Jeremiah, and Zechariah following him, prophesied. This heavenly city is the sum of the inheritance promised in the Abrahamic Covenant to the patriarch and his seed, and God is its architect and artisan (cf. Heb 11:10). Agreeably, when Zechariah in his third vision resumes the theme of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, it is the divine Angel who is engaged in a related function involving a measuring line (2:1 [5]). Christ, the Angel incarnate, is the builder of the new temple city, for in the new covenant the city and temple coalesce, and Christ is the one who, with his body the church, is the temple and builds the temple.²²

“Remember me.” As simple an order as a king can give.
“Remember why I died.” For he did not wish tribute, though tribute will come. Nor a sacrifice or a burnt offering. His wish was simple.

²² Meredith Kline, *Glory in our Midst*, 50.

“Remember me,” he said, “with a broken and contrite heart” through the new covenant in my blood. That was his hope.

Should any enslaved soul come across that place in all the countless centuries yet to be, may that voice whisper to him from the ageless stones.

Go tell the world, passerby,
Forgive them, O forgive he cried.
And here the Son of God died.

And so my king died, nearly 2,000 years ago.

Long I pondered my king’s cryptic talk of victory. Time has proven him wise. For from county to country the word was spread that sinless Christ Jesus, so far from home, laid down his life, not just for Israel, but for the whole world and the promise that his Kingdom holds.

Now, here on this rugged patch of earthen desert, Satan’s hordes are faced with their doom. For angels, authorities, and powers have been subjected to him. Just there, the unbelieving huddle in sheer terror gripping tight their hearts with icy fingers knowing full well what

merciless horrors they have suffered at the hands of the Evil One.

Yet they stare now across the plain at the Living King riding his White Steed, his battle sword in hand. The hosts of heaven at his command. One little word to fell them, or one little word shall give them life. A whole world in need of rescue. Good odds for any Christian. This day we rescue a world from mysticism and tyranny and usher in a future brighter than anything we can imagine.

Give thanks, to God the Father and to his brave unique Son by the power of the Holy Spirit.
To victory!

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. (2Th 2:16-17).