

Zechariah 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.

Analysis

And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. Following the Angel of the LORD's intercession (verse 12) questioning how long God would withhold mercy from Jerusalem and Judah after seventy years of indignation, God responds with "**good words**" (devarim tovim, **דְּבָרִים טוֹבִים**) and "**comfortable words**" (devarim nichumim, **דְּבָרִים נִחוּמִים**). The term nichumim comes from nacham (נִחָם), meaning to comfort, console, or bring relief—the same root as the name Nehemiah ("Yahweh comforts").

This divine response contrasts sharply with the somber report of verse 11 that "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest"—a rest that felt unjust since Israel remained weak while oppressor nations enjoyed prosperity. God's good and comforting words assure the struggling post-exilic community that He has not forgotten His covenant promises. The angelic mediator receives these words to transmit to Zechariah and the people.

The content of these comforting words unfolds in verses 14-17: God is jealous for Jerusalem with great jealousy, displeased with the complacent nations, and determined to return to Jerusalem with mercies. The house will be rebuilt, the measuring line stretched over Jerusalem, cities will prosper and spread, and God will comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem again. These promises sustained the discouraged remnant, assuring them that present hardships would give way to divine restoration.

Historical Context

The seventy years of exile prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10) had concluded. Cyrus's decree (538 BC) allowed Jewish return, but by Zechariah's prophecy (520 BC), restoration remained incomplete. The temple foundation was laid (536 BC) but construction had stalled for sixteen years due to opposition, discouragement, and economic hardship (Ezra 4:24).

Into this situation of disappointed hopes and delayed fulfillment, God speaks comforting words. The same God who executed judgment through exile now promises mercy and restoration. This pattern of discipline followed by comfort pervades Scripture—God wounds and heals, tears down and builds up (Deuteronomy 32:39; Job 5:18). The "good words" weren't empty encouragement but substantial promises: temple completion (finished 516 BC), Jerusalem's eventual prosperity, and God's renewed choice of Zion.

These comforting words find ultimate fulfillment in Christ. Isaiah 40:1-2 commands "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" because "her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned." Jesus brings the ultimate comfort—forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and eternal hope. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter (Parakletos, John 14:16), applying Christ's finished work to believers.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. When facing discouraged circumstances with delayed answers to prayer, how do God's "good and comfortable words" in Scripture sustain faith?

2. How does the pattern of discipline followed by comfort reveal both God's justice and His covenant faithfulness?
3. In what ways does Christ fulfill the ultimate "comfortable words" that bring consolation to troubled souls?

Interlinear Text

�. עז	ה. אָתָּה	ו. הָיָה	נ. פֶּמֶלֶא	ר. פְּדָבֵב	ב. יְמִינָם	ד. דְּבָרִים
answered	And the LORD	H853	the angel	that talked	H0	words
H6030	H3068		H4397	H1696		H1697
			נְחַמִּים:	דְּבָרִים	טוֹבִים	
with me with good	words	H2896	and comfortable	H1697	H5150	

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 29:10 (Word): For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

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