

Zechariah 1:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

Analysis

I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy (קָנָאתִי לִירוּשָׁלָם) (qinneiti lirushalayim ul-tziyyon qin'ah gedolah)—God's declaration reveals the intensity of His covenant love. The verb qana (קָנָה) means to be jealous, zealous, or intensely protective of what belongs to oneself. This is not petty envy but righteous jealousy—the passionate commitment of a faithful husband toward his bride. The phrase "great jealousy" (qin'ah gedolah) emphasizes extraordinary intensity: God's love for His people burns with consuming fire.

This jealousy appears throughout Scripture. At Sinai, God declared: "I the LORD thy God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:5, El qanna). His jealousy is holy—He will not share His glory with idols nor tolerate rivals for His people's affection. Here in Zechariah, God's jealousy burns for Jerusalem, not against her. After seventy years of exile punishing her adultery with foreign gods, divine jealousy now works on her behalf—zealously protective, fiercely committed to restoration. The parallelism "Jerusalem and... Zion" (physical city and spiritual reality) shows God's covenant faithfulness encompasses both earthly and heavenly dimensions.

The context magnifies this declaration's significance. Zechariah's first vision (1:7-11) showed angelic patrols reporting that "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest"—the nations enjoying peace while God's people languished. Verse 12 records the angel's intercession: "O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on

Jerusalem?" God's answer (verses 13-14) overflows with "comfortable words" (devarim nechumim, words of consolation). His jealousy means the nations' complacency will end; God will act decisively to restore His beloved city. This anticipates Messiah who came "not to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34) —disturbing worldly calm to establish God's kingdom. Paul applies divine jealousy to the Church: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Corinthians 11:2), presenting her as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Historical Context

Zechariah prophesied in 520 BC, eighteen years after the first exiles returned from Babylon. Jerusalem lay in ruins, her walls broken, her temple incomplete, her population small and discouraged. The seventy years of exile (586-516 BC) had fulfilled Jeremiah's prophecy (Jeremiah 25:11-12, 29:10), but restoration seemed agonizingly slow. Meanwhile, Babylon had fallen to Persia (539 BC), yet the Persian Empire now enjoyed relative peace and prosperity while God's people struggled.

The context of divine jealousy is Israel's spiritual adultery. Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had portrayed Israel's idolatry as marital unfaithfulness—she played the harlot with foreign gods and nations (Hosea 2:2-13; Jeremiah 3:1-10; Ezekiel 16). God's jealous anger brought exile as divorce papers (Jeremiah 3:8). But covenant love transcends judgment. Hosea's marriage to unfaithful Gomer illustrated God's determination to redeem His adulterous bride (Hosea 3:1-5). Now in Zechariah, divine jealousy has shifted from punishing unfaithfulness to zealous restoration—the Husband reclaiming His wife.

This jealousy finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ who "loved the church, and gave himself for it" to present her "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle" (Ephesians 5:25-27). Jesus's cleansing of the temple—twice driving out merchants—demonstrated that "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17, quoting Psalm 69:9). His jealousy for the Father's house and His bride the Church led Him to the cross. The New Jerusalem descending from heaven (Revelation 21:2) as "the bride adorned for her husband" represents the consummation of God's jealous covenant love announced by Zechariah.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's 'jealousy' as righteous covenant love rather than petty envy transform your view of His commandments and discipline?
2. What does it reveal about God's character that His jealousy works *for* His people rather than *against* them after they have repented from idolatry?
3. In what ways does Christ's jealous love for the Church (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27) call believers to exclusive devotion rather than divided loyalties?

Interlinear Text

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|------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|
| אָמַר | קֹרֵא | בְּ | בְּ | אָמַר | אָמַר |
| Thus saith | So the angel | that communed | | unto me | Thus saith |
| H413 | H4397 | H1696 | H0 | H7121 | H559 |
| H559 | | | | | |
| אָמַר כִּי | אָמַר הָיָה | אָמַר זֶה | קֹרֵא אֲלֵיכֶם | לִירוּשָׁלָם | לִלְכֵד זִיּוֹן |
| H3541 | Thus saith | the LORD | of hosts | I am jealous | for Jerusalem |
| | H559 | H3068 | H6635 | H7065 | H3389 |
| | | | | | |
| גָּדוֹלָה: | קָרְאָה הָ | | | | |
| jealousy | with a great | | | | |
| H7068 | H1419 | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Joel 2:18 (References Lord): Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

Isaiah 40:6 (Parallel theme): The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:

Isaiah 40:1 (Parallel theme): Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Zechariah 1:9 (References Lord): Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.

Zechariah 1:17 (References Lord): Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

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