

Zechariah 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. This verse reveals the passionate intensity of God's covenantal love for His people. The Hebrew word *qana* (קָנָה, "jealous") appears twice, emphasizing divine zeal that tolerates no rivals. Unlike human jealousy rooted in insecurity or possessiveness, God's jealousy flows from His rightful claim as Creator and Redeemer and His exclusive covenant relationship with Israel.

The phrase "LORD of hosts" (Yahweh Tzeva'ot, יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) emphasizes God's sovereign power over heavenly and earthly armies, assuring that His jealous love has the authority and might to accomplish His purposes. "Zion" represents not merely a geographical location but the covenant community, the dwelling place of God's presence, and the focal point of redemptive history.

The dual expression "great jealousy" and "great fury" (*qin'ah gedolah* and *chemah gedolah*) intensifies the emotional force. God's fury isn't capricious anger but holy indignation against whatever threatens or harms His beloved people. This verse sets up the restoration promises that follow, showing that God's passionate commitment to Zion drives both judgment against enemies and restoration of His people. It reveals that divine love isn't passive sentiment but active, protective, and exclusive devotion.

Historical Context

Zechariah prophesied to the post-exilic Jewish community (circa 520-518 BCE) who had returned from Babylonian captivity to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. The returnees faced discouragement, opposition from surrounding peoples, and internal struggles. Many questioned whether God still cared about them after the devastation of exile.

This oracle comes in a series of eight night visions and subsequent messages assuring the community of God's continued commitment. The historical context includes the stalled temple reconstruction project (resumed under Haggai and Zechariah's ministry) and doubts about whether God would truly restore Zion to its former glory. The memory of the exile—punishment for covenant unfaithfulness—made some question God's ongoing relationship with Israel.

By declaring His jealous love for Zion, God reassures the community that the exile wasn't abandonment but discipline, and that His covenantal passion remained undiminished. This would have been profoundly encouraging to a small, struggling community surrounded by larger, hostile nations. The phrase echoes earlier prophetic language about God as a jealous husband (Ezekiel 16, Hosea 1-3), reminding Israel that covenant relationship, though broken by their sin, was being restored through God's initiative.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's jealousy differ from sinful human jealousy, and what does this teach us about His character?
2. What does this passage reveal about the exclusive nature of our covenant relationship with God through Christ?
3. How should God's passionate commitment to His people shape our understanding of church discipline and holiness?
4. In what ways does God's jealous love both comfort and challenge believers today?
5. How does this verse help us understand passages about God's wrath against idolatry and unfaithfulness?

Interlinear Text

כֹּה	אָמַר	יְהוָה	צָבָא וְ	קִנֵּי אֶתִי	לְצִיּוֹן	קִנְיָהּ
H3541	Thus saith	the LORD	of hosts	I was jealous	for Zion	jealousy
	H559	H3068	H6635	H7065	H6726	H7068
גְּדוֹלָהּ	וְחֵמָהּ	גְּדוֹלָהּ	קִנֵּי אֶתִי	לָהּ:		
for her with great	fury	for her with great	I was jealous			
H1419	H2534	H1419	H7065	H0		

Additional Cross-References

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

Nahum 1:2 (References Lord): God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.