

VI. Zechariah in Biblical Perspective
The Gospel According to Zechariah
“Vision #2: The Vision of Horns and Craftsman”
Zechariah 1:18–21
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November 27, 2022 • Sunday Evening Sermon

I pray that as we have been studying this book of Zechariah that this book in the Bible will become much more familiar to you. In this study we will be at the conclusion of Zechariah 1. When I was a student pastor in Chattanooga, Tennessee, a young man that I pastored there worked in a print shop. I made a comment one day from the pulpit saying ‘my guess is when you buy a new Bible, the gold edges disappear in the New Testament long before they disappear in the Old Testament.’ About that time, I heard a loud guffaw in the congregation, and it was this young man who was a printer and deals with ink regularly. He said, “Forget the gold edges on my New Testament for the edges are black and the Old Testament is still gold.” I then said, “Well, go to the Old Testament and start mining some gold while you're there.”

The Old Testament is such a glorious book. Think of it this way; remember that the New Testament is God finally speaking in His Son. I love that Hebrews 1:2 says *[2] but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world.* Now, in the former days, which is the Old Testament, He spoke of the Christ that was to come. Then God spoke and the Word became flesh and now the New Testament is the latter days. Once Christ came, the latter days began at that point. And then those whom He has called, equipped and furnished with credentialing gifts, apostolic signs, wonders and miracles, then give us the exposition. There are the four Gospels, then the Book of Acts which are the five books rooted in history, and then the rest of the New Testament which include the epistles where 13 of them belong to the Apostle Paul and then there are eight more so that's the latter days which is God's finished revelation.

I love to go back to is in the Old Testament because of what Paul tells Timothy in II Timothy 3:14-15 which says *[14] But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it [15] and how from childhood you have been acquainted with **the sacred writings**, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.* The Bible Timothy was raised on as a child was the Old Testament that Paul says is able to lead you to saving faith in Christ Jesus and give you the wisdom for that. Or our Savior who said in John 5:39, *[39] You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about Me.* It's not the Bible that saves you, it's the Bible that brings you to the Savior. The Bible brings you to Christ where the glory of the Triune God is revealed in the preeminence of Christ, our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer and coming Judge.

One of the things I love to do in studying the Old Testament is to follow the trajectory to the New and Jesus. We've already started that with Zechariah. Zechariah, this man who was both a priest and a prophet, probably born and raised in Babylon during the captivity, has been restored and we pick up his writing here in 520 B.C. He is accompanied by another prophet named Haggai that began his ministry two months earlier and he had been preceded by the triumvirate leadership that God had put in place to bring the people back from Babylon under the Medo-Persian Empire who are now restored under Cyrus in the Medo-Persian rule and decree.

How are they led back? There are three that lead them – Ezra, the extraordinary teacher who has a book in the Bible, then Zerubbabel, who is of the line of David, who was an appointed governor under Cyrus and thirdly, Joshua, the high priest, whom we're going to be studying when we returned to studying the book of Zechariah after the Advent season, because he shows up in the book of Zechariah in one of those amazing moments that bring us to the glory and majesty of Christ.

All of the Old Testament is pointing us there, and in particular Zechariah. One of the ways that Zechariah is bringing us to Christ, is that Christ actually personally shows up in Zechariah in the very first vision. He is the man on the Red Horse, the Angel of the Lord, resting in the myrtle trees with the company of Angelic Rangers, a reconnaissance group of the Lord that has gone throughout the world and brought back the report that the nations are at ease while the people of God are under oppression and adversity. **The** Angel of the Lord is an Old Testament expression. Whenever the second Person of the Trinity shows up, His pre Incarnation presence, He comes in the appearance of humanity. Other places in the Bible where the Angel of the Lord appears is in Exodus 3, Genesis 18 and 22 which identifies the pre Incarnate ministry of Christ.

Remember, Zechariah had eight visions. He had them all in one night and I don't think he got much sleep that night or perhaps it was rather fitful sleep but we're going now to his second vision. We're going to have to go back to the first vision, because the second vision is like the second step after the first one. You need to understand the first one to understand the second one and to understand the second one, you need to look at the context of the first one. But let's look at the second one, first of all.

Zechariah 1:18-21 says [18] And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns! [19] And I said to the angel (the angel of the Lord) who talked with me, "What are these?" And he said to me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." [20] Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. [21] And I said, "What are these coming to do?" He said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one raised his head. And these (referring to the craftsmen) have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it."

Zechariah here is in conversation with the second Person of the Trinity as he is seeing a pre Incarnate appearance of Christ. I want to take a moment to show you why we need to go back to the first vision. Notice here he says there are four horns, and in the Bible and in the context of literature in that era, the horns were used to refer to national, political, and military might. The other day I was looking at a YouTube video and it always amazes me that every time I turn on YouTube a video of someone killing another person or some animal killing another animal comes up on my YouTube. Recently I saw a very interesting one for when you think of predators in Africa, of the animal kingdom, one would typically think of a lion, right? In this video there was a lion who with pride, was stalking a herd of rhinoceros. I'm looking at this skilled predator designed for predatory activity, and then I see this rhinoceros weighing in at a couple of tons who doesn't seem to be all that agile. All of a sudden that lion went after that rhinoceros and it was *nolo contendere* for that rhinoceros with its horn picked that lion up about eight times and threw him about 15 feet up in the air. I don't know how many bones must have broken in that lion, but when it was all over, he just crawled underneath a bush to die. That's what we are seeing in this passage when you think of the horn. This is not the horn from an orchestra or a horn of plenty or even a horn that people honk on highway 280. It is a symbolic

statement of a large and mighty animal who is equipped with a horn or horns that are utterly destructive. It is used in this text to speak of political and military might of nations.

After the four horns he sees four craftsmen. Now, these are those who are able to deconstruct the horns or the nations that were destroying Israel, Jerusalem and Judah. They were particularly gifted not only to construct, but first of all, to destroy those who were deconstructing God's people. That's the picture that's given to you. This is building on the previous vision. Judah is the place they live. Israel is the name of the nation and Jerusalem is the capital. So the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and some of the tribes of Levi has now been restored back to this area after captivity. They have reclaimed the capital that has been destroyed which is Jerusalem and this is known as the Israel of God – the children of God that belong to Him.

Now, what has God said about Israel, Judah and Jerusalem? This is where we need to go back to the first vision that we have just finished studying. First, remember that when Jesus makes an appearance in the Old Testament it is not as an Incarnate Son of God. It's a pre Incarnate appearance of Christ. We call it a Christophany – an appearance of humanity but not actual humanity. The actual humanity of Christ awaits the virgin birth and His Incarnation. In this appearance He is not doing ministry of His Incarnation but do point to the future ministry of His Incarnation. What is Jesus doing right now in the heavens? He ever lives to make intercession for His people (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25). Here in Zechariah 1 in this Christophany, we will see the anticipation of the glorified Incarnate Christ interceding at the throne of God for His people. You see it by His intercession among the myrtle trees as He sits upon the red horse. He has a very specific request.

Zechariah 1:12-17 says [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 (of judgment and discipline)? [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 (the Mount of the temple). [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.'"

The Lord is jealous for that Mount Zion, for that capital city, Jerusalem, for His people, residing in Judah which is the Israel that has been restored after the captivity. He is jealous for His bride. He is angry with the nations who assault His people, not His people, for His disciplining judgment has come to a conclusion. He has restored His people – 40,000 to 50,000 as far as we know, the people of Israel in Jerusalem, in the region of Judah. This is the same language used in the second vision. So, the angel of the Lord informed Zechariah that he now has a message. Jesus is basically saying to Zechariah, "I'm going to give you your preaching message, Mr. Prophet, based upon the answer to My intercession." Do you see what He is asking for? He is asking for God to engage in His promised work of deliverance, which is rescuing and delivering His people from all of their enemies, and the gracious and encouraging words that come to Him, He now downloads to Zechariah – here is your sermon. It has three points.

His first point is that you have asked Me to return and I have returned. In fact, the presence of the angel of the Lord is a declaration He has returned. The fact that the people have been restored through the hand of Cyrus is manifest that He has returned. If He had not returned

His people would not have returned to Jerusalem and they have returned. The second point is that the temple on Mount Zion will be rebuilt. Here is a prophetic word and now we move from the past and present – I have returned and I am here – to the future. They had started on the temple but then quit as they were under assault from the surrounding nations.

Remember from the last study, the prophetic words of God in the Old Testament will have an immediate fulfillment. Then they will have a Christological fulfillment, and then they will have an ultimate or eschatological fulfillment. For instance, Abraham was promised a seed. The immediate fulfillment was Isaac. The Christological fulfillment is Christ. The ultimate eschatological fulfillment are those who are in union with Christ – all of His people are His seed that He has brought forth through Christ. The same thing is true with this temple. In the Old Testament there was the tabernacle, then the Solomon Temple and now they are going to rebuild what's called the Zerubbabel temple or the Second temple after their return from Babylon. He says it will be rebuilt and it was rebuilt. He says the glory of this that you see as small is going to be greater than the glory of the Solomon Temple.

He is anticipating two things in that statement that is made by Haggai referenced in Malachi and affirmed in Zechariah – the ultimate fulfillment of the temple being built is not the Zerubbabel temple, but Jesus Himself. The word became flesh and tabernacled, tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory and the glory of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and true (John 1:14). The second anticipation is the ultimate eschatological fulfillment where Christ, in the New Testament established three New Testament temples. One is the believer – do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19)? Two, the local church is a temple for He said to the Corinthians, ‘Do you not know that you (plural) are a temple (singular)? Then thirdly, Ephesians two, the church universal is the Temple of God that is built not with human hands, but with the hands of the Holy Spirit, and not with dry stones, but living stones.

As Zechariah is giving this message, I’m sure the people are thinking he is talking about the Zerubbabel temple, but God is going to have an unfolding fulfillment that will be seen in Christ and then for eternity in His church that He builds of those who are in Christ and Christ is in them.

The third point to his message is the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. The capital of Judah, Israel and the place within the environs is Mount Zion, upon which is the temple and this place is what He will measure it. You measure something when you own it. It’s another way for Him to say He owns it – He owns His people, Jerusalem, the temple, and all that He is redemptively going to produce from it.

Two times in the New Testament, Jesus cleanses the temple – one in the opening weeks of His ministry and in the last week of His ministry two times he cleanse the temple. The first time this happened it is recorded in John 2:16-19 which says [16] *And Jesus told those who sold the pigeons, “Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade.”* [17] *His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”* [18] *So the Jews said to Him, “What sign do you show us for doing these things?”* [19] *Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* Jesus refers to the temple as His Father’s house and this basically translate into Him telling them He owns it and He is the fulfillment of it.

So what He is saying here in Zechariah is ‘My people, this Jerusalem and the eschatological Jerusalem that will come down from heaven, the city of God, I own it. It's mine.’ That doesn't mean it won't be under assault. Even though we know God was silent 400 years we

know Satan wasn't for he is producing all kinds of false words from God – the pseudepigrapha, the Apocrypha. Satan is doing all kinds of things. Just because God's Word says this does not mean that the evil one does not come against it and what does Satan have to serve him? He has these tyrannical, political machines backed with military power – the nations of the world against the Kingdom of God and the city of God. So while God declares these three promises that doesn't mean there's not going to be an assault upon them.

Notice how Zechariah 1 ends. This is basically Zechariah's conclusion to his sermon from his first vision. Cry out again. He says, here's your sermon. Let me give you let me give you your conclusion to your sermon. I've just given you your three points. Now, let me give you the conclusion to your sermon from this first visions. Zechariah 1:17 which says [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.*”

In this first vision we have heard the words Jerusalem, Zion and Judah several times. In the first vision, there were two statements that God made that comforted the angel of the Lord in His intercession. One, He has come to be with His people; He owns them and He is jealous for them. The second statement He made was; I am angry with those who come against them. Now, the second vision tells you who is coming against Him and His people – the four horns, but God is jealous for His people, right? So, what does He come up with? God comes up with four craftsmen. A craftsman usually constructs but there's this little piece of construction work called deconstruction work. We had some work done on our house this past year and the construction workers said, ‘You need to hang some plastic because we've got to do some **demo work.**’

These craftsmen have been equipped by God to do the demo work of deconstructing those who would deconstruct His people, those who would attack His temple and His people. He now will bring those designed to dismantle and deconstruct them with His judgment upon them. I know some of you are connecting things and want to know who the four nations are that are coming against His people – Judah, Jerusalem, Mount Zion (the temple), and Israel – through their political focus backed by military and economic power. Great question.

I have four possibilities for you, but not who the nations of the four horns are but four possibilities of the four horns. One of them may be referring to Daniel 2, where Daniel speaks of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians and the Greeks who have brought the assault upon the people of God. The Assyrians came against the ten Northern Tribes, the Babylonians came against the two Southern tribes, then the Medo-Persians whom God uses to send His people back and then the Greeks who bring the Hellenistic paganism and apostasy among His people. So, it's possible He may be referring to those foreign nations, or secondly, He may be referring to another chapter of Daniel where the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks and the coming oppressors, Rome itself.

A third possibility is that He is not referring to the individual nations, but referring to the four points of the compass from which nations have come – from the North it could be Syria, Babylon, from the East, from the West it could be the Medo-Persians, from the South it could be the Egyptians. He may be just referring to this conglomeration of a continued unofficial alliance of the nations who rise up. In other words, the four horns may be a way to anticipate the picture in the Book of Revelation that at the end times, the Kingdom of God is going to be under assault by two beasts. There is the beast of the sea, which is representative of tyrannical governments, who would assault the Kingdom of God and the people of God. The second one is the beast of the land, which is the apostate church that sells out to the beast of the sea and becomes the

handmaiden as the church accommodates the cultural demands of the beast of the sea, instead of being prophetic and speaking the truth of God's Word.

The fourth possibility, is it could be all three. Being the postmodern that I am, I kind of like that idea that it could be all three, but if you ask me to pick, I would say I think it's referring to the four corners of the earth, the four points of the compass, and any and all nations, not just those that are outlined for us in the Book of Daniel. Here is one of my reasons why; the way Daniel goes from four here to four there with them being somewhat different that is just entirely too messy for me. I have to have symmetry and a way to connect the dots and I wouldn't know which one of those to go with. I prefer maybe to think of the way the Bible speaks of the four corners of the earth. It's one of the completion and that's telling you that any and every nation has its inclination to come against the Kingdom of God unless God's common grace restrains them through God's transforming grace at work within their borders.

Now, who are the four craftsmen? It's any and all that God raises up to destroy those who would make their objective to destroy the people of God. Ultimately He says in Zechariah 1:21, *[21] And I said, "What are these (craftsmen) coming to do?" He said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one raised his head. And these (referring to the craftsmen) have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it (destroy it)."*

In other words, Judah became passive and the object of derision and scorn because of those who had raised up against God's people. Then He speaks of the nations that have terrified God's people with military, political and economic might. Here's the bottom line to walk away with. Zechariah is putting together message. God says that He loves His people with a jealous love and has anger against any and all who would bring destruction upon His people. God has returned, is with His people and will be with His people. He will rebuild the temple, not only the Zerubbabel temple, but it's ultimate fulfillment in Christ, and then this eschatological fulfillment in Christ's church which He owns and He owns His people. He buys them with His blood and He owns His city. And He owns the ultimate city of Jerusalem, which is the one that comes down from heaven. He owns the ultimate Israel that is not identified by the circumcision of the flesh, but by the circumcision of the heart. He owns all of it. He will bring judgment ultimately and finally against who would seek to scatter her (His people) or destroy her.

So, what is God telling us here? I will draw from my professor of Old Testament at Westminster Seminary. God's judgments will not only track down His enemies and the enemies of His people, but He will do all that's necessary to pour His wrath upon them and bring judgment upon them. When He tracks them down, He will have in place what is necessary to bring and pour His wrath upon them. Concerning the four horns, these four craftsmen He has designed them to do the job.

Once I heard an evangelist whom I love use as an illustration in an evangelistic meeting. At the end of his sermon, he said, "I've shared the gospel with you that Jesus loves sinners and He's ready to save you. I know you have an enemy of your soul who is Satan. As you sit there tonight, Satan votes against you and God votes for you. Now is the moment for you to cast the deciding vote." Afterwards, I said to him, "My dear friend, that was moving and it was relatively effective. There's only one problem, the theology was terrible because when God votes and Satan votes, there is no tie, *nolo contendere*, no contest. God is the victor." God will not only track down His enemies, but He will bring the judgment upon them that is required.

His great Craftsman, who fashions all other craftsman, is His Son Jesus, who went to the cross and defeated sin, death, hell, and the grave. When He comes again, He will cast them all into the lake of fire. He has a jealous love for His people. He defeated not only His enemies, but our enemies and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ. He has crafted all that's necessary to keep us.

Romans 8:31-39 says [31] *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? [33] Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. [34] Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.[35] Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [36] As it is written,*

*“For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

*[37] No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.** [38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

If God before us, it's no contest who can be against us. It's not that we don't have the world, the flesh and the devil against us, but it's no contest. Our God reigns. It's a great privilege to pastor Christ's Church with those assurances. Let's pray.

Prayer:

God, thank You so much for these moments we could be together in Your Word. We ask that You would guide, direct and superintend over all in Jesus' name, that Savior who is the Savior of His people and nothing can stop Him. He who began a good work will complete it, in Jesus' Name, Amen.