

Lesson 4

Last week when we ended we had just started looking at Zechariah's second vision: the vision of the four horns, which starts in verse 18 of Chapter 1. So far, Zechariah has seen four horns, which represent earthly powers that have scattered the people of God. The vision continues in verse 20.

Zechariah 1:20-21

20 And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. 21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Verse 20 introduces four carpenters. The Hebrew word translated "carpenter" here means "smith," and it could include a worker in wood, stone, or iron. Those who favor wood suggest these carpenters have come to finish the paneling in the temple, but I think workers in stone or iron is perhaps the better view. These workers are about to confront some very powerful enemies.

That we see *four* carpenters gives us another reason why it would have been improper to change the four horns into two animals as we discussed last week. Zechariah sees four horns and four carpenters.

Recall also from last week that the number four is often used to figuratively denote the earth. Because we have four carpenters it seems that the focus is still on the earth. These four carpenters likely depict the mighty agents of God who carry out God's will on earth and punish the great earthly powers that are arrayed as enemies against his people.

These carpenters must have arrived with their tools because the next question is not "who are these people," but rather "what come these to do?" What have they come to do to these four horns?

And this is where I really love the KJV - verse 21 says that they have come to "fray" them and to cast them out. "Fray" is not a word we see that often, but it is the root word of the word "afraid." These carpenters are coming to frighten these horns and cast them out.

You mean there is something out there that can terrify the mighty empires of this world? Yes - in fact, terror is what ultimately awaits all who are outside of God's family. But that terror was even closer for the current mighty power, Persia.

A Brief Side Trip

Alexander the Great would be born in less than 200 years, and he would turn mighty Persia upside down, and we will see him prophetically described later in this book.

How did he do it? How did Alexander create one of the largest empires in the ancient world by the age of 30 and be undefeated in battle? Alexander founded cities that remain to this very day. How?

It is forever a puzzle to anyone who has not studied the Bible, but we know the answer to that puzzle. God was using Alexander to punish Persia, and God was also using Alexander to create the perfect Greco-Roman setting into which God would later send his Son and spread his gospel.

It was no accident that Jesus came into this world when and where he did.

Galatians 4:4 - But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

God created the perfect setting for Jesus to come and establish his eternal kingdom, the church. How was it the perfect setting?

After the death of Alexander, his empire was divided up among his generals. Ptolemy and his successors established themselves in Egypt and at first controlled Palestine as well. The Seleucids controlled Mesopotamia and Syria. There was constant friction between these two groups, and as was often the case, Palestine became a battlefield.

The spread of the gospel would have been greatly hindered if this constant warfare had been allowed to continue. The fourth kingdom, Rome, put an end to it and brought instead the famous *pax Romana*, the Roman peace. Here is how Wikipedia describes it:

Pax Romana (Latin for Roman peace) was the long period of relative peace and minimal expansion by military force experienced by the Roman Empire in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. ... Its span was approximately 206 years (27 BC to 180 AD). The *pax Romana* is said to be a "miracle" because prior to it there had never been peace for that many centuries in a given area of human history.

You don't need quotation marks around the word "miracle" in that last sentence!

The importance of the Roman peace, the pax Romana, cannot be overstated. The Greeks' hobby was war. The church would have had a much more difficult time reaching beyond Jerusalem had the Greeks still been in charge.

But the perfect cradle for Christ and his kingdom was not just Rome, but it was Greece and Rome, the Greco-Roman empire. The Greek language, which had been around since 800 BC and in which the New Testament was penned, had twice the vocabulary of Latin.

Those who believe that Christianity is anti-intellectual and irrational should note that Christianity began at a time of Greek intellectualism and rationality, and again that was no accident. It is no accident that the church was established, not in a time of superstition, but in a time of rational inquiry.

Greek thought is admired even to this very day. In fact, it has been said that the Greek contribution to western philosophy was western philosophy!

So you have the Greek language and Greek rationality combined with Roman peace across the known world. To this day, historians puzzle over how that all came to be, but Bible believers don't have to puzzle over it at all.

If you really want a faith-building experience, just pick up a secular history book describing the time from Persia through first century Rome. You will see the hand of God working on every page. Here's an example from the book *Rome and Her Enemies*:

Lying at its heart is a mystery as profound as any in the records of human civilization. How on earth did the Romans do it? How did a single city, one that began as a small community of castle-rustlers, camped out among marshes and hills, end up ruling an empire that stretched from the moors of Scotland to the deserts of Iraq?

How on earth, he asks? Those events was not caused by anyone on earth. God caused them to happen, and Daniel and Zechariah both prophesied about them in detail 500 years before the Roman empire began.

Now, back to the visions.

Chapter 2

Zechariah 2:1-2

**I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.
2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.**

This is Zechariah's third vision: the vision of the measuring line.

Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line in his hand, and he asks the man where he is going - that is, where are you going to measure?

The man answers that he is going out to measure Jerusalem. What does that mean?

Remember that we are at this time in the year 519 BC. The wall around the city is still just a pile of rubble. The wall would not be rebuilt until about 70 years later when Nehemiah arrived in 445 BC.

This lack of protection must have made the people very anxious, and must have caused them to wonder how long this new temple would last without any walls to protect it. Measuring the city would have been the first step in rebuilding the walls.

One of our interpretive guidelines is that we should carefully examine elsewhere in the Bible where a symbol we are studying is used. But we need to be careful in creating parallels where none exist.

Many commentaries go to great lengths to compare this vision in Zechariah 2 with the vision of the new temple in Ezekiel 40-48, but there are significant differences.

Ezekiel's vision is focused on the temple, while this vision is focused on the city as a whole. And the role of the wall in Ezekiel is to separate what is holy from what is common, while here the purpose of the wall is to provide protection.

I don't think we need to turn to Ezekiel to understand what is happening here in Zechariah 2. Let's keep reading.

Zechariah 2:3-5

3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, 4 And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: 5 For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.

Two angels join the scene in verse 3 - the one that had been talking to Zechariah (presumably in an earlier vision) and another angel who goes out to meet him. One of the angels tells the other angel to run (not walk!) and give "this young man" a message.

Before we look at the message, let's ask another question: who is this young man?

We really have only two choices - either the young man is the man with the measuring line or the young man is Zechariah.

If the young man is Zechariah, then we certainly have confirmation here of something we discussed in the introductory class - Zechariah was a young man.

But if the young man is Zechariah, then what about the man with the measuring line? Does he just step off the stage without playing any role? And why does Zechariah need the angel to run and tell him something that verse 4 suggests he was able to hear when the first angel said it? I think this young man is most likely not Zechariah, but is instead the man with the measuring line.

But why is he called a young man?

The Hebrew word used here for "young man" can also denote a servant in a household or an official in a court or temple. I think its use here is most likely in that latter sense because the context is focused on what he is doing rather than on his age - this man is an official of some sort tasked with measuring the city.

This official is going out to measure, but there is something very important he needs to hear first. So important that an angel is told to run and tell him. What is that message?

Verses 4-5: *Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.*

This important message is an unexpected message - he is told that Jerusalem doesn't need any walls! In fact, he is told that Jerusalem will be a city without walls. Why? Because God will be their wall, and God will be their glory.

Why the mention of fire in verse 5? That seems surprising because fire was usually associated with the destruction of walls. Perhaps it is a reminder of who has the true fire and the true power to destroy. "For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). That explanation fits well with what we are about to see in this vision.

I said that this message was unexpected. Why? Because the people were worried about their lack of protection and wanted a wall, but here the one who is about to build that wall is told that no wall is needed.

But it is an unexpected message for another reason, and particularly for those of us who have read ahead in the Bible. Why? Because here the people are told that they don't need a man-made wall, but Nehemiah will soon build a man-made wall anyway. How do we explain that?

The point of this vision is **not** to tell the people that they don't need to build a wall to protect themselves. I know that on the surface that sounds exactly like the point of this vision - but it is not. How do we know that? Because Nehemiah tells us in Nehemiah 6:16 that the wall was the work of God.

So what then is the point of this vision?

The problem is not whether the people needed a physical wall. The problem was that this man with a measuring line thought he could measure the city of God! He thought he could draw a circle around Jerusalem and contain God, the work of God, and the city of God within it.

But his conception of the city of God and the work of God was too small. He had failed to understand the far greater things that God had promised. This man with the measuring line needed to think of the Jerusalem of God in far grander terms.

With that thought in mind, listen again to the answer in verses 4-5:

Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein:
For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the

midst of her.

This man needed to see things as God saw them - and that is a theme that runs all throughout the Bible, and especially in this book. Zechariah will constantly be telling the people to lift up their eyes to see what God was preparing for his people.

When they looked around all they saw were ruins, but when they looked through the eyes of faith they could see much, much more. And Zechariah, perhaps more often than any other Old Testament prophet, lifts that prophetic curtain so that the people could see what was God was doing for them.

God's plan was not just to bless Jerusalem. God's plan, as he had promised Abraham long before, was to bless the entire world through the coming Messiah.

Verse 4 says that no walls would be able to contain all of the people and cattle living in the city. When would this happen?

Zechariah is about to do something here that he will do again and again in this book - Zechariah is about to look beyond the present situation to instead look far down the years of time to see what God was preparing for his people. And verses 6-13 describe that wonderful (then) future promise.

Zechariah 2:6-9

6 Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. 7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. 8 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. 9 For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me.

The key word in verses 6-9 is the first word in verse 7 - **deliver!** These verses are a promise of deliverance.

God's people are told in verses 6 and 7 to get out of the way because God is about to punish Babylon! We see something very similar in Revelation. There God's people are told to get out of the way while Jesus defeats the entire Roman empire by himself!

Yes, we are to wear the whole armor of God, but here and later in Revelation we see, not us fighting for Jesus, but Jesus fighting for us!

Why the land of the **north** in verse 6? Babylon is more east than north from Jerusalem, but the road to and from Babylon is due north from Jerusalem. Anyone coming to Jerusalem from Babylon would come from the north as they bypassed the desert and followed the Euphrates River.

Verse 8 is beautiful. How much does God love and care for his faithful people? How does God see us? How does God feel about those who persecute us? "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

We are the apple of God's eye! Just think about that the next time you are tempted to feel discouraged or unloved. If we could only see ourselves as God sees us, I am convinced that we would be transformed. The church is beautiful and powerful beyond description. That's how God sees us. Is that how we see ourselves?

What does verse 8 mean when it says, "after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you"? What is this glory? Who are "he" and "me"?

First, the "me" is the speaker, who is identified in verse 8 as the Lord of hosts. So who is the "he"? Who can send the Lord of hosts to do something?

I think the best way to understand verse 8 is to view the speaker here as the Angel of the Lord (while being called the Lord of hosts). Most commentaries agree:

From this point onward throughout the chapter there is a peculiar change of subject; sometimes the Lord speaks as the Lord; sometimes concerning the Lord. [Perhaps] this is for the purpose of indicating, on the one hand, the identity of this "Angel of the Lord" with the Lord and, on the other hand, a personal distinction from Him.

We will see this again in Zechariah 3:2, where "Lord" will be used to refer to the Angel of the Lord.

We earlier discussed the possibility that the Angel (or Messenger) of the Lord in these visions is the preincarnate Christ. If so, then God here is once again lifting the prophetic curtain to let them the people of Zechariah's day see something they should have already understood. The Messiah is God.

Isaiah 9:6 - For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon

his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, **The mighty God**, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

What about the glory in verse 8? What does it mean that "after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you"? That is the reason why the Lord of hosts was sent to spoil these nations - for glory.

Isaiah 59:19 - So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, **and his glory from the rising of the sun**. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

This vision reminds us of Jeremiah 50-51, which is a lengthy attack on Babylon for its treatment of Jerusalem and the temple.

- Here in verse 7 we see the daughter of Babylon, and we see the daughter of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:42 and 51:33.
- Here in verse 6 we see the land of the north, and in Jeremiah 50:9 we read: "For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country."

So if the people were wondering when the prophecies of Isaiah 13-14 and Jeremiah 50-51 would occur, the answer here is that they are yet future. The verb tenses are future - "I **will** shake mine hand upon them, and they **shall** be a spoil to their servants."

So **when** would it happen? Verses 10-13 will help us answer that question, but I think Daniel also helps us answer that question.

Daniel 2:44 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

A study of Daniel 2 shows us that "these kings" in Daniel 2:44 are the first century Roman emperors. And the powerful eternal kingdom of Daniel 2 is the church that was established in Acts 2.

The Babylonians may have worried about the Persians. The Persians may have worried about the Greeks. The Greeks may have worried about the Romans. The Romans may have worried about the Parthians and the Barbarians. But they all should instead have been worried about the coming

kingdom of Christ, which would sweep them all away!

Zechariah 2:10-13

10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. 11 And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee. 12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. 13 Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

Before we study these verses, I think it would be helpful to briefly consider another question. The promises in this book are for the faithful people of God. At the time this book was written, the faithful people of God were the faithful Jews, many of whom had returned to Jerusalem and were rebuilding the temple. The immediate blessings in this book are directed to them. **But to whom are the future blessings directed? And a related question - who are the people of God today**?**

In one way the answer to that question has never changed over the centuries, but in another way the answer is very different today. The answer has always been the same in the sense that God's people have always been the faithful remnant who love, trust, and obey him. That was true then, and it is true today. It has always been true.

But who are those people today? Look around. We in the church are those people today, and sadly (I will say, echoing Romans 9:2) the church today is primarily composed of Gentiles. That's a very big change from the days of Zechariah, but the Bible is crystal clear on this point - we in the church are the people of God today.

1 Peter 2:9 - But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people.

Romans 2:29 - But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Philippians 3:3 - For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Matthew 21:43 - Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Romans 11:5 - Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

Galatians 3:7 - Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Ephesians 2:19-22 - Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Now back to verses 11-13. To whom are those verses directed? We just saw a big hint. Ephesians 2:22 described the church as a habitation of God - the dwelling place of God. Back to Zechariah 2:

- Look at verse 10: "I will **dwelt** in the midst of thee."
- Look at verse 11: "I will **dwelt** in the midst of thee."
- Look at verse 13: "for he is raised up out of his **holy habitation**."

Let's turn to Isaiah for another big hint. First look here at verse 11: "And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people." Now look at Isaiah 2:2-3.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Those verses in Isaiah 2 were fulfilled when the church was established in Acts 2. How do we know that? Because Luke 24:47 and Acts 2 tell us so.

Luke 24:47 - And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among

all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

That verse from Luke 24 is a clear tie between Isaiah 2 and Acts 2. And Ephesians 2 gives us another such tie.

Ephesians 2:16-17 - And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

That is the peace that was prophesied in Isaiah 2 and that was preached in Acts 2.

These verses in Zechariah are saying the same thing as Isaiah 2 and pointing to the same great event - the establishment of the eternal, unshakable, immovable kingdom of Christ in Acts 2.

Psalm 2. Isaiah 2. Daniel 2. Joel 2. Zechariah 2. Acts 2. Ephesians 2. You can learn a great deal about the church just by sticking to the chapter two's of the Bible!

But how do we know that the focus of the vision has shifted from Zechariah's day to a future day? Most importantly we know it from our study of the rest of the Bible. We can see the same prophecies elsewhere (as in Isaiah 2), and we can see their fulfillment in Acts 2 (in the first century, 500 years later).

Also, we know that a shift in time has occurred from studying history. We know what did happen in Zechariah's day and what did not happen. We see God telling them that they won't need a wall, and then we see God telling them to build a wall. That also lets us know the time frame has shifted in this prophecy.

And we have an important textual indication - look at verse 11. "And many nations shall be joined to the LORD **in that day**, and shall be my people."

"In that day." That phrase occurs 22 times in Zechariah, and, as we will see, it usually indicates a significant shift forward in time. This is its first occurrence in the book.

The beautiful Messianic prophecy in Haggai 2 (that was being preached at this same time) also uses the phrase "in that day."

Haggai 2:23 - **In that day**, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant,

the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

So when did all of this happen?

- I will dwell in the midst of thee?
- Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people?
- The LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land?
- The LORD shall choose Jerusalem again?
- The LORD is raised up out of his holy habitation?

When did all of that happen? Don't we all know the answer to that question? Each of those promises was fulfilled in the first century when the promised Messiah came and established his promised eternal kingdom.

Ephesians 2:22 - In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Luke 2:30-32 - For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Romans 11:26-27 - And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

Finally, notice that in this third vision we saw a part of the vision that was fulfilled in Zechariah's day and another part of the vision that was fulfilled when Jesus came and established his kingdom. Keep that in mind - we will see that type of dual fulfillment again.

#Zechariah