



ZECHARIAH, Being the People of God

Living Without Walls

Lesson 2 Zechariah 2:1-13

SECOND NIGHT VISION: GOD THAT SHOWS MERCY (1:18-21)

1:18 “Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.”

Zechariah sees four horns. The imagery of horns is often used in the Bible to symbolize power, strength, kings and kingdoms (see, e.g., Psalm 18:2, 75:10, 89:24, 132:17; Jeremiah 48:25; Daniel 8). Based on the next verse, the horns here are Gentile nations. Consistent with the vision in Zechariah 6 and the concept seen in several places in Scripture of the earth having four directions or four corners (e.g., Isaiah 11:12, Revelation 7:1), that there are four horns seen here does not mean that God has four distinct Gentile nations in mind. Rather, the idea is that of Gentile oppressors of Judah coming at it from all sides or directions.

1:19 “And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What *be* these? And he answered me, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”

As Zechariah did in 1:9, he again asks the angel to help him understand what he sees. Zechariah wants to understand what the horns represent. The angel of the Lord explains that the four horns represent Gentile oppressors, not only against Judah (the Southern Kingdom), but also Israel (the Northern Kingdom) and the city of Jerusalem. Certainly these horns included Babylon, but it is unlikely that God intends for us to understand the horns to represent four specific nations. If God had intended that we draw such a conclusion, the angel of the Lord would have identified the four nations to Zechariah. Instead, he only indicated that the horns “*scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.*” The concept of “four” speaks to the totality of the scattering.

1:20 “And the LORD showed me four carpenters.”

Corresponding to the “*four horns*” are “*four carpenters.*” The Hebrew word translated carpenter is a generic term that can refer to any artisan. The point is that horns destroy and carpenters (or artisans) build and restore. Since the horns represent nations, it is reasonable to assume that the carpenters do also.

1:21 “Then said I, What come these to do? And he spoke, saying, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to frighten them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up *their* horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.”

Zechariah implores the angel of the Lord to explain to him what the carpenters and horns represent. The horns are Gentile nations that have scattered Judah, but the carpenters are deliverers of Judah. Again, we need not try to identify four specific nations. The concept of “*four*” here is symbolic. Just as there was a complete scattering of Judah (by the Babylonians) and Israel (by the Assyrians), there will also be a complete removal of Gentile oppressors from the Land.

QUESTION

10. Why do the horns oppress Israel? Have Gentile powers ceased oppressing Israel?

THIRD NIGHT VISION

2:1 “I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.”

Using similar language to the language in 1:18 that initiated the Second Night Vision, Zechariah tells us here, “I lifted up mine eyes again.” We are to understand that he is reporting to us exactly what he sees. In this instance, it is a man with a measuring line. We should probably understand the “man” to be an angel, just as Zechariah used that description several times in the first night vision in chapter 1. The idea is that he is charged with measuring the dimensions of something. The next verse tells us what he is measuring. This vision relates back to God’s promise in the first night vision and continues the idea: “I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it,” saith the Lord of hosts, “and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.”

2:2 “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.”

Zechariah interacts with the angel in his vision. He wants to know what the angel is going to measure, and the angel informs him that he is charged with measuring the dimensions of Jerusalem. At one time, Jerusalem had walls in which the length and breadth could be measured, but those walls were (at least partially) destroyed by the invading Babylonians. Zechariah was living in a Jerusalem without adequate security. In that historical context, a city with inadequate walls was a “sitting duck” for invasion and plunder, a point that will come up again in verse 4. Zechariah is seeing the measuring of Jerusalem so that the boundaries can be reestablished preparatory to the city’s full reoccupation. Ultimately, it is God’s agent doing the measuring and therefore God that will rebuild, in accordance with His own specifications. The prophet Jeremiah had anticipated such a day when he, prior to the fall of Jerusalem, had redeemed the property of his uncle against the day when the Babylonian exile would be over and land could be reclaimed (Jeremiah 32:6-15). As this chapter unfolds, it becomes evident that it has some measure of near term fulfillment for the people of Zechariah’s day, but also looks to a future complete fulfillment. The complete fulfillment in this instance is the New Jerusalem. In Revelation 21:10-17, John has a similar vision to Zechariah’s and again the city is measured by the angel, the city with God as its architect and king.

2:3 “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:”

Zechariah is privy to the discussions among the two angels and it seems that one angel has authority over the other. The angel with authority commands the other to “run” to Zechariah, a “young man.” The reason for his running is that the message is one of urgency. And the message is “good words and comfortable words” (Zechariah 1:13). God is telling Zechariah through the angel that the city of Jerusalem shall be inhabited by so many people that it cannot be contained by walls. This is quite a contrast to what Zechariah could see in the Jerusalem of his day. This vision, as with much of Zechariah’s book, looks to both an immediate fulfillment and a more complete distant (or eschatological) fulfillment. Some 75 years after Zechariah’s visions in the time of Nehemiah (445 B.C.), Nehemiah records the disarray of Jerusalem, particularly the absence of walls (Nehemiah 1:3). This prompted Nehemiah, as governor of Judah, to journey to Jerusalem and supervise the rebuilding of the walls (Nehemiah 2:9-6:19). Zechariah did not say the city would not have walls, only that the walls could not contain the multitude. The events of Nehemiah’s day provide a partial fulfillment of Zechariah’s vision, but the best is yet to come.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to live by faith and not by sight (consider Habakkuk 1:2-4 and 2:4; 2 Corinthians 5:7)? What are Zechariah's possible responses to what God has said about Jerusalem?
 2. Can God's blessings toward you be measured? What are some of God's blessings toward you promised in the Bible?
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2:5 “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.”

From this verse, we know that Zechariah's vision has not been completely fulfilled. There will be a time in the future when Jerusalem will not need walls of protection because the LORD will dwell there and He will be “*a wall of fire round about*” the city. We know this has not been fulfilled yet. After Zechariah's time, Jerusalem would see violence and destruction again and again (e.g., from Antiochus IV Epiphanes, from the Romans in 70 A.D.) and even to this day, Jerusalem is at risk of another attack. But there is a future time, recorded in Ezekiel 37-38, where some of the nations surrounding Israel will mount an attack of unprecedented proportions and God will be a wall of fire and strike them down. The complete fulfillment will be in the Kingdom when Jesus himself rules and reigns from Jerusalem and the city has complete security. Following the first 1,000 years of the Kingdom (sometimes referred to as the Millennial Kingdom), Jesus will rule and reign from the “*New Jerusalem*” (Revelation 20-21; also Hebrews 11:10-16, 12:22, 13:14) and will dwell there forever with all of the children of God who were saved throughout history up until Jesus' second coming. At that point, sin and all of its terrible consequences will have been totally eliminated as God dwells with His people forever in the new heaven and new earth. Much of the future of Jerusalem is also recorded later in chapters 8 through 14.

QUESTIONS

3. What is the eternal destination of the believer?
 4. What can a person do to feel safe and secure (physically, emotionally, spiritually)?
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2:6 “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.”

The phrase “*Ho, ho*” is a call to immediate attention. God is calling His people to “*flee from the land of the north*,” a reference to the area that was held by the Babylonians and in Zechariah's day, the Medo-Persians. God had allowed the Babylonians to scatter His people and the scattering was complete (note the symbolic use of the “*four winds of the heaven*”). But now God is calling for their return. This is God's invitation to return to blessing, an invitation to return to Him both physically and spiritually. This return will have a present or near fulfillment, relative to Zechariah's time, and a distant complete fulfillment. From Zechariah's perspective, many more Jewish people will return to Israel in the future, and by the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, Judah is well populated again with Jewish people. Despite this partial return, a substantial portion of the people would remain scattered in Jesus' day (the *Diaspora*) and up to the present day. But there awaits a future gathering together for Israel. Just as the “*four winds*” are used to describe the scattering of God's people, they are also used to describe their regathering during the Tribulation, “*And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” (Matthew 24:31).

QUESTION

5. What does the regathering of Israel in the future, notwithstanding their rebellion, say about the character of God (see Genesis 17:1-8)?
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2:7 “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with the daughter of Babylon.*”

God speaks to Zion. Although technically a mountain in Jerusalem, the word is often used figuratively for all of Jerusalem, and promises to Jerusalem are representative of promises to the entire nation. Similarly, the phrase “*daughter of Babylon*” is an expression that simply refers to the city of Babylon or its inhabitants, and by implication the rest of the nation. In Zechariah’s day, most Jewish people had not returned from Babylonian captivity. Although the Babylonian rule was ended, the Jewish people remained where the Babylonians had placed them, and indeed many of them remained in the city of Babylon. To these scattered people, God says “*Deliver thyself.*” The point is that God has freed them to return and that they should do so. Imbedded here is a test of faith that parallels their earlier exodus from Egypt. God has not made it look easy, nor has He supernaturally rebuilt Jerusalem for them, but God has made the way for their safe return to Judah, and the choice to return is theirs. They can remain where they no longer belong (from God’s perspective) or they can take a faith journey home, stepping out on faith in God’s promise of provision and safety.

QUESTION

6. What does it mean for a child of God to “step out in faith”? What is the difference between faith and presumption?
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2:8 “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.”

The phrase “after the glory” is perhaps the most debated part of the entire book of Zechariah. It is best to understand the word “glory” as it is used so often throughout the Old Testament in reference to God’s presence. Zechariah is concerned here and again in verse 9 with the confirmation that he is God’s prophet and that his message is really from God, especially here where the message is not only for Israel but the whole world. Thus, “after the glory” means after God first appeared to Zechariah to call him as a prophet. After Zechariah’s calling, God gave him a word for the nations. This does not mean that he will go to the nations, but that God has a message for the nations that Zechariah will proclaim. It is not arbitrary that the announcement Zechariah will make comes from the LORD of hosts, the LORD of armies, the One who can carry out His judgments in force. Zechariah warns the nations that those who touch (with intent to harm) Judah are like those who would dare to place their finger on the pupils of God’s own eyes. This verse does not teach that God has physical eyes. Instead, this is a figure of speech called an anthropomorphism in which God is viewed as having human characteristics in order to more clearly express a truth about God.

QUESTION

7. Has Israel ceased being the apple of God’s eye (see Romans 11:1)? What does this verse say to those nations in our day that support or oppress Israel?
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2:9 “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.”

Zechariah’s proclamation for the Heathen nations that are at rest (recall 1:11) is that God is coming after them in judgment. The idea of God shaking His hands is an anthropomorphism for God executing judgment, just as in other Old Testament passages. (see, e.g., Isaiah 10:32, 11:15). Their

own slaves shall spoil them, just as they did when God brought them out of Egypt. When they experience the judgment of God, they will know that Zechariah's proclamation was truly from the LORD of hosts.

2:10 "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD."

God's message of future blessing to Jerusalem ("*daughter of Zion*") is a cause for singing and rejoicing. God is going to dwell in Jerusalem. Once again, there is a near term and more distant fulfillment. The language "I come" indicates God's imminent action, and we know that in Zechariah's day God did supernaturally protect and provide so that Judah could rebuild. Ultimately, however, God permitted further judgment as well. What awaits future fulfillment is a time of permanent security with God dwelling in their midst forever. (Revelation 21:22, 22:3-5).

2:11 "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."

Not only will God dwell in Jerusalem, but at that future point in time ("*that day*"), Gentiles will also enjoy the blessing of dwelling with God and being His people. This fulfills the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. Other prophetic texts also look forward to this future time of unity of all of God's people. (Isaiah 2:2-4, 25:6-10, 56:1-8, 66:18-24; Jeremiah 3:17; Daniel 7:14; Micah 4:2; At that future time, it will be acknowledged that Zechariah's message was truly the message of the LORD of hosts.

QUESTION

8. How does God bring many nations together as one people (see Ephesians 2:11-18)?

2:12 "And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."

In the future when God dwells in Jerusalem, the nation of Judah will be His and Jerusalem will be blessed. That the text says "*his portion in the holy land*" suggests that the holy land is much larger than just Judah. We must remember that God promised Abraham a possession of land to his people and that land area was never fully occupied by Israel (Genesis 15:18). Only in the future Kingdom is the entire land finally inhabited.

2:13 "Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation."

The world must be silent before the LORD as He begins taking action to fulfill what He has spoken through Zechariah. This is a picture of the entire world's submission to the will of the Lord, particularly the future blessing of God's people (Jewish and Gentile) outlined in this chapter of Zechariah. Nothing can stop God. We know God's Word will be honored in all creation: "I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." (Isaiah 45:23). And we know from New Testament revelation that all of this is fulfilled in Jesus Christ: "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth."