

## Message #4

## Zechariah 1:18-21

Back in 1971, when I was in radio, I used to play a John Lennon song “Imagine.” John Lennon wrote a song, which was half-communist and half-socialist, about imagining a time when the world is united, in peace, as one. Some of the lyrics were these: “Imagine all the people living life in peace; you may say I’m a dreamer but I’m not the only one I hope someday you’ll join us and the world will be as one.” Lennon was writing about some world utopia where everybody just loved everybody and we existed as one. That would be nice; but how is that accomplished? How is this achieved?

Well one political scholar said there are five steps to world peace:

- 1) First, we must find inner peace with ourselves—shower daily, exercise, eat and meditate.
- 2) Second, we must perform acts of kindness.
- 3) We must create a work-life balance.
- 4) We must eliminate prejudices.
- 5) We must resolve to be happy.

So let’s say we took this formula to share with the radical Islamic Muslims who hate the United States and hate Israel. Let’s say we sit down with them and say, now what we want you to do is shower daily, exercise and meditate. Go out and do nice things for people. Just let your prejudices float off into the sunset and be happy. How do you think that would work? Do you really think that would produce the peace John Lennon imagined? I think not.

**What the world does not realize and what most politicians don’t know is that the key to world peace is God and the key to God granting world peace is Israel (Zech. 9:10). This is not a viewpoint formed by studying political science; this is a conclusion that comes straight from God’s Word.**

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said you never hear this in political discussions because our politicians are so ignorant of the Bible. What they don’t realize is that the nation Israel is the key to world peace (Zechariah 1:18-21, *The Four Horns and the Four Smiths*, p. 6).

**Israel is the key to world peace.** It is not China, it is not North Korea, it is not Iran, it is not Russia. Israel, according to the Word of God, is the key to world peace. When Israel is in her land, in peace, the whole world will be at peace.

In fact, God permits powers to exist in the world that are negative because Israel is not right with Him. When she finally is in a right relationship with Him, those powers will no longer exist.

No one who takes an honest look at the Middle East cannot help but be totally amazed by the fact that Israel, as a nation, has survived and still exists, in spite of the fact that many nations of the world have literally tried to exterminate her.

I remember reading of one Bible teacher who was challenged to prove the Bible was the inspired Word of God. The Bible teacher said I can easily prove it by one proper noun—Israel.

The fact that Israel is still here and still waiting for her land is certainly not due to her faithfulness; it is due to the prophetic plan and promises of God. **The national survival of Israel is a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.**

No matter who Israel's enemies are—Arabs, Iranians, Russians, Germans, Syrians, Muslims—Israel is still here and she will continue to be here. She has survived unimaginable things because of the sovereign plan and protection of God. God has a plan for Israel and that plan does include powers who come up against her and then are destroyed by God.

That point is clearly taught in this second vision of Zechariah. The point of the vision is this:

**THE VISION OF THE FOUR HORNS AND FOUR CRAFTSMEN IS GIVEN TO ZECHARIAH TO SHOW ISRAEL THAT EVENTUALLY GOD WILL SCATTER AND CRUSH ALL THOSE NATIONS WHO AFFLICTED ISRAEL.**

We may recall that Zechariah was a young man who went to bed one night and he had quite a night. God revealed to Him eight prophetic visions in one night. Now in the first vision we saw that Jesus Christ (the Angel of the LORD) was with Israel, specifically closely connected to her land. Moses said in Deuteronomy 11:12 that Israel's land is "a land for which the LORD your God cares; **the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it...**".

Now at the time that Zechariah was shown this, the nations who were not even right with God, were peaceful and quiet, and Israel was in turmoil, being dominated by those nations. So God said you need to know I will return to Israel again, I will return to Jerusalem, I will see that the Temple is built and I will bless and prosper the cities and you will be in peace."

We may remember that one question the angel of the LORD asked is "how long" before this happens or when will it happen? How long will Israel be under the Divine displeasure and discipline of an angry God (1:12)? How long before Israel gets all of the blessings of God?

So God gave Zechariah another vision that kind of answers that. God says I am in sovereign control of all political powers connected to you and eventually I will destroy them and bless you. This prophetic vision is good for God's people in any age. It is good to know that God will eventually destroy those who made life miserable for His people.

These four verses break down into two main sections; each comprised of two verses:

**SECTION #1 – The vision of the four horns. 1:18-19**

Four of Zechariah's visions begin with the phrase "Then I lifted up my eyes and looked" (1:18; 2:1; 5:1; 6:1). By using this expression, Zechariah wants us to know that he actually saw these things with his own eyes. Zechariah lifted up his eyes and he looked, which means he actually, literally saw this.

What he saw and what caught his attention were four horns (qeren). Now when you and I think of a horn, we don't think about it like they did back in this day. Animals with horns are no threat to us.

I have some rifles and my favorite rifle is my 300 H&H Winchester magnum. That gun has tremendous knock down power. In fact, until the 375 H&H magnum was manufactured in 1937, the 300 H&H was the choice of big game hunters in Africa from about 1925.

Now when you are facing a charging animal with tusks and horns and you have one of these big bore rifles in your hands, you aren't as nearly intimidated as you would be when back in the days of Zechariah.

Back in the days of Zechariah, you had no way of stopping a dangerous animal charging you with tusks and horns. You could not stop it. It would destroy you and that is precisely why God often uses the image of animals and horns to refer to unstoppable, ferocious Gentile enemies that charge against His own people, specifically Israel.

Animal horns are often used in the Bible as a metaphor for tremendous political and military power (Ps. 18:2; 75:10; Jer. 48:25).

Zechariah dates the beginning of his book in 520 B.C., the second year of Darius (1:1). What that means is that he was well aware of the prophecies written by Daniel prior to 530 B.C. and by Ezekiel about 570 B.C..

This is important to know. We assume this because when this vision is given, Zechariah seems to know something about what it means, which we will see.

**About 50 years before this vision to Zechariah, Ezekiel predicted that God would sovereignly authorize four very severe judgments to come against Jerusalem and Israel.**

Ezekiel said this: "For thus says the Lord GOD, how much more when I send My four severe judgments against Jerusalem: sword, famine, wild beasts and plague to cut off man and beast from it. Yet behold survivors will be left in it who will be brought out both sons and daughter. Behold they are going to come forth to you and you will see their conduct and actions; then you will be comforted for the calamity which I have brought against Jerusalem for everything which I have brought upon it" (**Ezek. 14:21-22**). **Ezekiel predicts that there will be four specific judgments that will come against Israel, specifically authorized by God before He blesses her in her land.**

**These four judgments in Zechariah's vision here are the four horns.** These are the Gentile beasts that God permits to come into power to do judgmental things against Israel.

Now in the Bible, a "horn" is often used to represent the authority and power of a Gentile world power.

The actual horn imagery is taken from an animal. As we mentioned, the horns of an animal were offensive weapons used to attack. In fact, it is used to refer to strength in the horns and is able to attack and destroy people.

Moses, in the O.T. law used this “horn” imagery this very way:

“As the first-born of his ox, majesty is his, and his horns are the horns of the wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all at once to the ends of the earth” (**Deut. 33:17**).

In **Micah 4:13**, we read “Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for your horn I will make iron and your hoofs I will make bronze that you may pulverize many peoples...”.

In **Daniel 7:24**, Daniel said, “As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise.”

In **Revelation 17:12** we read “and the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom...”.

**So often in Scripture horns represent a powerful political Gentile leader and Kingdom, who is sovereignly permitted by God to dominate Israel.**

According to **Zechariah 1:18**, Zechariah used his eyes to look up and see four horns.

According to **Zechariah 1:19**, when Zechariah saw these four horns (**v. 19**), he asked the angel, who was showing him these things “What are these?”

In **verse 19**, the angel responded that these are the four horns who have been permitted by God to scatter Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. That word “scatter” (zara) refers often to scattering Israel out of the nations and putting her into exile. In other words, these four horns were four Gentile political powers who chased Israel out of her land.

There were four political powers who were responsible for scattering the entire nation. These four Gentile powers are sanctioned by God to dominate Israel before God once again returns to Israel to bless her in her land.

Now there are two observations we want to make here:

**Observation #1** - The verb tense is past tense (“have scattered”).

In God’s mind this is already done, even though it had not yet been done. Some interpreters believe that because of the past tense verb in **verse 19** “have scattered” it refers to Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia and Medo-Persia, who had already done great harm to Israel.

However, the past tense verb is not conclusive because it can be viewed from God’s perspective as past tense and, furthermore, it is legitimate to translate it into English in the present or future tense.

For example, Isaiah 53 uses past tense verbs to describe the Person and work of Jesus Christ hundreds of years before He was born.

**Observation #2** - Zechariah did not need any further explanation of the horns more than what he got.

Zechariah did not say, well what does that mean that four horns scatter Israel? What that tells us is that he knew what it meant. The reason he knew what it meant was because he was well aware of what Daniel had written.

There is no question that Zechariah would have been familiar with Daniel. Daniel died about twenty years before Zechariah and he wrote his prophecies in about a 60 year span before Zechariah and Zechariah would have been well-acquainted with Daniel's prophecies about these four horns. Every prophet would have known about those prophecies.

Daniel clearly predicted that these four horn Gentile powers would be authorized by God to do negative things against Israel before God would bless her (Dan. 2:36-43). Daniel specifically identified the four horns as being four Gentile kings and powers who would dominate Israel. He identified them as:

- 1) Babylon (Dan. 2:37)
- 2) Medo-Persia (Dan. 2:39a; 8:20)
- 3) Greece (Dan. 2:39b; 8:21)
- 4) Rome (Dan. 2:40; 8:22)

At the time Zechariah wrote, Israel was being dominated by Darius the Mede. So in all reality, the Medo-Persian power was already fulfilling prophecy with two yet to go.

In Daniel's prophecies, the worst is the final one: Rome. It would come in two phases; the initial phase and a revival phase. That final power will be the most ferocious against Israel. Literally that power will be responsible for chasing Jews all over the world, north, south, east and west. He will scatter them until God crushes them and that is exactly what He will do.

Now what Zechariah saw was four ruthless, national Gentile powers who were responsible for scattering all north and south Jews out of her land.

God raises up various nations to use as instruments of His discipline against His own people, but when these people go beyond the limits of what they should do, then He steps in and takes them out.

## **SECTION #2** – The vision of the four craftsmen. **1:20-21**

Just as soon as Zechariah had seen the four horns, the LORD showed him four craftsmen. It is interesting to observe that Zechariah does not ask the identity of these craftsmen. He simply asks, what are these craftsmen coming to do?

The word “craftsmen” (harashim) is one that refers to one who is very skilled and functions at a very high level as a skilled craftsman in wood, stone or metal. **Now the skilled craftsmen in these fields all had one thing in common, they all knew how to use a hammer.**

A powerful craftsman can take a hammer and crush and pound even horns into submission. If a hammer goes up against a horn, the hammer wins.

According to **verse 21**, God uses these craftsmen to come to terrify and overthrow those political leaders and powers who did things “against the land of Judah.”

What is described in **verse 21** is that the horns made things so miserable for Israel that “no man lifts up his head.” It is a description of very severe oppression.

What these craftsmen with hammers did was come in and beat and destroy and crush those who hurt Israel:

- 1) Babylon was destroyed and beaten and crushed by Medo-Persia.
- 2) Medo-Persia was destroyed and beaten and crushed by Greece.
- 3) Greece was destroyed and beaten and crushed by Rome.
- 4) Rome was not initially destroyed and beaten and crushed by anyone. She kind of disintegrated and blended into European nations. But there will come One who will crush her and that one is none other than Jesus Christ.

Christ Himself will return and just as Zechariah predicts, He will gather all the nations...and He will fight against those nations and they will be destroyed and the world will finally be at peace (Zech. 14:2-3). World peace is not about taking showers or purposing to be happy; it is directly connected to Jesus Christ and Israel. That is clearly taught by Zechariah.

#### **Five critical lessons:**

**Lesson #1 - God is sovereign over everything that happens in the lives of His people.**

**Lesson #2 - God watches nations as to how they treat and relate to Israel.**

**Lesson #3 - God often uses negatives in His own people's lives as a means of chastening His people because they have become so worldly and disobedient.**

**Lesson #4 - Often times we really don't get serious about God and His Word until we are in trouble.**

**Lesson #5 - In the end, God will always cause His people to finish the victors.**