

## THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

### Lesson 4, Chapter 2

We leave chapter 1 and begin chapter 2 of Zechariah, a most unique Prophet in the way he presents the oracles God gave to him, which operates mostly in complex symbolism because it deals so very much with the future. When I say "the future" I mean future to Zechariah, and not necessarily to us. Followers of Yeshua, worshippers of Yehoveh God of Israel, have waited for a long, long time for the future timeframe of many of these prophecies to finally arrive. In fact, I think the wait has been so long that it is too easy to just keep on living and thinking that this future will always be even more future for us. This is what happened to the Jewish people concerning the arrival of their Messiah. By the time He finally did come, only the most zealous were still looking for him. By then many Traditional Jewish views and doctrines had formed about what the Messiah would be, what he would look like, how he would behave, and how he would reveal himself. I think it fair to say that their expectations were very nearly 100% incorrect. Not because their Holy Scriptures were wrong, but because they didn't take them literally enough, and because it is much too easy to try to fit a prophetic happening into a mold that religious leadership has decided upon.

I have concern that the same phenomenon is happening in our time, concerning the End Times. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a wide array of traditions and doctrines have developed within Christianity about the End Times based more on fictional novels than on biblical evidence. Some Christian denominations don't believe there is such a thing as the End Times, others only seem to care about the End Times...but within their own particular set of thoughts about what it is, and when it's going to happen. Nearly all of these doctrines are based on one Bible book: the Book of Revelation.

In reality, it is the Old Testament Prophets... particularly the so-called Minor Prophets... that set the scene for the End Times and the entry into a 1000-year period of the Kingdom of God as the ruling force over our entire planet. What is even more crucial for us to notice is those prophecies concerning what would happen, and what did happen, to ancient Israel and Judah that would set a fulfillment pattern that would be repeated in the End Times. That is, if we

pay attention we learn that prophetic fulfillments are typically things that happen more than once. The first time the event is near to the age in which that prophet lived and had a fairly limited scope of who and what would be affected. The next time it happened, that scope widened. Should it happen a third time, typically it is predicted to be a global event with global affects. The Book of Zechariah is one of the most informative about the events surrounding the End of Days.

In Zechariah chapter 2 the second vision or oracle of this series of vision/oracles is presented. We cannot make the error of reading this or understanding it in a standalone manner. It is connected to chapter 1, and in fact it adds more to the oracle presented in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> verses of chapter 1. Here's what that was:

**CJB Zechariah 1:14-15** ***14 The angel speaking with me then said to me, "Here is what Yehoveh-Tzva'ot says: 'I am extremely jealous on behalf of Yerushalayim and Tziyon; 15 and [to the same degree] I am extremely angry with the nations that are so self-satisfied; because I was only a little angry [at Yerushalayim and Tziyon], but they made the suffering worse.'***

Be aware that because I read nearly always to you from the CJB, and because the CJB always substitutes the term "adonai" in place of God's name, I will read it with reinserting God's name, Yehoveh. Because of the way Zechariah is structured and due to the prolific use of God's name in the original Hebrew, I will be doing this from this point forward until our study of Zechariah is completed.

God is the protector and judge over Israel. But, the judge decided that unfaithful Israel had to be punished for their sins as an act of basic justice. Yet, it was also to drive them back into repentance, submission, and ultimately obedience. Obedience to what? The typical response to that question is obedience to God. While that is true, how are we to know what God's rules are that we are to be obedient to? Yehoveh says over and over, our obedience is to be to the terms of the covenant... meaning the Covenant of Moses. So, in driving His people back to Him, God would take the drastic measure of driving

Israel then Judah out of the land He had set apart for them hundreds of years earlier, but with a plan to eventually bring them back. To do this, Yehoveh enticed two different gentile empires to attack and conquer first Israel, then later Judah. It was the Assyrian Empire that overcame Israel, but it was the Babylonian Empire of more than a century later that invaded and overtook Judah. However, in doing so these nations also inured His anger because, after all, God is the protector of His people, Israel and Judah.

Ironically, the Persians overcame the Babylonian Empire and took it away from them. The Persian kings actually freed the Jewish people to go home and reconstitute their lives, their Temple, and their worship practices. So, why would Yehoveh have a bone to pick with Persia? The cause of God's *increased* anger and wrath concerning them had to do with what the Persian Empire did as regards Jerusalem and Zion: they took these places away from God's people, which is the same as taking them away from God. We're told that God has especially great jealousy over Jerusalem and Zion; He will react harshly against those who mess with Jerusalem and Zion because these are exclusively His. When Persia refused to give Jerusalem and Zion back their independent sovereignty, this provoked Him to a new and greater level of wrath.

Immediately within the first few words of chapter 2, we get symbolism that can be difficult to decipher. The symbols are horns. Let me remind you that even though all the words are there and they are the same, depending on your Bible version chapter 1 ends at verse 17 or it continues through verse 21. So, some Bibles will have those verses (18 – 21) as the final verses of chapter 1, while other versions will have those same verses as the first 4 verses of chapter 2. It makes no difference in substance or content, but it can be confusing when discussing it. The CJB ends chapter 1 at verse 17, and that is what I'm referencing when I mention chapter and verse number. Let me also point out that while using this chapter and verse numbering method makes this the second vision/oracle, the other chapter and version method begins the third oracle about a man holding a measuring cord.

What these first several verses of chapter 2 are speaking about is God's increased wrath over the gentile nations (these are nations that are part of the

Persian Empire) that Yehoveh holds responsible for what He sees as unjustly harsh treatment of His people. What follows that explanation is a prophetic vision of how the Kingdom of God will develop and evolve over time, and then finally to its mostly fully developed moment at the entry into the Millennial period, just prior to the re-creation of the entire Universe including planet Earth. Nonetheless, this only continues the most challenging task of properly unwinding these prophecies so that we can grasp their meaning because the terminology used is from the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and so we must be careful not to try to view it through our modern Western lens.

Let's read the entire chapter 2.

### **READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 2 all**

So, the first symbol presented is horns and then the second symbol is presented: the smiths. While these might be challenging for us to understand, obviously these were common things to the people of that era and they had no difficulty grasping their sense even if the exact meaning in this prophecy was not obvious. The other key to helping we moderns to understand is to not try to look for a precise comparison between the vision object and exactly what it was meant to represent. As an example: if the vision object had been an automobile, it would have been fairly easy for us to grasp the sense of it even though from a precision aspect we know there is much variation among automobiles from their size to their shape, to the number of passengers they can transport, to even the type of locomotion used (diesel engine, gas engine, electric motor). So, a car represents transportation of people in a very general and broad sense, and the details about it are unimportant. Rather, what is it that these common things, the horns and the smiths, are meant to represent within the context of how they are being used?

Zechariah asks the Interpreting Angel exactly what these horns are meant to represent, as opposed to asking "what is a horn?". The Angel responds that the horns represent the powers that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. What this is to mean to us (that is, how is this to be interpreted) has never been fully agreed upon by academics. That is mainly because 1) indeed the interpreters are trying to find a precision match between the symbol and its meaning, and 2) the method they tend to go about interpreting it seems

mostly concerned with Hebrew grammar and word etymology. This is certainly a needed discipline when studying the Bible. However, especially when it comes to study of the Old Testament Prophets, I have invariably found that one needs always to look first to the political, theological, and cultural context of the people and governments in that prophet's era. As a comparison: it is difficult to apply similar metaphors and expressions commonly used in the Civil War, to literature and conversations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. And, if one were to prophecy something in the Civil War era that would occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what kind of symbols could possibly be used to get the message across? Thus, the best one can do in predicting the future is to use symbols that have meaning for the era in which the author wrote and the first readers read.

The horns were a very well-known symbol in that ancient era for power. Usually that meant a government that projected military power. However, we also have to back away and see the role of the horns in the wide scope that is introduced to us with the first vision oracle, and then winds its way through 5 more visions that deal with more narrowly focused nuances that all fit within that very broad scope of the opening vision, which concludes with the 7<sup>th</sup> vision. Further, as I highlighted in Haggai, and now again in Zechariah, at the center of it all is the Temple. Because, in general, Christianity has a negative viewpoint of a Temple as a result of Yeshua's advent, then most of the time the centrality of the Temple to Zechariah's visions is dismissed. Therefore, the entire core of the purpose of these oracles is lost and something more fanciful has to be inserted in its place. We'll not be doing that even if it injures some of our sensibilities.

Eric Meyers makes this excellent insight that I'd rather simply quote to you than to paraphrase:

***All of the visions have as their ultimate concern the content of the central focal one, the Temple in Jerusalem as well as the High Priesthood, which is the subject of the prophetic vision that stand at the center of the series along with the fourth vision.***

What cannot be bypassed in that the core focus of all these oracles is the Temple and the Priesthood, and their irreplaceable necessity in God's plan not just for Israel, but eventually for all humanity.

So, the horns are symbolic of the great national powers that destroyed Israel, scattering the people to the wind, and also who invaded Judah destroying the Temple and much of Jerusalem, sending the Jewish people as a group to Babylon, and now Persia as lording over God's people and the place where God puts His name (Jerusalem), even if Persia is doing so in a more enlightened and somewhat gentler policy of governance.

One of the things that can throw interpreters off is that there were 4 horns. Maybe we can identify 3 of them as earthly powers, but who is the 4<sup>th</sup>? There doesn't seem to be place within the context to understand the horns as anything but history past, not involving some future power (as Daniel's prophecy does). On the other hand, there was one more scattering of the Israelites that did occur, that of the aftermath of the Roman invasion and destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of 70 A.D. So, could this be the 4<sup>th</sup> horn? Perhaps. Yet, another viewpoint is that this is talking about the scattering of Israel, and most historians wouldn't consider what Babylon did as a scattering, and neither did Persia... at least to any significant extent. My take is to ignore the number of horns as trying to match them with world powers, and instead to see the number of them (4) as representing the entirety of the earth. That is, the 4 compass directions. The number 4 is a most common symbolism to the people of that day. If what I am suggesting is the case, then generally this oracle is speaking about all of the military powers that scattered Israel to places all over the known world. And, just as importantly, that Yehoveh holds power over them just as they hold power over Israel.

Verse 3 introduces this second symbol of this second vision oracle. Different Bible versions choose to translate this in different ways. The Hebrew word is **charash**. It is a general term for a variety of skilled people who can create things whether that be a woodworker (a carpenter) or a painter (an artist), or maybe even a jewelry maker. Several Bible versions have chosen to use the word smiths, with at least 1 version using the term blacksmith. But, when we read verse 4, one wonders how artisans can do what is being suggested.

**CJB Zechariah 2:4** *I asked, "What are these coming to do?" He said, "Those horns that scattered Y'hudah so completely that no one could*

***even raise his head- well, these men have come to terrify them, to overthrow the nations that raised their horns against the land of Y'hudah to scatter it."***

As with the horns, Zechariah asks the Interpreting Angel what the purpose of these 4 skilled workers is. The answer is that they have come to terrify the horns! Put another way, they have come to punish or to oppose those military powers. Before we pursue that a little further, we have something else to deal with. This verse speaks exclusively about Judah (the Judeans) and not about all Israel. Frankly, this is puzzling and if I were to try to give a reason why this has shifted to Judah only (the *former* Judah), it would be guessing. Perhaps it is nothing more complicated than these prophecies are all about Judah returning from Babylon, Judah being subject to Persia, and with Israel (meaning the Northern Kingdom of Ephraim/Israel) just a distant memory. That is, for Zechariah, Judah and the Judeans were his immediate context for after all, he was probably born up in Babylon.

Nonetheless, just as the horns were used by God to judge Israel and Judah (Judah more recently), so are the 4 artisans being used by God to judge those 4 horns. Kiel and Delitzsch confidently assert that these 4 artisans symbolize the instruments of divine omnipotence by which the imperial power in its several historical forms is overthrown. Maybe. Or maybe the horns represent little more than all the powers in history lumped together that have harmed God's people, Israel, and the artisans are all the means lumped together that God has and will use to execute His divine wrath upon those powers. I think I prefer the latter to the former. Or as Kiel and Delitzsch also suggest as an option: perhaps "It is simply designed to show to the people of God that every hostile power of the world which has risen up against it (Judah), or shall rise up, is to be judged and destroyed by the Lord."

Next, a 3<sup>rd</sup> vision/oracle is presented starting with verse 5. Let's re-read verses 5 – 9.

**RE-READ ZECHARIAH 2:5 – 9**

I think it is fair to say that just as the second vision/oracle was connected to chapter 1:14 and 15, so is this third one connected to chapter 1:16.

**CJB Zechariah 1:16** *Therefore says, 'I will return to Yerushalayim with merciful deeds. My house will be rebuilt there,' says Yehoveh-Tzva'ot; 'yes, a measuring line will be stretched out over Yerushalayim.'*

The first comment I want to make about this third vision/oracle is that some commentators believe that this is talking about a Jerusalem that is located in Heaven. I won't go into the several reasons why some advocate this only to say that on its face it can't be so because there is no measuring of things in Heaven. I realize that this is symbolic, however on the other hand, the spiritual realm has no dimensions of length, width, or height. While the Universe we all live in consist of 3 physical dimensions of length, width and height, along with a 4<sup>th</sup> dimension of time, that is not so in Heaven. So, this measurement is meant to indicate the physical Jerusalem of earth.

Unlike the measuring line used in chapter 1, this is a measuring string or cord that is used like an ancient ruler. Two Hebrew words are used together to indicate this device; *hebel* and *midda*. Zechariah sees a "man" as holding the measuring line. Indeed, because the Hebrew is *ish*, then it is a human male. However, this is not to mean anything more than that the symbolic entity has the *appearance* of a human male. What is interesting is that the man with a measuring cord carries another symbolism of itself, which is important to understanding the vision. It is that he is one who measures the portion of Judah's inheritance from God. So, this works in conjunction with the thought of inheritance found in chapter 2:16.

**CJB Zechariah 2:16** *Yehoveh will take possession of Y'hudah as his portion in the holy land, and he will again make Yerushalayim his choice.*

Thus, the man with the measuring line is in Judah's allotted territory, measuring Jerusalem as its sacred capital. And yet, the man with the measuring line isn't really the point of the vision. So, who is this man? We'd have to classify him as an angel; in fact, this is a new figure added to the

scene. This cannot be the Interpreting Angel that speaks with Zechariah because he doesn't add new elements to the scene, he only explains their meaning and purpose. And, because the Angel of Yehoveh is called just that, this "man" is not him, either. There is nothing unusual about the idea of yet another angel being given a role as the one with the job of measuring Jerusalem.

Verse 6 has Zechariah addressing this new angel and asking, "Where are you going?". It's kind of fascinating how all of these vision/oracles revolve essentially around conversations: questions and responses. Therefore, like a drama series on TV, there's a growing cast of characters that make appearances from time to time. And what we come to realize is that the man/angel and the measuring cord aren't the symbolic focus, but rather it is the reason for this task of measuring that has to be flushed-out that gives us the true picture.

When we pay attention to this dialogue we also realize that this man/angel is on the move. He is going somewhere, his destination being Jerusalem... but he's not there, yet. This measuring task is in anticipation of a full restoration of the city of Jerusalem along with its all-important Temple. This idea of measuring a city with a Temple is also part of Ezekiel's prophetic visions, thus what we read here in Zechariah is connected to what Ezekiel sees.

**CJB Ezekiel 40:1-5** *In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth day of the month- this was the fourteenth year after the city [of Yerushalayim] was struck- it was on that very day that the hand of Yehoveh was on me, and he took me there. <sup>2</sup> In visions God brought me into the land of Isra'el and put me down on a very high mountain; on it, toward the south, it seemed that a city was being built. <sup>3</sup> That is where he took me, and there in front of me was a man whose appearance was like bronze. He had a flax cord and a measuring rod in his hand, and he stood in the gateway. <sup>4</sup> The man said to me, "Human being, look with your eyes, hear with your ears, and pay attention to all the things I am showing you; because the reason you were brought here is so that I could show them to you. Tell everything you see to the house of Isra'el." <sup>5</sup> There was a wall*

***surrounding the house. The man had in his hand a measuring rod six cubits long [ten-and-a-half feet], each cubit [twenty-one inches] being a normal cubit [eighteen inches] plus a handbreadth [three inches]. He measured the wall's width at ten-and-a-half feet and its height ten-and-a-half feet.)***

And, from there Ezekiel goes on with very detailed measurements of the restored Temple, the city, the territory of the tribes of Israel, and more. I'm going to keep hammering home this issue of the Temple because it is so critical to God's restored Jerusalem and His Kingdom in general. And because the historic Constantinian Church that so many of us grew up in has generally found this Temple issue to be anywhere from incomprehensible to offensive to anathema, all because Paul called Believers "temples".

**CJB 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *16 Don't you know that you people are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 So if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you yourselves are that temple.***

Thus, Christianity has essentially taken this to mean that Believers are the replacement temples for the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, much in the same way that the gentile body of Believers of the nations is the replacement people for the Hebrew people of Israel. So, to even contemplate that God is demanding His Temple be rebuilt, and to then to find these excruciating details of the Millennial Temple laid out in the final 8 chapters of Ezekiel (with nearly all Christian and Jewish scholars agreeing this Temple is a far future Temple where Messiah will live), is a deep source of resentment, even anger, that has led to all sorts of imaginative spin to try to work out some way to make what the Bible clearly says about the Temple work with Christian doctrines that virtually say the opposite. Ladies and gentlemen, Paul is in no way saying that Christians have replaced the Jerusalem Temple. Like with a few other things he says... such as Believers being priests... he is intending that to mean "like temples" or "like priests". People of his era well understood that; it's gentile Believers outside of Jewish culture that misconstrued the meaning, and has stuck with it for centuries. These statements of Paul are similes intended to bring across a message that the Holy Spirit of God now lives in us, and this is

because the belief was that the Holy Spirit of God lived in the Temple (although that is not exactly true, either). Thus, if we are vessels with the Holy Spirit in us, we are like walking, talking temples and so we need to treat these bodies as though they were holy and set apart for God just as is the Temple in Jerusalem.

Now, in verse 7, yet another new cast member is added, when another angel appears. The Interpreting Angel goes out to meet this new angel and tells this new angel to:

**CJB Zechariah 2:8** *...**"Run and tell this young man, 'Yerushalayim will be inhabited without walls, because there will be so many people and animals;***

For this angel to be told to "run" to tell this young man with the measuring tool to go measure Jerusalem, is to add the sense of urgency and that because this message comes from God, then it is the duty of a messenger to hurry to deliver it.

However, the CJB translation of this verse (as does many English Bible translations) leaves out an important word for some reason, that if included would give better depth to the passage. The following literal translation, although awkward sounding, gives a fuller sense of it.

**YLT Zechariah 2:4** *...**and he saith unto him, 'Run, speak unto this young man, saying: Unwalled villages inhabit doth Jerusalem, From the abundance of man and beast in her midst.***

Notice that the word villages is missing in most English translations. The Hebrew word that is skipped over is **perazah**, meaning towns or villages. And, the word walls doesn't actually appear here. In the ancient times, a village or a town was defined as a sort of country hamlet that inherently did not have walls. If it did have defensive walls (a large and expensive project), then its status was upgraded to a city. So, saying a village without walls is like saying a house with a door. Villages automatically don't have walls, and houses automatically must have doors so there is no point to adding those additional

words. The idea being presented then is this: at a future time, Jerusalem will more look like a large open area of country villages as opposed to a large city enclosed by formidable defensive walls. This means that Jerusalem is going to be much more extensive in size than ever before, and will have no need for walls because God will be their protection. This extended size also means more people and more livestock will be present.

Clearly, this is an End Times Jerusalem when all opposition to God's Kingdom is defeated, and all risk of attack is gone. Safety and security are no longer an issue. At the time of Zechariah and Ezekiel, as it would be for several hundred more years, a walled city and the surrounding villages were a necessary civic unit. The city is where the villagers would come to buy and sell at the marketplace. And, when an invasion of some kind was imminent, the villagers would run to the city to be protected inside its walls. Because a city was bounded by walls, then it could only accommodate a finite and limited number of homes. Thus, villages surrounding it were necessary to provide sufficient shelter for the population.

Verse 9 explains how the foregoing of no longer needs walls is possible (an explanation that people of Zechariah's era would certainly need to hear).

**CJB Zechariah 2:9** ***"for," says ADONAI, "I will be for her a wall of fire surrounding her; and I will be the glory within her."***

I left the term "Adonai" in here because virtually all English versions use the term The Lord, even though God's name (Yehoveh) is once again present. So, it is The Father that is making this promise and statement about personally being the equivalent to a wall of fire. As with Paul likening Believers to temples, so here God is not going to be a literal fire. No one could pass through a fire and live, so this is an expression speaking of 100% protection. The end of this verse brings us to another occasion of something I've spoken about before. When God says that He will be the glory within her (meaning within Jerusalem), this does not mean glory in the sense of splendor. The Glory needs to be capitalized because it is the name of one of God's several revealed manifestations. God, in the form of The Glory, will inhabit Jerusalem. Or, as I think we'll learn at later point, it is The Glory that inhabits the Temple

that is inside of Jerusalem, as the object that makes Jerusalem unique from all other places. What this means is that instead of only the Temple being the holy place of God on earth, the entire city of Jerusalem... with its large surroundings of many villages... that will be God's earthly domain.

I want to end today's lesson with this thought. While the typical mode of prophecy is to provide a prediction that will be fulfilled in steps beginning from a limited scope, and then happening again at a broader scope, and then perhaps even again at its final universal scope, we are finding Zechariah's vision/oracles are doing the opposite. In his vision/oracles the first fulfillment is presented as the widest universal scope, then Zechariah takes us in steps to smaller and smaller scopes of the effects of the prophecy. This third vision has now brought the reduction of scope down to only the city of Jerusalem and its outlying villages. What will happen next in that progression is that the scope will be further reduced down to only the Temple. And, as we have discussed thoroughly, it is the Temple that is the ultimate focus of Zechariah's prophecies.

Beginning in verse 10 is an expansion on the first 3 vision/oracles, and that's what we'll open with next time.