

Verse 1: *In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,...*

Last time we looked at this prophecy in the overview, we were reminded that the prophet Haggai prophesied at the same time as Zechariah, and they both had been sent to the people who had returned from exile in Babylon, under the 'benevolent' rule of the Persians who allowed nations to worship their own gods, and to even return to their own lands, as long as they paid their taxes! This situation had of course been overruled by God, who had created this situation in order to fulfil His will, that the land might enjoy its sabbaths, and the nation would learn that God keeps His word. So after seventy years the Jews were permitted to return, and to rebuild their city, rebuild the temple, and their own homes. Initially the work began with great zeal, as described in the records of Ezra and Nehemiah, but increasingly the influence of the surrounding nations created obstacles, which tested their spiritual strength. Many began to lose their faith. The work of building and restoration slowed and eventually stopped altogether. But as we are reminded by the writer of Acts 14:22 we *must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*. God had not left them or forsaken them, but was longsuffering and full of compassion and mercy, which was why He sent two prophets working together to warn and encourage them.

In the 6th month, and in the 7th month of the second year of the Persian King Darius, Haggai had stood before them, and delivered the message of God, to be strong, and that God was with them (Hagg1:13). Now in the 8th month, Zechariah was sent with a message, to maintain a steady input to rouse the people from their apathy, and to encourage them to get back to the work of building up. Zechariah reminded them of the older generation, who thought that returning from exile was enough, they had made the journey, now everything would be rosy, and things would return to what they were like before. But no, that was not enough. 2 *The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers*. Sore displeased! or very angry. God was so angry with one generation, that he sent them into exile in the first place, if they survived the invasions of Babylon at all. Now the returning generation had also become indolent and complacent. What was it all about? Zechariah placed the appeal of God before them:

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. This is a simple and straightforward Truth, God has respect to those who turn, and call upon him, - like the nation when they were in Egypt, - and even if one individual repents, and turns from his evil way, his sins will not be accounted against him (Ezekiel 33:14-16) *and the angels in heaven rejoice over one sinner that repents* (Luke 15:7,10) This then really highlights the purpose of Zechariah's mission, it was to bring about a repentance. That, with the nation turned to God, He would be with them. Had they not learned anything from the terrible experiences they had gone through? After all, with the older ones, it was within their living memory, when they were led as children, with their weeping parents, and grandparents into a far-off land, watching their towns and villages burning in smoke behind them. The wailing and screaming, could they not remember? So why were they now not showing leadership to stop such a thing happening again, and trust in the Lord of Hosts? Zechariah in his first words, made it clear that such a national tragedy

happened because of their refusal to change their evil ways. Now, were they going to do the same thing? Happily in this instance, it seems that Zechariah's words made an impact: as we read verse 6:... *and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.*

Zechariah then records how he had a very sleepless night indeed – the 24th day of the 11th month of the second year of the reign of Darius. For in one night he experienced seven extremely vivid dreams, that were in fact visions, sent from God, and under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Zechariah was moved to write them down for the sake of posterity, as these visions had much to do with this peculiar people, this chosen race the Jews, and their future, and the purpose of God with them, which when Zechariah would deliver these visions to the people, they would see that The Lord of Hosts was indeed with them, because they had turned towards Him.



The first dream he saw that night was verse 8: *I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom (or in the shade) ; and behind him were there red horses, speckled (or sorrel), and white.*

There were riders also upon the other three horses as well, as we can see by reading on. Zechariah in his vision found himself in the vision as well, as an onlooker, and he asks the angel giving him this vision

what does it mean?

Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. But it was the lead rider on the red horse among the myrtle trees which answered: *These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.* To confirm this, all the riders upon their horses answered together as one: *We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sits still, and is at rest.*

In the dream evidently Zechariah was alarmed, he didn't know what this meant, and it seemed as if the angel was speaking the mind of Zechariah as he asked on his behalf. *O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?. but good words and comfortable words* were given to the angel to explain to Zechariah. Of course, this was in the minds of many who had returned, it seemed as if the seventy years of trial was still continuing, as the nations around them, even the Samaritans, were so hostile, and causing them so many problems! But Zechariah, and of course, all those to whom he would reveal this vision were reassured: *Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for*

Zion with a great jealousy. This was the message of earlier prophets: Isaiah 42:13 *The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies.* Joel 2:18: *Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people.* Nahum: 1:2 *God is jealous, and the LORD revenges; the LORD revenges, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies.* Of course God cared about His people, they were bound to Him by a Covenant, even the promises made to the fathers. He only sent them into exile, to teach them, to punish them but not cut them off. He sent nations against them, so that they would reject their idolatry, repent and turn to Him again. Not because He hated them, but because He loved them verse 15: *And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.* Sore displeased again ... it is in Hebrew *qatsaph* meaning to crack off. (We recall the treatment an unfruitful branch gets in Jesus parable of the vine) - Very angry, with consequences. As God was sore displeased with their fathers and 'cracked them off' and sent them into exile, so also with the nations, who He used as an instrument of punishment, like a rod, but they took matters into their own hands, and enjoyed inflicting misery and suffering upon God's elect, His chosen. Examples of this are seen in

- Isaiah 10:5-7 *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, ...to take the spoil, and ... and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he means not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.*
- Isaiah 47:6 *I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.*
- Jeremiah 51:24 *And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.*

See also Ezekiel 25:12-17, Ezekiel 26:2, Ezekiel 29:6-7, Ezekiel 25:3-9, and Amos 1:3-13 shows this perfectly. The nations went over and above with what God wanted them to do. Of course they would! because human nature is cruel, hateful, spiteful, and without restraint it is utterly evil. By contrast God's people can be reassured and comforted knowing that their God is one of longsuffering, kindness and compassion: So verse 16 -17:

Therefore thus saith the Lord; 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. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.16

God promised in the vision that His house would be built in the city. He was not talking of the little one, the very little temple which made the old folk cry when they saw it, as it didn't compare with the glorious one built by Solomon, but God was speaking of the House of Prayer for all nations, which would be the frame of a city, in the midst of a new and cleansed Zion, a place of worship, praise, peace and fellowship with the God of Israel.

Yes, a line would be symbolically stretched over the city. It would be measured. The time would come when it would no longer have to endure the domination of Gentiles. A line

would be drawn. Enough will be enough. A time of prosperity and glory will never leave the city, so much so that it's prosperity would spread abroad – into the whole world.

Yes, this was the good and comforting message given to Zechariah, and what he would relay to the people. But what about the horses among the myrtle trees? What did these mean? The riders were on horseback. Horses to the people of Israel in those days meant just one thing. War. They were used for war, not pleasure and hobbies like today. They were warhorses, but were now at rest. At rest in the shade (what bottom -KJV – IN Hebrew means) to cool down, and among sweet smelling myrtle trees. They were ridden by angelic beings. These four horses were different colours. Either all the horses were all red, speckled and white ie all patchy, as in skewbald, or it could be describing two as red, one as speckled and one as white (we prefer this view) Red of course, symbolises blood, and in war much blood is shed. Speckled – a rare word in Hebrew is *sawruq*, which means bright red (– accurately as piercing to the sight!) – so very much blood indeed being shed! White in Hebrew is *laban* which is also a word meaning to make bricks, the link is in the bleaching caused by the sun. Denoting much hardship, which is of course what war produces, wandering around as refugees, no shelter from the sun. When the question was asked what are these? The answer given was, these are they which the Lord has sent to walk to and fro through the earth. In other words, Zechariah in vision was being shown that God used his angels, from the four winds of heaven, to overrule and bring to pass his will, that all those nations and empires which had overcome Israel His chosen, and all subsequent nations and empires, all who have helped forward the affliction will themselves suffer in the way they have made Israel to suffer. Israel were never left without this angelic host, this heavenly army to protect them. It is why so frequently in the book of Zechariah God uses His title Lord of Hosts (armies), or Yahweh Tzva'oth. It is why these protecting forces were known as the Chariot of Israel, and the Horseman thereof – see 2 Kings 2:12, 13:14. True the wheels had come off the chariot of Israel, while they were in exile, but the Divine Horsemen were still active. We will hear a lot more about these horses later in Zechariah. But in the vision, the work of the avenging horsemen had finished. They were in the shade of myrtle trees. The only time the shade of myrtle trees is mentioned in the Bible is at the time of the feast of booths, the feast of tabernacles, when people were commanded to make temporary shelters of branches of myrtles (see Nehemiah 8:15) and other trees, and the family was to gather underneath, and celebrate the great harvest that God had blessed them with, a time of peace and prosperity, which really represented the Kingdom of God, peace and prosperity, after all nations had been subdued. This Zechariah was being shown in vision.

The following vision really illustrated the same thing, but in further detail. He was shown four horns. He knew what horns were. All cattle in his day, had horns, and they were used to push and shove. The goats and rams were always at it. They signified power. The bigger the horn, the greater the advantage. But Zechariah asked what they meant.

19 ... *And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.* Well, he already knew about two horns which had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. Babylon and Persia... so there would be two more? It would have been upsetting to say the least! His heart would have sank.

But then he was shown four carpenters. (Heb charash a fabricator, craftsman or smith)



21,

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 (terrify) them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it. Everytime an empire comes upon Judah to push and shove it, and overcome it, and help forward the affliction, God would send another power to punish and break that empire.



So it would look like this...



These four craftsmen were used to beat the four horns into submission.

But who were these four craftsman, builders or blacksmiths, or terrified, and subdued these great Kingdoms? There are two possible answers.

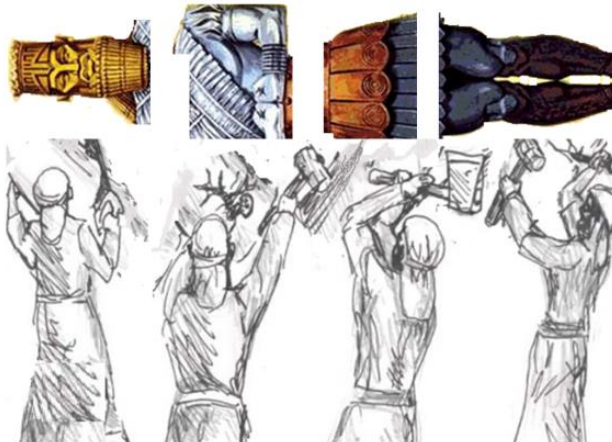
- 1) Every time a power came upon Judah, to overcome and dominate the nation, they helped forward the affliction, and were themselves then destroyed by the next all-powerful empire. Each subsequent empire punishing the one before. In chart form the craftsman can be seen in the next illustration.

Four Craftsmen

Offending Kingdom (Horn)	Correcting Kingdom (Craftsman)
Babylon	Media- Persia
Media-Persia	Greece
Greece	Rome
Rome	Messianic Kingdom

These four correcting Kingdoms would have been overruled by the four horsemen, to carry out this work of correction.

- 2) The second suggestion is that the four horns being terrified by four craftsmen, is Zechariah being shown in vision the work of the four carpenters will be those who follow the carpenter from Nazareth – the Lord Jesus, in evicting and destroying the old empires and rebuilding a new one. This is supported by the context of Zechariah seeing builders, and carpenters rebuilding a city. So would look something like this:



We will leave it to you to decide which interpretation fits best, and await the suggestions of our brothers.

Brother Terry