

Zechariah Chapter Two

Vision Two: Four Horns and Four Carpenters (1.18-21) Divine Power

The second (1.18-21) and third visions (2.1-13) enlarge 1.15-16 where God *pronounced* His displeasure with the heathen nations and *promised* to re-build the temple and city of Jerusalem. **v.18:** Zechariah is often found 'lifting up his eyes' (2.1; 5.1; 6.1) as each preceding vision has caused him to *bow* his head in meditation, prayer and thankfulness (cp. 1 Thessalonians 1.10; Philippians 3.20). This particular vision concerns 'four horns'. To a pastoral people like Israel, the horns of the strongest in the herd were naturally symbolic of *power* and *pride* (1 Samuel 2.10; Micah 4.13), and, in scripture, often represent kings and their kingdoms (Daniel 7.24; Revelation 17.12). These horns thus symbolise four, proud Gentile powers (v.21) that scattered Israel. **v.19:** The verb 'scattered' can refer to a completed action in the past, present or future (during the entire period of the times of the Gentiles). Whilst the number *four* may represent the totality of Gentile opposition against Israel, it is more likely referring to four specific nations. *Daniel* had already spoken of four great Gentile powers that would scatter Israel and tread down Jerusalem during the times of the Gentiles – Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome (Daniel 2). In Zechariah's day, the first of these horns had already been 'cast out' (v.21), the Babylonian empire having been replaced by Medo-Persia (Daniel 5.30-31, 539BC). The fact that only *three* groups of horses were seen in v.8 may suggest that Babylon had already left the scene.

v.20: In contrast to the horns are *carpenters*. The word 'carpenter' refers to skilled workmen in materials such as wood (1 Chronicles 22.15) or metal (1 Samuel 13.19). The basic idea is 'cutting', e.g. engraving stone or ploughing soil. MacArthur refers to 'those who shape material with *hammers* and *chisels*'. That there are *four* suggests they are equal to the task of overthrowing *four* horns. **v.21:** These Gentile nations had so oppressed Israel 'that no man did lift up his head', i.e. Israel is seen as bowed down under their oppressor's feet, having lost their freedom. But the 'carpenters' would cause them to 'fray' or tremble, striking terror by cutting off and throwing down their horns, disturbing their 'ease' (cp. v.15). Clearly then, the carpenters are raised up as instruments of judgment to deliver God's people from their enemies. They are represented in the beasts of Daniel 7 and stand for Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome and Messiah's kingdom which shall 'smash' a revived kingdom of Roman character – this is the Stone cut out without hands (Daniel 2.34-35). The lowly carpenter from Nazareth *is* the Stone that shall smash Israel's enemies. In the past, carpenters had been used in the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 35.35). Now they were engaged in re-building the temple. As they worked, they would have afforded a timely encouragement and reminder of this prophecy. Their work was not in vain! They were *small*, and the Gentile powers were *great*, but Israel was indestructible. All their enemies – past, present and future – would ultimately be defeated (Psalm 129.1-2; Jeremiah 30.11; Haggai 2.22).

Vision Three: The Man with the Measuring Line (2.1-13) Divine Protection

The *third* vision sets forth the restoration of Jerusalem as the dwelling place of the glory of God (v.5). As with many OT prophecies there is a *dual* referent with an *initial* (or preliminary) fulfilment in Zechariah's day, and an *ultimate* fulfilment in the millennium. God has a glorious future for Jerusalem. It was worth the labour and commitment required to build, for Jerusalem is an *eternal* city. Be committed. Toil on. Your labour is not in vain in the Lord. vv.1-5 focus on the *city* of Jerusalem, and Christ as Surveyor; vv.6-13 concern the *citizens* of Jerusalem, and Christ as Servant.



v.1: Zechariah lifts up his eyes to see a man with a 'measuring line' (used to define the boundaries of buildings). He is not identified but is likely the same man as 1.8, 10 (identified as the Angel of the Lord) and 6.12, the Man whose name is the Branch (cf. Ezekiel 40.2-3). The measuring line represents Him as the Author of the future restoration of Jerusalem. In both Ezekiel 40 and Revelation 11, measuring is preparatory to the blessing of God coming to re-establish His dwelling place amongst His own people. The Lord Jesus still *measures* today – the motives of those who engage in His service, and the true condition of every local church gathered in his name (cp. Mark 11.11). **v.2:** The purpose of the Man was 'to measure Jerusalem' in order to mark out the boundaries of the city, and yet he appears to be measuring something so vast it is utterly bewildering to Zechariah (cf. v.4). The present state of Jerusalem was nothing like this. The walls would not be properly re-built for another 80 years! In this vision, only the *length* and *breadth* are measured. When the heavenly Jerusalem is in view, there is also the *height* to be considered (Revelation 21.15-16).

v.3: At this point, the angel that talked with Zechariah 'went forth' to find out more and was met by 'another angel' sent with a message from the Man. **v.4:** 'Run' and 'speak' are a double imperative conveying *urgency*. The 'young man' is most likely Zechariah himself. The city of Jerusalem was going to be so large and prosperous that it would be inhabited 'without walls', literally as 'open country' (cf. Ezekiel 38.11). City walls acted as protection, but also restricted the

growth of population. Even today, the walls of the old city of Jerusalem only encompass 1km², but in millennial days, the city will overflow with people and animals and the Lord Himself will be the city's protection (v.5). Popular opinion in Zechariah's day may have suggested the walls were more important than the temple (Haggai 1.2). But Zechariah exhorts the people to build the temple first. God himself would be their wall. The worship of God must take priority. **v.5:** 'I' is emphatic – 'I myself will be' a 'wall of fire'. Fire often represents the powerful presence of God (cp. Genesis 3.24; Exodus 14.19-24; 2 Kings 6.17). Security and prosperity will not be achieved by man-made walls, but by the promised presence of God (Barry Webb). Where once the glory of God had departed (Ezekiel 10), it will now return in the Person of the King of Kings (Isaiah 60.19). Christ is the glorious, personal presence of Jehovah. Only a few recognised and beheld His glory at His first advent. Consequently, the Glory (literally) departed from the Mount of Olives as in Ezekiel's day (Ezekiel 11.23; Acts 1.9-12). Yet, the Glory shall return to the same place (14.4) at His second advent and every knee shall bow.

vv.6-7: The focus of the vision turns from the *city* to the *citizens*; to those still in exile (vv.6-9), and those in Jerusalem (vv.10-13). Again, there is a *dual* referent to Zechariah's contemporaries *and* Jews of a future day. It seems that Zechariah is now speaking, proclaiming the words given him by the angel sent from the Man (v.3). The message is a command to 'flee' and 'escape' from Babylon. Although Babylon is to the east, it is called the 'land of the north' because this was the direction of invasion and gives best access to the land (Jeremiah 1.14; 31.8). This is undoubtedly a call to the remaining captives to return to Jerusalem. They were still comfortable in Babylon and judgment was coming (two rebellions in the reign of Darius). The wider scope of the prophecy is again suggested by the 'four winds of heaven'. God, in His eternal purpose, has spread His people out to all quarters of the globe, yet they have a responsibility to flee from Babylon (and the system it represents), cp. Matthew 24.31. Furthermore, future Israel is commanded to come forth out of the final world system of Babylon the great, the mother of all harlots (Revelation 18.4). The overall message is clear. God's people must not be part of a city and system which is hostile to God and is subject to imminent judgment. *'How often believers, instead of having an interest and exercise in the work of God, are not prepared to rouse themselves because of their lives being crowded with the pressure of business interests, or they are too happily content with life as it is in this world. As a result, God's interests suffer and the things of God are left to the exercised few. The challenging word from God to us too is 'come forth' and 'escape'. Let us not be entangled in the affairs of this life. Since the time is short it is not for the believer to be building his hopes in this world and to lose out in the things of God. As the Jew had the choice to go back to his country and build up the city of Jerusalem, so the believer should let the prospect of the heavenly city so thrill him as to stir his heart to be exercised in heavenly things and to build for eternity.'* (John Stubbs)

v.8: Why flee from Babylon? Israel is precious to God. To 'touch' Israel in hostility is to touch 'the apple (literally *gate*, i.e. pupil) of His eye' (Deuteronomy 32.10). To mistreat God's people is to strike a blow at God's most *tender* and *sensitive* point – the slightest injury is felt acutely. This is the secret of Israel's survival as a nation through the years. **v.9:** Thus, He will 'shake' or *wave* His hand in judgment upon all the nations which 'spoiled' (plundered) His people, and, in an ironic twist, those who plundered Israel will themselves be plundered by their own slaves (cf. Exodus 12.36). The Agent in this judgment ('me') is the Man with the measuring line, the Angel of the Lord. He is the 'sent one' (Isaiah 61.1-2; John 10.30, 36; 17.4); sent to *pursue, restore, display* and *magnify* the glory of God. This He will do by destroying those nations set against Israel (Revelation 19.11-21; Matthew 25.31-46) – then all will know He has been sent of the Lord of Hosts. Some commentators take 'after the glory' in the sense of *time* rather than *purpose*, i.e. after the manifestation of Christ in glory, He will destroy His enemies and judge the heathen. Both are true.

v.10: The appropriate response of a community delivered from captivity is to 'sing (shout) and rejoice', particularly because the Lord comes to 'dwell' (*shakan*) in their midst. [The word *Shekinah* derives from the verb *shakan* and recalls the purpose of the tabernacle, Exodus 25.8]. God Himself will dwell in the midst of His people in the Person of His Son (Zechariah 6.13). How blessed to dwell in the presence of the Lord (Psalm 84.2, 4)! For so long the captives *wep*t by the river of Babylon (Psalm 137.1-2). Now *sorrow* is replaced by *singing*. 'Daughter of Zion' seems to be a personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants (Psalm 9.14; Isaiah 37.22; 62.11-12). **v.11:** This will be a day of blessing for Gentile nations as well as Israel (Isaiah 2.2-3; 66.18-20; Micah 4.1-2; Zechariah 8.20-23; Acts 15.16-17). They will be 'joined' (implies spiritual *union* as an act of grace) to the Lord and designated 'my people'. **v.12:** The Lord is reigning, thus the city (Jerusalem), region (Judah) and 'holy land' (Israel) are sanctified by His presence. *Jerusalem* is once again displayed before the world as the city of His choice. *Judah* is in the possession of the Great King. A defiled and polluted *land* has been cleansed (3.9). **v.13:** This is a day in which the Lord has 'risen up' in activity. The present dispensation is the period of God's long continued silence with no audible voice or visible interposition. But such silence will be broken as He is awakened to action (out of figurative sleep) in response to the distressed cries of His persecuted people (cf. Psalm 44.23). His 'holy habitation' is heaven from which the seals of Revelation 5 are opened, and the work of judgment commences. All flesh (mankind) is therefore exhorted to be in silent and reverential awe before the Lord. His mighty power is about to be manifested.