

Zech. 1:18-21 A Theology of Horns

Today we come to Zechariah's 2nd vision; it follows the first vision very closely. Through the prophet Zechariah, God is assuring his people that he is in control. Because of their sins, God raised up different nations. Here, they are pictured as "horns." I think of the Assyrians that conquered the northern kingdom and the Babylonians that conquered Judah and Jerusalem, as explained to Zechariah by the angel who spoke to him. Look at v. 19: **"These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."** And as we have seen, their time of judgment in Babylonian exile had come to an end. And now, God raises up "craftsmen" or "carpenters" or "workmen" that work with iron, brass, stone, or wood. And these craftsmen bring judgment upon the "horns." Look at v. 21. Zechariah says, **"What are these coming to do? He said, These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no raised his head. And thee have come to terrify them, to cast down the horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter it."**

As this vision stands by itself, it is pretty simple. As the enemies of God's people raise up on every side and cause many troubles, so there is a remedy in God's hands who will ultimately break in pieces these "horns" and carry out his sovereign plan to do good to his people. And those who understand this vision will certainly find comfort in God's good providence. This is really the message of Zechariah; we will see it over and over as these words bring US comfort. What a picture we have! Horns! Horns that represent the power of God's sovereign rule. But, this truth is only the TIP of the iceberg. There is so much more below what we see. With this in mind, I want go down below what we see on the surface and speak today about a "theology of horns." The word "horn" or "horns" is used 97 times in the Bible. So, I read all of them and have come up with 4 characteristics of horns from the Bible: 1) A Horn of Power, 2) A Horn of Majesty, 3) A Horn of Sacrifice, and 4) A Horn of Salvation.

1. A Horn of Power. When we think of horns in this culture, we may think of trumpets and trombones and bugles. And yes, it is a beautiful thing to be able to put that instrument to your mouth and raise up your head for more air and blow that horn. And, throughout the Bible we do see horns in this context. I think of Jericho when Israel blew the trumpets and the walls fell down. But, this is not the picture that came to mind when Israel heard the word "horns" in this vision. They would have thought of the horns of an animal, particularly a bull or a ram or even a goat. I don't know about you, but I don't want to get in the ring with a bull (with or without horns). But, the horns only add to its power, as the head goes down and the horn raises up to meet it's foe. If you've seen rams go to battle, or goats, or even rhinos, you know that it is the horns that project power, both in presentation and in battle.

Do you remember Daniel's vision of the four beasts in Dan. 7? Also, in a "night" vision (also described as a dream), Daniel saw four beasts, a lion, a bear, a leopard, and then another beast with iron teeth. But, this beast is described as having 10 horns and then a smaller horn rising up. Do you know what all these visions picture? They are kings (kingdoms) of great power that rise up and then fall. But, each are given dominion for a time. In the Book of Revelation we see the same, different kinds of beasts with horns of different sizes. This is exactly what Zechariah is picturing here with the 4 horns. They are kingdoms of power. I am not sure if he is speaking of 4

in particular or 4 as a representation of many. But, we know he is speaking of Assyria and Babylon and the Persians as those who had been given authority to rule in God's sovereign plan, even as those bringing judgment upon Israel. And these "horns" are seen, especially if we think back to the first vision, as evil nations, evil "horns" rising from the deep; these are the powers of the devil that fight and rage against the people of God. And they are powerful, which is our first characteristic about horns. (For more on this truth, see Ps. 74 and 75.) And nothing has changed in general principle today. Jesus says, **"If they persecute me, they will persecute you"** (John 15:20).

2. A Horn of Majesty. This is another picture we get from horns. Again, which of us does not marvel at the beauty of a ram's horns. For those of you who hunt, which would you rather put on your wall, the head of a doe, or the head of 14-point buck? Which you rather get a 4 pointer or a 10 pointer? There is something about the horns of the reindeer or the buck or the impala, that projects beauty and majesty. Turn with me to Deut. 33:13-17 to see an example of this truth. In Moses' last words before he died, he says this about Joseph: **"And of Joseph he said, 'Blessed by the LORD be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above, and of the deep that crouches beneath, with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favor of him who dwells in the bush. May these rest on the head of Joseph, on the pate of him who is prince among his brothers. A firstborn bull—he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth . . .'"**

Do you remember Balaam's oracles when Balak tried to hire him to curse Israel? Instead of cursing Israel, he blessed them and speaks of their beauty and majesty. In he says **"How lovely are your tents, O Jacob, your encampments, O Israel! Like palm groves that stretch afar, like gardens beside a river, like aloes that the LORD has planted, like cedar trees beside the waters. Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox . . ."** (Num. 24:5-8). In Ps. 92:10 the Psalmist says, **"But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil."**

Throughout the OT we see "horns" that picture majesty and beauty. And, it is often Israel, Jerusalem, Zion, etc. that are pictured as having great majesty and beauty in the eyes of God.

3. A Horn of Sacrifice. I get this from the fact that Zechariah's vision has four horns. Why four? Here the picture shifts from power and majesty to sacrifice. It is interesting that pagan nations often constructed horns on and around their altars and their places of worship, places of sacrifice, particularly on mountains. There is even some evidence that the Tower of Babel would have been constructed in such a way (See M. Kline *Glory in our Midst*, 62). When 4 horns are mentioned in the Bible (as opposed to 1 or 7 or 10), it is usually in reference to a place of worship with a particular emphasis on sacrifice. This is very interesting! Do you remember the tabernacle that Moses built? Do you remember what was constructed into the 4 corners of the altar? . . . They were horns! In Ex. 27:2 Moses gives the people God's instructions for the altar. We read: **"And you shall make horns for it on its four corners; its horns shall be of one**

piece with it, and you shall overlay it with bronze.” In Exod. 30:10 we read “**Aaron shall make atonement on its horns once a year. With the blood of the sin offering of atonement he shall make atonement for it once in the year throughout your generations. It is most holy to the LORD.**” This means that on the Day of Atonement, the blood of sacrificed animals would have been poured over the 4 horns of the altar. (See also Ezekeiel’s end time temple as well.) Now, this is an interesting picture alongside horns of power and horns of majesty. Now, we have God’s provision in dealing with sin. There must be sacrifice . . . Now, turn with me to Luke 1:68-79.

4. A Horn of Salvation. In these verses we find the words of another Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. Do you remember his story? He was a priest, and he entered the temple to burn incense. And while inside the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared before him and told him he would have a son (John). And he also told him that his son would come in power like Elijah, filled with Holy Spirit, and he would preach messages to prepare Israel for the coming of another Son. And Zechariah did not believe Gabriel (v. 20). So, when he came out of the temple, he was unable to speak. And this lasted until the birth of John. And then, after John was born, these are the words given to Zechariah. As I read these words, there is SO MUCH similarity with the context of Zechariah and the people of Israel coming out of captivity to rebuild the temple.

Starting in v. 68: “**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, (John) will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**”

Here we find the Horn of ALL Horns, the Horn of Salvation, that God raises up above all the other horns. Brothers and sisters, this vision of Zechariah fit their context. But, in their day, it still looked forward to ultimate fulfillment. We must remember the OT, the OC was full of shadows and types of Christ, to which ALL of them pointed. And Zechariah and his son, John the Baptist, GOT IT. This was Luke’s point with writing his gospel. Look at 2:25 ff. Here we see the old man Simeon who sees the Messiah and says in vv. 29-32: “**Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.**” And then we see the same as God reveals this truth to the eighty-four year old widow named Anna. In v. 30 we read: “**And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.**” This REDEMPTION came in God’s HORN OF SALVATION!

Brothers and sisters, with every vision of Zechariah, we will end up here. Why? Because these kinds of prophecies lead to one place, ONE person, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the True

Israel, the True King from David's family, the True shepherd of God's people, the TRUE vine, the Light of the world, the Bread from heaven, etc. We must preach the prophecies of the OT like this, or we do not preach them properly. Today, we worship God's horn of power. He healed the sick. He rose the dead to life. He cast out demons with authority. At his word storms immediately cease to be! In Rev. 5:6 we read these words: **"And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth."** Our Lord is a horn of salvation because He did what none of us can do. He lived a sinless life and laid down that life on the cross as a sacrifice for sinners. But, he did not stay dead! He rose again. This is why the vision of Revelation sees him as a Lamb, as though it had been slain. In this Horn, we have ultimate power. **"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. "For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent"** (Col. 1:15-18).

Also, this "Horn" is the most beautiful, the most MAJESTIC of all horns. Ps. 45:6-7 says of Him: **"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions . . ."** The writer of Hebrews says of Christ, **"What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet."** Speaking of him in his glory, Peter says, **"For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased . . ."** (2 Pet. 1:17). On and on we could go! But, today, and every day, my goal is to present this majestic "horn" of salvation. Is Christ beautiful to you?

Finally, this "Horn" is a horn of sacrifice. I think of the 4 horns of the altar upon which Israel poured the blood of all those animals for all those years. Yet, the Lord Jesus "becomes" the altar upon which our sins are removed. Is. 53:4-6: **"Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."** Even look over to Zechariah 3:9-10. Speaking of God's servant, he calls the "branch" (as we will see) he says, **"I will remove the iniquity of this land in a single day. In that day, declares the Lord of hosts, every one of you will invite his neighbor to come under his vine and under his fig tree."** This did not happen with the rebuilding of the temple of Zechariah's day. This happened way after that time with the sacrificial death of God's "horn," God's "servant," God's "branch." **"For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). Today, the Lord Jesus is God's powerful, majestic, sacrificial Horn of Salvation for his people, for those who believe. And this was God's sovereign plan before the foundations of the world. This is the Gospel!

Today, preaching is like prophecy, always calling the church to trust in the sovereign plan of God in Christ. This is the message of the Bible! Today, do you find that you believe this truth? There is only one horn of salvation! It is a horn of power, a horn of majesty, and a horn of sacrifice.

(If time, mention the craftsmen, as a picture of a “horn of vengeance.”)