

The introduction message from Zechariah was a call to repent. The people needed to be holy if they were to perform the holy task of rebuilding the temple. Compromise with the cultures around them had to cease. We saw that God's call to us is very similar. If we are to be used of God to share Christ with others, we need to be vessels of the Holy Spirit. Then we can be used to shape living stones to be part of the eternal temple of God. That is what we refer to as discipleship. We need to exemplify the message we are teaching or the meaning will be distorted. I can't teach a brother or sister to trust in the Lord if I'm constantly worrying and frustrated over situations in my life. My example will speak louder than my words (Matthew 24:3ⁱ).

The first of eight visions was of the four horses and riders who reported the world was at peace. That seemed unfair because these nations had abused God's people and mocked their God, the one true God (Genesis 18:25ⁱⁱ). Israel, represented by myrtle trees, was in the deep valley of humility. But the Lord was standing there with them speaking words of comfort. We saw that no matter what we are enduring, if the Lord is with us we can know all will be well and His plans for our good will prevail. In the verse immediately preceding our verses for today, the words of comfort were, *¹⁷ Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.*" Zechariah 1:17 For the Jews whose hearts were right with God, the glory of Israel pointed the world to the goodness and greatness of God. They wanted the world to see God favoring them again so the world would look to YHWH.

Today we will look at the second vision which tells us how the first vision will come to pass in a most unlikely way. It is a vision of four horns and four craftsmen. *¹⁸ And I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, four horns! ¹⁹ And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" And he said to me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem."* Zechariah 1:18-19 This is Zechariah's second vision. He saw four horns. They represent four powers, kings, or kingdoms. These are the nations that scattered Israel: Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Egypt, or perhaps Edomⁱⁱⁱ. While Edom didn't take captives, it is mentioned in Scripture as being particularly harsh toward Israel during and after the fall of the nation (Obadiah 9-14^{iv}). The Assyrians took the northern tribes captive in 722 B.C. Babylon's final conquest of Judah and Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple came in 587 B.C. God was angry with these nations for being excessively cruel toward Israel (verse 15^v). Because of that, the Lord was going to stretch out the measuring line over Jerusalem. That is the first thing you do when you begin to build, or in this case rebuild. That is a strange response. However, it is a key to understanding the vision.

²⁰ Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. Zechariah 1:20 Even seventy years after this vision, those who returned felt they were not experiencing God's favor like they hoped. At that future time Nehemiah prayed, "see, we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our forefathers so they could eat its fruit and other good things it

produces... its abundant harvest goes to the kings you have placed over us. They rule over our bodies and cattle as they please. We are in great distress (Nehemiah 9:36-37^{vi}). When was God going to deal with these nations? How would He punish them and restore Israel's sovereignty?

God's response to these four great powers that were so cruel to His people was to send four craftsmen. The term craftsmen is applied to people who have skills of working with their hands. This term is not used of military leaders or kings but of simple folk that have learned a skill such as weavers or carpenters or engravers or the like. It is the term used in the Bible to describe those who helped build the tabernacle and later for those who worked on the temple. In Ezra 3:7^{vii} it is used of those hired to rebuild the temple upon the return from captivity. God's response was not another king to that would build an army, but craftsmen who would build the temple.

21 And I said, "What are these coming to do?" He said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one raised his head. And these 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." Zechariah 1:21 One popular interpretation is that each succeeding nation was the craftsman to destroy the previous one with the last being the Roman empire revived in the last days only to be conquered by Jesus. That interpretation seems to ignore the weakness and insignificance of the status of a craftsman. I prefer the following interpretation.

"At the heart of this vision... there is a strange conjunction of weakness and power. There are four horns (power) and four craftsmen or carpenters (weakness). The task of the craftsmen is to overthrow the power of the nations, and the correspondence of the 'four' and 'four' implies that they are equal to the task! But how can this be so?"^{viii}

"Perhaps the vision of the four craftsmen is meant to evoke the idea that just as a craftsman does his work slowly, carefully, and skillfully, so God skillfully works His justice in His own time. Also, sometimes we can only understand the work of a craftsman once it is finished. In the same way, God's ultimate justice will only be fully understood when time has drawn to a close and God's purposes are complete."^{ix}

These craftsmen are the Lord's answer because, as stated in verse 16^x, the LORD will return to Jerusalem with mercy. He will see that His house is rebuilt as well as the rebuilding of Jerusalem. These simple craftsmen anointed by God are the power that puts the nations in their place. They are rebuilding the temple. They are not weak insignificant laborers, but instruments in God's hands to build the house of worship which would have a transformative effect for centuries to come. **The weapons of our warfare are not swords and spears, but rather cooperation with God's Spirit in worship, prayer, and witnessing (2 Corinthians 10:4^{xi}).**

We tend to put our faith in politics and social causes which can be good causes and callings that God gives individuals. But the greater and more foundational cause is the building of God's kingdom one soul at a time. The temple of God built with living stones

is the only lasting kingdom (Revelation 21:2-3^{xii}). It is the answer to all the powers of the world. Remember the dream that Daniel interpreted not so many years before Zechariah. King Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of an image of a man consisting of various metals. A stone was seen striking the image and the stone became a mountain that filled the whole earth. The image represented the governments of man throughout the history of the earth. The stone is the Lord Jesus conquering all the futile efforts of man to govern himself. That stone becomes that eternal kingdom that reigns over the earth in true justice and righteousness (Daniel 2:44-45^{xiii}).

Lest we think that craftsmen conquering nations is wishful thinking, consider the craftsman Noah. While the world mocked his obedience to God, the very work he did day in and day out condemned the world (Hebrews 11:7^{xiv}). Their refusal to turn from evil and fear the justice of God ended their power. The craftsman and his family were the only survivors.

We have the greatest example in the craftsman from Nazareth. Who would have walked into his carpentry work shop or seen Him shaping stone on a building project and have imagined this craftsman would one day be the King of kings reigning over a kingdom that invaded all kingdoms of man and would one-day reign over them all. And how did He establish His kingdom? Obedience to the Father! He only did what the heavenly Father did and said what the Father told Him to say (John 14:10^{xv}). He is our example.

The Apostle Paul who himself was a craftsman, a tentmaker, tells us that we are those weak and foolish craftsmen and women. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 *²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.*

Were the craftsmen who were rebuilding the temple and the walls really that significant? How can we as seemingly insignificant craftsmen and women take on the world (2 Corinthians 2:16-17^{xvi})? We confront the world with spiritual weapons, for that is where the battle is really won or lost. The fruit of the Spirit is more effective than we imagine. Love, joy, peace, and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit influence lives and draw others to our King (Galatians 5:22-23^{xvii}). It is Christ in us who wages the war against the dark powers of this world (Exodus 14:14^{xviii}).

We put on the spiritual armor of Ephesians 6:12-17^{xix} and march into our everyday jobs as seemingly insignificant tradesmen, but in doing so we influence lives by shining the light of Christ into the darkness of this world. Never underestimate the power of a single phrase to be used by God. One sentence from a letter was used by God to bring me out darkness. I said one phrase to a man, "I'm doing this because God loves you." God used that one phrase to bring him to salvation and to return the truck he had

stolen and to turn himself into law enforcement. When we speak what God puts in our mouths, the effects can be beyond what we can imagine.

"The revolutionary message of this vision is that the judgment of the world is already being put into effect wherever God deploys his workmen. Through them God brings his kingdom into this world, a kingdom that will eventually sweep away and replace every earthly power."^{xx} Light will prevail over darkness. Truth will prevail over lies. Goodness will prevail over evil. This is not because we are a militia with powerful arms. It is because our God is mighty. He is mighty in us to draw people to Himself. We point to the saving power of the cross and He draws people to His love (John 12:32^{xxi}).

What is our trade? It is the Word of God which is also called the sword of the Spirit. Our trade is the fruit of the Spirit and in demonstration of that fruit people see there is something more than this world offers. Our trade is words from the Spirit that reach into souls and with the light of Christ to see what they have never seen before. One living stone at a time we are building the kingdom of God (1 Peter 2:5^{xxii}).

We don't have a land or a visible government, and yet we have a mighty spiritual army led by the captain of the armies of heaven (Joshua 5:14^{xxiii}). We cannot fail for our leader is all-knowing and all-powerful. He shows His greatness in working even through simple tradesmen and women like you and me.

Are you following our Captain's orders? It is a privilege and an honor. Lest you hear the lie of the deceiver that you are unable to be such an instrument, remember the account of Gideon. The angel addressed him as mighty warrior. Gideon replied, "Excuse me, but I'm the humblest person from the humblest tribe. I think you have the wrong person" (Judges 6:12-16^{xxiv}). You know the rest of the story. God loves to use the least. **The less you think of yourself, the more you will rely on the Lord, and the more the glory goes to the Lord.** That is God's message to you this morning, mighty warriors.

"Ravi Zacharias tells the story of visiting the city of Varanasi in northern India. There he walked into the small side room of a building where a father and son were working together to make a wedding sari, a spectacular traditional garment that every bride in India wants to wear on her wedding day. He writes, 'The father sits on a raised platform with huge spools of brilliantly colored threads within his reach. The son sits on the floor in the lotus position. . . . Before my eyes, though it did not appear so at first, a grand design appears. The father gathers some threads in his hand, then nods, and the son moves the shuttle from one side to the other. A few more threads, another nod, and again the son responds by moving the shuttle. The process seems almost Sisyphus-like in its repetition, the silence broken only occasionally with a comment or by some visitor who interrupts to ask a question about the end design. The father smiles and tries in broken English to explain the picture he has in mind, but compared to the magnificence of the final product, it is a mere lisp. Throughout the process, the son has had a much easier task. Most likely he has often felt bored. Perhaps his back has ached or his legs have gone to sleep. Perhaps he has wished for some other calling in life—

something he might find more stimulating or fulfilling. He has but one task, namely to move the shuttle as directed by the father's nod, hoping to learn to think like the father so that he can carry on the business at the appropriate time. Yet, the whole time, the design has remained in the mind of the father as he held the threads.' (Zacharias, *Grand Weaver*, 15–16)

The Jews wanted to see a new King David that put the nations in their place. It was the people that ignored God by choosing to have a king other than God. God allowed it to show them the rule of man is a dead end. Now God was preparing them for a new direction, a spiritual kingdom, built by humble laborers, and the most effective craftsman of all, the Creator, the only One fit to reign in unselfish love. The vision was clear, but it was so difficult for them to see what God was weaving.

In the same way we look at our lives and from our limited earthly human perspective. We cannot see the pattern or the plan. We cannot see God's justice at work, and life looks incredibly messy and unfair. **Life is *not* fair, but God is fair, God is just, and God is greater than this life.** When we are on the other side, power, wealth, fame, and so much of what the world values will be seen as vanity. Heaven's values are love, truthfulness, grace, and all those attributes we see in Jesus (1 Corinthians 13:13^{xxv}).

We may not experience the fullness of His plan for us in this lifetime. We may find ourselves wondering, "Why am I suffering this way?" Why am I going through this? But, like a craftsman, God is working everything together (Rom 8:28^{xxvi}). As a result, we can say, 'God, I know that You are just. I know that You are righteous. And I am counting on Your ultimate justice, that You are going to take care of things, even if I don't quite understand how.' God promised overriding justice to His people Judah. He promises that to us, as well.^{xxvii}

Fellow craftsmen, let us be faithful to do as the Word and the Spirit instruct us. Let us trust God for the outcome. Let us not be discouraged because we know the One who directs us is doing more than we can see or understand. Remember, this is a life of faith in our good Father who holds the threads and sees the finished product. Trust Him! Watch Him. Listen and learn to let His life flow through you.

Questions

- 1 What were the conditions in Yehud?
- 2 What was the promise of the first vision?
- 3 What do the four horns represent?
- 4 What are two interpretations for the craftsmen?
- 5 How does it relate to the work before the people of Jerusalem?
- 6 Why does God use weak and common people?
- 7 What looked most lasting and powerful? What was eternally significant?
- 8 What is the temple today and who are the craftsmen?
- 9 What is needed for us to be faithful builders?
- 10 How does Ravi's story teach us the value of our labor and teach trust in the Lord?

ⁱ **Matthew 23:3 (ESV)**

³ so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.

ⁱⁱ **Genesis 18:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

ⁱⁱⁱ The targums translate horns as kingdoms. Some commentators suggest it is the horns of Daniel 2 and 7, Babylon, Medo-Persian, Greece, and Rome.

^{iv} **Obadiah 1:9-14 (ESV)**

⁹ And your mighty men shall be dismayed, O Teman, so that every man from Mount Esau will be cut off by slaughter. ¹⁰ Because of the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you, and you shall be cut off forever. ¹¹ On the day that you stood aloof, on the day that strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. ¹² But do not gloat over the day of your brother in the day of his misfortune; do not rejoice over the people of Judah in the day of their ruin; do not boast in the day of distress. ¹³ Do not enter the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; do not gloat over his disaster in the day of his calamity; do not loot his wealth in the day of his calamity. ¹⁴ Do not stand at the crossroads to cut off his fugitives; do not hand over his survivors in the day of distress.

^v **Zechariah 1:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ And I am exceedingly angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was angry but a little, they furthered the disaster.

^{vi} **Nehemiah 9:36-37 (ESV)**

³⁶ Behold, we are slaves this day; in the land that you gave to our fathers to enjoy its fruit and its good gifts, behold, we are slaves.

³⁷ And its rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us because of our sins. They rule over our bodies and over our livestock as they please, and we are in great distress.

^{vii} **Ezra 3:7 (ESV)**

⁷ So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.

^{viii} The Bible Speaks Today – The Message of Zechariah: Your Kingdom Come.

^{ix} Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi
^x **Zechariah 1:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercy; my house shall be built in it, declares the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.

^{xi} **2 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)**

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

^{xii} **Revelation 21:2-3 (ESV)**

² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

^{xiii} **Daniel 2:44-45 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure."

^{xiv} **Hebrews 11:7 (ESV)**

⁷ By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

^{xv} **John 14:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

^{xvi} **2 Corinthians 2:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? ¹⁷ For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

^{xvii} **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

^{xviii} **Exodus 14:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

^{xix} **Ephesians 6:12-17 (ESV)**

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

^{xx} The Bible Speaks Today – The Message of Zechariah: Your Kingdom Come.

^{xxi} **John 12:32 (ESV)**

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

^{xxii} **John 12:32 (ESV)**

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

^{xxiii} **Joshua 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"

^{xxiv} **Judges 6:12-16 (ESV)**

¹² And the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O mighty man of valor."

¹³ And Gideon said to him, "Please, sir, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all his wonderful deeds that our fathers recounted to us, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has forsaken us and given us into the hand of Midian."

¹⁴ And the LORD turned to him and said, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian; do not I send you?"

¹⁵ And he said to him, "Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house."

¹⁶ And the LORD said to him, "But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man."

^{xxv} **1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV)**

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

^{xxvi} **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

^{xxvii} - Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary – Exalting Jesus in Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.