Zechariah 1:18-21

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 1:18–21*** (ESV)  
**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.” **20** Then YHWH showed me four craftsmen. **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.”

Note: Zech 1:18-21 in our Christian tradition corresponds to Zech 2:1-4 in the Hebrew tradition. There are a number of cases where verse numbering and even the order of the books themselves differ between the two traditions. This is one of those cases.

1. These four verses record Zechariah’s Second Vision. Remember the context:  
   a) Summarize the main point of the, Introduction, Zech 1:-1-6.  
   b) Summarize the main point of the First Vision, Zech 1:7-17.

Introduction – Don’t be like your ancestors. Repent… turn back to YHWH and obey his Torah. When you do, He will turn back to you as well.

First vision – The world may appear to be at peace, but it is actually in a state of complacency (spiritual complacency). YHWH is very angry and will punish all the nations that have trampled His people. this should encourage His people. They should also be encouraged because YHWH will rebuild His city and His land, and dwell there with His people again – ALL of them, including both the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

1. The second vision is about all “horns” (Hebrew קֶרֶן **keren**). Think about animals with horns and how they use them. Look up other uses of this word, such as Dt 33:17, 1 Sam 2:1, Ps 18:2, Ps 22:21, Ps 89:24, Ps 92:10, Jer 48:25, Ezek 29:21. What all does a horn symbolize? And why?

***Deuteronomy 33:17***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; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

***1 Samuel 2:1***And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; my horn is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.

***Psalm 18:2***The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

***Psalm 22:21***Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

***Psalm 89:24***My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

***Psalm 92:10***But you have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; you have poured over me fresh oil.

***Jeremiah 48:25***The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, declares the Lord.

***Ezekiel 29:21***“On that day I will cause a horn to spring up for the house of Israel, and I will open your lips among them. Then they will know that I am the Lord.”

Picture horns on a ram or an ox. The horns were on their head, almost as a crown, or a symbol of pride on their head. And they were used to exert their power. They killed their foes with their horns. So horns were a symbol of strength, but more than that, a symbol of pride and honor. A symbol of the head of something… **symbolizing a person, a leader or a nation, and all the power and honor associated with that position.**

1. As an aside, thinking about horns, recall that the altar of sacrifice in the tabernacle and the temple had four horns – see Exod 38:1-2. What was the altar used for? What is the symbolism of those horns? Recall also the account of Adonijah (**Adoni-yahu**) in 1 Kings 1:50-51, when he clung to the horns of the altar. Look up that passage along with Ps 18:2, 2 Sam 22:3. Why did Adoniyahu cling to the horns of the altar? Now look up Luke 1:69. How is the Messiah connected to all this??

***Exodus 38:1–2***He made the altar of burnt offering of acacia wood. Five cubits was its length, and five cubits its breadth. It was square, and three cubits was its height. He made horns for it on its four corners. Its horns were of one piece with it, and he overlaid it with bronze.

***1 Kings 1:50–51***And Adonijah feared Solomon. So he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then it was told Solomon, “Behold, Adonijah fears King Solomon, for behold, he has laid hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me first that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’ ”

***Psalm 18:2***The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

***2 Samuel 22:3***my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.

***Luke 1:68–69***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.

The altar was a place of offerings – burnt, grain, fellowship, sin, and guilt (See Lev 1:1ff). This was seen as YHWH’s food. Perhaps the altar was viewed as YHWH’s mouth or head… the part that consumed the offering meal. The horns of the altar, were the horns of YHWH, the horns of His head.

Adoniyahu clung to the horns of YHWH, hoping that YHWH would be his salvation.

The YHWH’s horn of salvation was in fact His Son, the Messiah. Yeshua became the ultimate sacrifice – seen symbolically in all 5 of the offerings. In Him, through his blood on the altar, came our salvation. In Him was the true strength, power, honor of YHWH demonstrated.

1. There are four horns. Why the number four? Consider Isaiah 11:12, Ezekiel 1:17, Ezekiel 37:9, Matthew 24:31. Recall too there were four horns on the altar. What may that have symbolized?

***Isaiah 11:12*** (ESV)  
**12** He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

***Ezekiel 1:17*** (ESV)  
**17** When they went, they went in any of their four directions without turning as they went.

***Ezekiel 37:9*** (ESV)  
**9** Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”

***Matthew 24:31*** (ESV)  
**31** And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Four represents the 4 directions. The 4 winds of the earth; the 4 corners of the earth. In other words, the four horns represented the nations of all the earth.

The four horns of the altar may have represented totality. YHWH was everywhere. He covered ALL the earth. ALL sins would be atoned for on that altar. Salvation would be for everyone, everywhere.

1. The “angel” was talking to Zechariah. Thinking back to our previous discussions, what is an “angel”?

Simply a “messenger” of God. Not necessarily a glowing, winged heavenly being…just someone, perhaps in human form, perhaps not, communicating the message of YHWH to Zechariah.

1. What are “the horns” that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem?

These are the nations that have attacked, conquered, and enslaved YHWH’s people over the past centuries

1. Why do you think the angel specifically mentions “Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem” instead of using a single all –inclusive term like “YHWH’s people”?

He was speaking to the Jews from Judah, specifically in Jerusalem. The immediate words of encouragement was to these Jerusalem Jews, but YHWH wanted them to know that His promises were for ALL the sons of Jacob… including all of Judah and even all of Israel, despite the fact that much of Israel had been scattered all over many nations even at that time.

1. Next Zechariah is shown a four “craftsmen” (Hebrew חָרָשׁ **kharash**). What is the meaning of this word?

DBL: “skilled craftsman, artisan, i.e., one who works at a high level in a trade or industry as a technical worker, some of which are gem cutter, blacksmith, carpenter, stonemason, idolmakers”

1. Zechariah asks what the four craftsmen are coming to do. The angel’s reply in Zech 1:21 seems to first talk about the four horns (Zech 1:21a) and then answer the question regarding the craftsmen in Zech 1:21b. Who were the horns and what did they do? Who were the craftsmen and what did they come do to?

Horns – the nations that scattered and subdued all the people of Judah  
Craftsmen – we don’t know “who” they were, but they were instruments of God. They would terrify and destroy the horns (power, authority, & honor) of the nations that scattered Judah.

Note also that Yeshua was a ***tekton*** which is often translated “carpenter” but more often than not referred to a stone mason. Yeshua was a “craftsman” who came (and will return) as an instrument of God to bring judgment upon the nations of the world. Perhaps the image of craftsmen in Zechariah’s vision hints at the Messiah’s coming for this purpose.

1. It is interesting that Zech 1:21 talk only about Judah (not mentioning Israel). Any idea why this might be the case? (Your guess is as good as mine…).

Perhaps he wanted to focus the encouragement “at home”, to the very people that were hearing these words.

1. Summarize the message of this prophesy. What would it have meant to the people hearing it?

God is saying that he knows you have been suffering under the hands of others. But don’t worry, there is coming a time of punishment for those nations. Your sufferings have not gone unnoticed. The abuses will be paid for. Take heart, be encouraged, for I am your God.

1. When will this happen? It is not stated, so you will have to guess what is perhaps being implied here. Connected to this question, how should the knowledge of the fact that God sees what is happening and will eventually punish their abusers change their actions or behavior?

Repent… turn back to me and I will turn back to you. The sooner you turn back to back and obey my Torah, the sooner I will turn around your situation, and avenge your abusers, and reinstate your horn!

1. How do we see ourselves in this passage? What does Yahuah want you to learn about HIM? What does He want you to learn about YOURSELF?