

Global City Zechariah 1:18-2:13

(Show slide 1 as soon as the sermon starts)

One of the most effective ways to suck the life out of someone's soul is to ensure they do **pointless things**.

Ask someone to dig a hole and then fill it in at the end of the day.

Or move a pile of sand from one place to another then move it back again.

Or how about pushing a large rock to the top of the hill only for it to roll down again just as it nears the top? (Sisyphus)

Pointless activity makes us feel rubbish.

I don't know how your life feels at the moment but if we don't see meaning and purpose in what we do, then we are normally faced with three outcomes.

- Busyness
- Escapism
- Despair

Today, as we gaze at this section of the Bible, I want to assure us that joining the kingdom of Jesus **and** investing in the kingdom of Jesus is profoundly **significant**, and because it is, it helps to bring **satisfaction** to our daily experience.

There are **two big truths** I want to highlight this morning.

- The kingdom of Jesus will be triumphant (1:18-21)
- The kingdom of Jesus will be enormous (2:1-13)

Change to slide 2 First, the kingdom of Jesus will be triumphant (1:18-21)

Look at verse 18. **Read verses 18 and 19.**

The **backstory** of these two verses is that the prophet Zechariah is being presented with a message from God in a **style** that is highly dramatic and visually eye-catching.

It's the year **519 BC** and one night Zechariah is shown the truth about how God is working out his purposes for his people in a way that he will never forget.

Last week we focused on the first part of the vision where multiple coloured surveillance horses are used to reveal the glorious encouragement that God knows exactly what is going on in his world and has a plan to preserve and grow his people.

Part 2 of the vision doesn't have any horses but it does have horns.

In fact, it has **4** of them.

Horns in the Bible are a symbol of strength and power. However, knowing that detail doesn't tell us straight away the meaning of these four particular horns.

That was also the case for Zechariah. And so in **verse 19** he asks his familiar question, **"What are these?"**

The answer from his angelic tour guide, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem."

The history of God's people had been one of **persecution** and **oppression** from many enemies.

In fact, danger and violence had been experienced from every direction, which is probably why 4 horns are mentioned. **They symbolise the four points of the compass.**

Sometimes this was from **their local enemies** and sometimes it was from **regional superpowers** like the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

The result was much **pain** and **destruction**, and in recent years a large scale **deportation** of the people of Judah to the nation of Babylon, a walking distance of around 900 miles!

Why such comprehensive persecution of God's people?

Behind all the human attacks there is the spiritual reality of darkness. There are **unseen** but **real** forces of evil who hate God and hate the people God has set his affection on.

So when we see the horns it's right to see both the human powers of destruction **but also** the evil power of the devil and his spirits as they move towards God's people with hatred and oppression.

If the vision had stopped here then the mood created would have been rather sombre. Realistic yes but not very hopeful.

Thankfully, the vision continues!

Look at verse 20. **Read verses 20 and 21.**

The good news is that the painful experience of God's people will not last forever. The horns are destined for destruction and removal!

However, there is a **big surprise in this vision**. Did you spot it? The elimination of the horns happens in a very unusual way.

Change to slide 3 The vision doesn't present us with hunters removing the vicious animals. Or mighty military forces overpowering the foe. But craftsmen.

This word can be translated in slightly different ways but the general idea is of someone who is skilled with their hand making something out of wood or metal.

Change to slide 4 Some have been tempted to imagine mighty warrior type **blacksmiths** with huge mighty hammers, a bit like **Thor** in the Avengers.

However, I'm not convinced that's the right way to picture what we are presented with in **Zechariah chapter 1**.

What we see is a deliberate contrast between something that looks powerful and menacing, the horns, with something that looks weak and ineffective, the craftsmen or as the Kings James Version translates it, the carpenters.

Change to slide 5 The question we are to ask is, **how can these puny carpenters possibly overthrow the evil powers?**

I discovered this week that elephants aren't scared of mice. However, they are frightened of bees. **Something very small can terrify a giant beast.**

This is the way of God that we see repeatedly in the Bible. He has a track record of using what is weak and small to overcome that which is big and impressive.

Remember David and Goliath? This is the running theme of the Bible. **With God's help, the small beat the tall.** And here we find it in the **book of Zechariah**.

It's not an accident that the word **craftsman** or **carpenter** is used.

This would have been so relevant to the situation of the original hearers. Remember they were back in the land and their big task was one of rebuilding. The city of Jerusalem was in disarray and needed a massive construction project. The people weren't finding it easy and many were pretty fed up and demotivated.

Here's the message of this vision. **Pick up your hammers and your chisels** because your building project will be used by God as part of his plan to overthrow evil.

Really? How? **Be a person of faith.** Trust God even when you can't see the fruit.

As we look back from **our position post Jesus**, we can see that one of the ways God was using this ancient building project was to **preserve the people** from whom the Saviour of the world would be born and to ensure that **the places** required by the Messiah would be ready for his arrival.

When the time was right, Jesus was born into a Jewish family.

As he grew up do you know what skills he learnt? Listen to what people said about Jesus in **Mark 6:2-3**, "What's this wisdom that has been given to him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter?"

Yes he is the carpenter! Indeed, he is the ultimate carpenter promised by **Zechariah chapter 1** who has come to terrify the horns and ultimately remove them from their position of oppression over God's people.

Jesus did this when he died on the cross. **Colossians 2:13-15**, "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."

Jesus will completely deal with his enemies when he returns again. A day of justice for the enemies of God and ultimate protection for God's people.

What does this mean for us as we wait for the carpenter's return?

As we build the kingdom we can seriously weaken the kingdom of darkness and save those who are currently under the oppression of that rule.

Our gospel work may look weak and insignificant but as we pick up our gospel hammers and chisels, the powers of evil are terrified by our **purposeful activity**.

Can you see why the devil hates local churches? He will do anything he can to stop us proclaiming the gospel and setting the captives free.

He loves to...

- Distract us
- Divide us
- Discredit us

Let's keep on building the kingdom of Jesus as we rescue more people from the kingdom of darkness.

As we do, let's get our expectations right. As kind as we seek to be and as compassionate and gracious as we live, here's the truth, **there is a hidden hatred of Jesus in our world.** And because of that it is pretty normal for his disciples to experience oppression for the simple fact of following him. However, one day our carpenter is coming back and when he does, we will raise our heads in glorious freedom and celebration!

Second, the kingdom of Jesus will be enormous (2:1-13)

Change to slide 6 Look at 2:1. **Read verses 1 and 2.**

The building theme continues in this part of the vision. What we are presented with now is a keen surveyor who has his measuring tape ready to measure how big Jerusalem will be.

At the time of this vision, the people of God were in the early days of rebuilding the physical city of Jerusalem that had been destroyed by the Babylonians. However, as we continue to engage with this vision in Zechariah chapter 2, it quickly becomes apparent that the Jerusalem being described is not the earthly city in the Middle East.

Look at verse 3. **Read verses 3 to 5.**

Here is a spectacular city.

- It is so big it won't have physical walls
- It won't need walls to protect it because God will be a wall of fire around it
- God will be present within it

In the Bible, Jerusalem can refer to different things. Sometimes it's a physical place. However, it also becomes a way of talking about the people of God themselves rather than the place where the people live.

This is what it means in **Zechariah chapter 2**. It's a vivid way of describing just how beautiful a future awaits the people of God.

- They will be enormous
- They will be protected
- God himself will dwell with them in a special way

We know that Jesus is the centre of how this grand vision will be accomplished.

As God the Son he came to dwell with his people. He died and rose again in order to save them. His message has gone throughout the world so that those who trust in him today are enormous and enjoy the presence of his Holy Spirit in their midst.

And yet even this still isn't the best it can be. The best is yet to come.

Revelation 21:1-5, "Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,'[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death"[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.' He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

What does this mean for us now?

Change to slide 7 There are **three** commands given in these final verses of **Zechariah chapter 2**.

- Come and join in (Vs 6-9)
- Shout and be glad (Vs 10-12)
- Stop and be reverent (Vs 13)

First, let's come and join in (Vs 6-9)

Look at verse 6. **Read verses 6 to 9**.

Don't stay in Babylon. Come back and join the people of God.

Why would someone want to stay? Comfortable? Hard to return?

Make the hard journey because you want to be found as part of the people of God when God comes to judge.

In the **book of Revelation** we have a similar command to the people of God.

Revelation 18:1, "Fallen! Fallen in Babylon the Great!"

Revelation 18:4, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues."

We live in spiritual Babylon. There will always be temptation to head towards the world and make our home there.

Or perhaps to be a **two home Christian**, with a postcode in Babylon and a postcode in Jerusalem.

Come and join in fully. Be a committed and joyful part of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Second, let's shout and be glad (Vs 10-12)

Look at verse 10. **Read verses 10 to 12.**

Enjoy what God is doing. Praise him that we are part of it.

Jesus has come to be with us. The church is a global family on mission together.

One day a great number that no one can count will gather round the throne of Jesus.

Whatever the circumstances of our lives, let's not forget what we now have in Jesus and what the future holds for us.

Let's shout and be glad!

Third, let's stop and be reverent (Vs 13)

Look at verse 13. **Read verse 13.**

What a way to end!

At some point the questions need to stop and the discussions need to cease. Instead, we should humbly bow in awe at the mighty and memorable wisdom of God as he works out his plan of salvation day by day and step by step.

Amen.