

PostExilicProphets 21-07-22a

Good evening on this Thursday, the 22nd of July, 2021. We're continuing our study in the book of Zechariah. Anyone who has not yet muted, feel free to do so.

Matt will focus all of the appropriate attention on me, myself, and I. We're taking a look at these wonderful visions that were revealed to Zechariah in beginning in chapter one and extending through chapter six and looking at the symmetry that helps us understand what they mean. These are so timely because these were delivered to the nation of Israel in prophetic time shortly before the end of their dispensation. Revelation is closing.

The window of opportunity for them is closing. God reveals his final plans and purposes to them through the prophet Zechariah. We are doing the same thing in our day and our time, availing ourselves of these prophetic messages to inform us and to encourage us and to lead us and guide us as we travel through similar days at the end of our own dispensation.

So it's very fascinating. We're gonna be picking up here, looking at that chiastic structure of the eight visions and tying together our observations and seeing their pertinence and application tonight. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we'll get started.

Father, we live in interesting and exciting times. We're grateful to have the stability and the outlook, the encouragement that comes to us through the presence of your Holy Spirit, the power of your word, the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the bright hope that has been set before us as it was before him to employ our time and our resources, our opportunities in this life to prepare ourselves for eternal life and service with you. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that the Holy Spirit will reveal its truths and its pertinence to us so that we can make the best use of it, we can be renewed in our inner man, we can be prepared by that provision that you've made for us to make the most of the time that remains in this life and be a blessing to each other and a light shining in the world at large.

We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. If you look now at the scriptures, Zechariah chapter one. The other thing you can do, Matthew, is turn the speakers to minimum and any dings and such will not come through.

As we look together at Zechariah chapter one and the first vision, we're going to finalize. This is our last trip through these visions. I think it's going to take this week and next week to get through all eight.

I hope to do about half of them tonight, Lord willing. But you remember the first vision. We've seen this in some detail.

This is in chapter one, verses eight through 11. I saw by night. Now, one thing I have not yet covered and that I should have covered, we're going to cover now.

And this is the nature of this revelation. Sometimes a scriptural author will just launch out into a poetic description. You find this often in the Psalms.

You find it in the hymn songs, such as the Song of Miriam or the Song of Moses, the Song of David. We find it in direct prophetic revelation in the chapters of Ezekiel and Isaiah, where God will say and then he will speak metaphorically or in similes or in synecdoche or various other poetic and literary forms. What is unique in scripture are those revelations that come in dreams and visions.

So for your first challenge question, this isn't exactly a pop quiz. I don't think we've covered this before, but as a sort of a thought provoker, let me ask this question. You know that God has spoken to people in scripture via dreams and you know that he has spoken to people in visions.

What's the difference in a dream and a vision? You have 15 seconds. Think about the difference between a dream and a vision. Scripture makes a very clear note when someone is receiving communication via a dream or via a vision.

There is sort of a hybrid, which is a night vision. And a night vision or vision of the night can have elements of both. I asked myself this question and I couldn't answer it.

So I studied it out this past week. And here is my suggestion of why God uses these two different forms or a combination thereof to communicate to his prophets and through them to us. Let's talk first of all about a dream.

Think about the dreams that you see in scripture. You remember Jacob had a dream. He saw a ladder connecting heaven and earth and angels ascending and descending.

You remember his son, Joseph, had dreams. He dreamt of the sheaves in the field bowing down. He dreamed of the celestial objects in the sky, the sun and the moon bowing down.

Pharaoh had dreams that Joseph interpreted. The baker and the butler had dreams that Joseph interpreted. Later on, Daniel, in the book of Daniel, you have Nebuchadnezzar having a dream.

Daniel has dreams that have great prophetic significance. In the New Testament, you remember that Joseph, the father in human terms of the Lord Jesus, the husband of Mary, was warned in a dream more than once in terms of divine guidance. He was receiving communication from God through a dream.

What is the difference in a dream and a vision? In simple terms, in a dream, it is a passive experience. The recipient of the dream observes what is happening in a passive sense, not participating, not involved, just viewing. And in many cases in a dream, there is no understanding involved.

The person might have to wake up and look for the interpretation of that dream or wake up, think back upon it and figure out its significance. But it seems as though 1 Corinthians 14, 15

might come into play in distinguishing these two. If you keep your finger in Zechariah and turn to 1 Corinthians, a book we studied just a few years ago, 1 Corinthians chapter 14, you remember this is the area where Paul is talking about speaking in tongues.

And giving guidance and instruction on how that should be conducted in the church. And so in verse 15, he says, what is the conclusion then? And his conclusion is that there must be interpretation. He doesn't want strangers walking into the church and hearing people babbling and there'd be no understanding.

And he said, if someone is gonna speak in tongues and someone else needs to interpret, needs to make it clear, there needs to be understanding. And he concludes in verse 15, what is the conclusion? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with the understanding.

This is really a powerful commentary on worship music in the current day church. Why? Do you want to repeat and repeat until your understanding kind of goes to sleep and it's more of a chant or something that becomes a litany and your understanding isn't involved. The wonderful thing, and we have wonderful instrumental music, we have wonderful music with lyrics in the conduct of our worship services at Grace and Truth.

And what's wonderful about that is when Dan and Anna are playing or when we have our music before class, on the break and after class, when you hear those tunes, the words come to mind, the lyrics come to mind, greatest thy faithfulness, to God be the glory. The church is one foundation. Any hymn that you hear, the words come to mind, there is understanding, there is the transfer of ideas and thought.

And so the engagement of our understanding when we pray, as Paul says here, when we sing, as Paul says here, is all important. And mindless repetition, mindless music or mindless prayer, repeating the Lord's prayer, you know, citing Psalm 23 from memory without really thinking about the ideas and the communication involved in it is not our goal. Our goal is engagement of the mind.

So back to Zechariah now and back to the, this is our communication. We pray, we sing, we're expressing something out of our soul. And Paul says there needs to be understanding as a vital part of those activities.

In the same way, there are dreams and there are visions. The dream, the communication comes, but the understanding is usually not yet engaged. Pharaoh doesn't know exactly what his dream means.

I'm not sure Jacob fully understood his latter dream. It's all the way down to the Lord Jesus Christ to tell us the meaning of that dream, that there is one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus, and angels ascend and descend on the son of man. It is his work, both in a timeless fashion before and after his first advent that enables God the Father to make

covenant promises to Israel and for us to inherit a new covenant founded on new and better promises.

So the distinction then between a dream where there is a presentation and there may be a gap in the presentation, it's kind of like a parable. Jesus would tell a parable and then later on people would come and say, what did that mean? The parable in a way is dreamlike in its communication mode. Does that make sense? The vision on the other hand, there is active participation and engagement and sometimes even involvement on the part of the recipient.

So we've seen Zachariah speak up and talk to the people in the fourth vision who are exchanging Joshua's filthy robes for clean ones. And Zachariah speaks up and says, you need to put a turban on his head. He is talking to the guide angel and asking questions about what he is seeing and there is interaction.

And various people speak to Zachariah and I say people, various angels and figures are presented. And it's an interactive experience. He is seeing it, asking questions, getting answers, making suggestions and so on.

And so it is not an accident when in Zachariah chapter one, when he says in verse seven, on the 24th day of the 11th month, which is the month Shabbat in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zachariah, the son of Barakai, the son of Ido the prophet, I saw by night. This is a night vision. And this idea of night visions is very fascinating.

The understanding of this goes all the way back to Numbers chapter 12 and verse six. Again, keep your finger in Zachariah, turn back to Numbers. Of course, the fourth book of the law.

And when you get to chapter 12, this is an oft referenced passage. Numbers 12, verse six, the Lord came down to the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle called Aaron and Miriam. And they both went forward.

Remember the carping. And in my New King James, it says the dissension of Aaron and Miriam. They're starting to complain about Moses and his status as leader of the people.

So the Lord comes down and calls Aaron and Miriam. They are kind of like John and James thinking that they ought to be on the right hand and on the left and perhaps equal, maybe have a little Trinity there in Israel of Moses, Aaron and Miriam. So the Lord says in verse six, hear now my words.

If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision. I speak to him in a dream. Isn't it interesting? God says he speaks in a dream, but he makes himself known in a vision.

And once again, you see this emphasis on understanding in the vision. God might speak and his words might be cryptic, but he makes himself known in a vision. Not so with my servant Moses.

He is faithful in all my house. I speak with him face to face, plainly, not in dark sayings. And he sees the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? The emphasis here is that a genuine prophet of God, God speaks in dreams, makes himself known in visions. Moses as the archetype and sort of super profit. And the next time there's going to be one like unto Moses is going to be the Lord Jesus himself, who not only issues dark sayings, i.e. the things that need to be meditated upon, reflected upon to be understood, or questions need to be asked for them to be interpreted.

Remember, Daniel asks a lot of questions, but spoke plainly. And God, of course, is going to speak plainly to the Lord Jesus in his humanity. So there's a fascinating preview of coming attractions there in Numbers chapter 12, verse six.

Keep your finger in Zechariah, flip forward to Job chapter 33. I've got this wonderfully tabbed Bible here, but I'm not using them. Job chapter 33.

This is a wonderful section to my eye because Elihu is speaking. You remember the three friends reflecting three different points of view that fall short. And then Elihu as the fourth friend, the only one who is not rebuked, the one who does not require a sacrifice on the part of Job to be acceptable in God's sight.

Elihu is speaking here. And in verses 14 and 15, Elihu says, for God may speak in one way or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds, then he opens the ears of men and seals their instruction.

In order to turn man from his deed and conceal pride for man, he keeps back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword. So we see here that Elihu understands in that ancient day that God would speak. This is before there was the law.

This is before there were written scriptures. And so people who were receptive, God would speak in dreams and in visions of the night, two separate modes, sometimes interactively, sometimes proactively and preemptively. And the purpose of it is to open the ears of men to turn them from a particular deed or deeds to remove pride.

It says to conceal pride for man, but it means to take it off the table as an option, i.e. to bring them to the point of humility through turning, keeping back his soul from the pit and his life from perishing by the sword. And this is perishing by the sword is judgment in time. Soul in the pit is judgment in eternity.

So Elihu understands this mode of communication and gives us an idea of its purpose. Finally, turn back to Genesis 46, verses one through four. You know, this is shortly before the end of the book in chapter 50, Genesis 46, verses one through four, referring to Jacob, Israel took his journey with all that he had, came to Beersheba, offered sacrifices to the God of his father,

Isaac.

Then God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, here I am. Notice the interactive ability to invoke understanding and speech, the response.

God says, I am God, the God of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt. I will make of you a great nation there.

I will go down with you to Egypt and I will also surely bring you up again. And Joseph will put his hand on your eyes, i.e. he will be there when you pass away. He will close your eyes in death.

So Jacob responds to that guidance and is willing to go. He wasn't willing to go right away. If you look at the last verse of the preceding chapter, he said, well, I'll go before I die.

And God says, no, you need to go now because I'm going to multiply you and your family and prosper you in Egypt. So don't wait, you need to go down there. I'll multiply and prosper you and you'll die down there in the much later future.

So I think it's important to understand at any time now that we come to a dream or a vision passage, it's useful to identify the type of communication and note whether or not this is something to be interpreted by the recipient or something that gets interpreted later, perhaps by some other party. So now here is your first pop quiz question of the night. The book of Revelation, is that a series of dreams or a series of visions? What would you say? Think about chapter four, verse one.

You can even look at the superscriptions of each of, or actually the introductions to each of the letters to the seven churches. What is said to John in each of those seven cases? To the angel of the church in Thyatira, write. John is actively involved.

Jesus speaks to him, he speaks back in chapter one. Chapter four, verse one, come up here and I will show you what is going to take place hereafter. John participates, he's given the little book that he eats.

He asks questions, angels respond to his questions and ask him questions, right? So it's an interactive session or series of sessions, therefore these are visions. And finally, let's look at Daniel chapter seven. I said sometimes, and I'll front load our observation here, sometimes a revelation from God will partake of both features.

And so in Daniel chapter seven, in the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. So if you have a vision of your head while you're on your bed, that would be a vision of the night, visions of the night. He wrote down the dream telling the main facts.

So you have elements of both. Some of it is going to be observation. He sees four great beasts coming from the sea, each different from the other.

And you have that, the horns that come up in verse seven, I was considering the horns and there was another horn, a little one coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked up. And then in verse nine, I watched till thrones were put in place and the ancient of days was seated. And you see the watching continue in verse 11.

I watched because of the sound of the pompous words the horn was speaking. I watched till the beast was slain and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

Now look at verse 13. I was watching in the night visions and behold one like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, coming to the ancient of days. They brought him near to him, was given dominion and glory and kingdom, people's nations and languages served him.

His dominion is everlasting, doesn't pass away. The kingdom is not destroyed. Then in verse 15, I Daniel was grieved in my spirit within my body and the visions of my head troubled me.

Notice the dream part didn't trouble him, but the vision did because his understanding is engaged and he begins to see that this means woe for the people of Israel. I came near to one of those who stood by and asked him the truth of all this. This is the interactive portion where it switches from being dream to being vision, and he is now asking questions and getting answers.

So just as another observation, it's really fascinating once you make this observation to see the distinction and where you might look for understanding and interpretation of those revelations. So back to Zechariah now. This is a vision of the night in verse seven.

I saw by night, verse eight, and behold. And then he sees this and notice, this is a vision of the night. So once he sees this horseman on the red horse and then the other three horses slash horsemen behind, he says, my Lord, what are these? So this is not just a dream.

It's not a passive revelation. He is actively engaged. And the angel says, I will show you what they are.

And the man who stood among the myrtle trees answered. You remember the details of this. I just wanna give one final pass to the symbolism.

I've been unceasingly excavating on this to see what we can glean because these symbols are no accident. Every single detail is important. We talked about myrtle trees and the fact that the Hebrew word there is Hadass from which comes Hadassah and which is the original name of Queen Esther.

And I have something to show you in this regard. I'm going to put up a picture here and hopefully you'll be able to see it. If you have a video here, otherwise I will describe what I'm showing.

If you can see this, this is a picture and you can pull this up on the web at some point. This is a picture of the flower of the myrtle tree. And you'll notice it is a gorgeous white blossom.

It's got these long, I suppose those are stamens or some kind of stems in the middle of the flower. There's just dozens and dozens of them at the end of which are these little golden clusters. It is a glorious flower.

Hopefully you can see that. And this is why the myrtle tree was chosen. It's not a fig tree.

It's not an olive tree. It's not an oak tree. It's not a cedar of Lebanon.

It's a myrtle tree. And there is a reason for this. Now I want to show you, if I can, the tree we're backing up a little bit and you can see that there are many, many of these flowers.

And if you look closely, you'll see some unripe berries. Those are the sort of orb-like structures there. It's just beautiful.

And these berries, once they ripen, the flowers will have disappeared. And what you're going to see here in the third picture, and you can look this up again, are the ripe myrtle berries. These flowers and their berries are very fragrant.

They give off a wonderful aroma. They were the source of perfumes and cachets and all sorts of medicines were made from these. And the leaves that you see in these pictures are evergreen.

It's not a deciduous tree. These leaves stay on all the time. And so the myrtle tree became a symbol of life, of glory, of fertility, of medicinal benefit and fragrant aroma and pleasure.

And so these figures that arrive in the myrtle grove, it's a grove. These are not low, knee-high bushes. And as I mentioned before, myrtle trees, and by the way, crape myrtle is a cousin of these true myrtle trees.

If you look this up later, be sure that you look for the true myrtle tree to get the blossoms because the true myrtle has these white blossoms, crape myrtles and some of the other derivatives. There are some South American and Fiji Island type of trees that are also cousins to the myrtle. And the allspice that people use in cooking derives from these Caribbean and South American cousins of myrtle.

They take those berries and distill them down. And that's where allspice comes from. The name allspice, when it was discovered by European explorers, when they found that the natives were using these spices and started taking it back to Europe, people said, well, this tastes a little bit like two or three different spices that we know.

And so they just called it allspice because it had characteristics and flavors that were involved in two or three different known herbs. But that's not this tree. This is the true myrtle.

And it was prized for its flowers, for its aroma and for these other qualities. It would only grow

to be a bush in normal conditions. But if the sunshine and the water was just right, they would grow to a height of 10 to 15 feet.

And that's what they have done in this setting. And so what we deduce from this is that the setting for the meeting of these horses and horsemen is in this grove, which is up in the heavens. The participants have come from the earth.

It says that these are the ones whom the Lord has sent to walk to and fro throughout the earth. And they answer and say, we have walked to and fro throughout the earth and behold, all the earth is resting quietly. So they have gone and done their reconnaissance and they have returned.

So this is a picture of that environment to which we hope to go, which is the celestial realms where God dwells, where the Lord Jesus Christ is in charge. And this is not an earthly location. This is a heavenly location of some kind.

Now we don't see the throne. We don't see the cherubim or the seraphim, but it is somewhere in that vast realm, I think where the unfallen angels dwell and where they stage before they descend on that ladder to earth and ascend back from earth to do their reporting, make their plans, receive their instructions and so on. It is outside the throne room of God, but in the heavenly realms.

It's just a fascinating little snapshot, it seems to me. And this vision is straining to capture the glory and the beauty and the peace that prevails there. Now these reporters come and say there is peace on earth, but it's a false peace and it's an evil peace.

It's a peace achieved by oppression. It's a peace achieved by corruption, by force, by brute, grinding of captives and conquered peoples into the ground. It is a Marxist kind of peace.

It is the boot stomping the face forever kind of peace and God is having none of it. God is angered by this. And his response is to speak peace and comfort to Jerusalem and to his people.

And so you find in the oracle, verse 12 and following, O Lord of hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah against which you were angry these 70 years? The Lord answered the angel who talked to me with good and comforting words. You can circle that word comforting, circle it, put a line out into the margin of your Bible and put Isaiah chapter 40, verse one. This comforting adjective comes from the very same root as the verb in Isaiah chapter 40, verse one.

And you remember that verse, comfort ye, comfort ye my people, speak comfortably to Jerusalem that her warfare has ended and so on. She has paid double for all of her sins. Comfort, very same word, Isaiah chapter 40, verse one.

Now, when is Isaiah 40, verse one and following going to be ultimately fulfilled? There was

some temporal fulfillment, but nothing like the ultimate millennial covenant promise fulfillment that God is speaking of there. And that is what is in view here. So it's very fascinating.

Let me talk one more time about the colors of these horses. I think after how many weeks now, four or five weeks, I think I finally cracked these colors. You cannot find anybody anywhere who has much to say about the colors of these horses.

Most of them say it's not really significant. You know better than that. There's nothing in scripture that isn't significant.

Everything is significant. I've been working and working and working, trying to figure this out. What is a sorrel horse in your New King James? Sorrel, if you go to the American horse clubs and so on, sorrel is chestnut.

It's a light reddish brown. Bay is a darker brown and so on. Well, that's not what this word in Hebrew means.

And when it was translated into Greek in the Septuagint and elsewhere, we get a little bit of illumination. Here, I'm just going to cut to the chase and tell you my conclusion. It's interesting that the man who we have decided represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is obviously in charge. And this puts us in the post incarnation day. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity is not a man until he is born in Bethlehem, until he lives his 33 years on this earth, right? So this setting is something of a timeless, foreshadowing of future things.

And we talked about the fact that these first four visions represent a hope. They look to the future. This is a future hope, which should comfort you in the present.

If you read Isaiah chapter 40 and other passages like it, you know that that's what God offers the people who have been captives, who are oppressed, or who are even about to go into captivity, depending on which part of Isaiah you're looking at, what part of Ezekiel they are already captive, they're by the river Kabar and so on. But these visions and future revelations are designed to instill hope. And that hope provides comfort in the present.

It doesn't change the present, but that future hope provides comfort. That's what this is. So in the future, there is going to be this man seated on the red horse.

This is the future Lord Jesus Christ. And he is seated on a red horse. He is associated with this red horse.

Now, this is not bright arterial blood red, but it is red enough. This word is used for blood or blood on garments and so on, this color. So he is associated with this blood.

And the idea is this blood has started to darken. It's not freshly shed. He is not bleeding as he sits on the horse.

And so this more brownish color of blood red horse speaks of blood that was shed in the past. And this again tells us perhaps that this is the Lord Jesus Christ, seated on, founded on, his work is based on his shed blood, which is already accomplished. Interestingly, why would you not have three other colors of horse behind him? Instead, you have another red horse.

You have what they translate here as a sorrel horse. And then you have the white horse. Well, sorrel is not sorrel.

It's not chestnut. It's not light brown. Long story short, after you can't believe the amount of excavation it takes to dig this up.

This means dappled, spotted. It's two different colors. So think about this now, the three horses behind the Lord Jesus, one is the same color as the one he's riding.

One is a mixture of those two colors, red and white, and the other is white. What does that suggest to you? There's red, then there's red disappearing and white appearing, and then there's white. And they're listed in that order.

You start with the red. The red seems to be affecting a change and you end up with white. What does that remind you of? You think about Revelation 1, verse five, those who have taken their robes and washed them in the blood of the lamb.

You take white robes, wash them in blood, and what happens? They come out whiter than any fuller can make them. It's super soap. It's ultimate bleach.

It's whiter than white. These things give off their own light. They are so white.

Same thing in Revelation 7, verse 14. Those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. The blood is applied to something and turns it white.

So these horsemen who are going out and doing a recon, what are they looking for? Here is the presentation of the blood of Jesus Christ. Is the issue of Christ and his work being made clear in the earth? Where are those who are in the process of responding to that work and cleansing and being cleansed in that flood? There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins. Sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

Remember the old hymn? And then you have white. Where are those who have been made white? What is the status? There are those who still need that application. They need that message.

There are those in the process of being changed. And then there are those who have been changed. And as they go through the earth and find this relatively small percentage and this remnant, what they see is that the rest of the world is at ease.

So they each have a different emphasis. The Lord Jesus Christ represents that message. That message goes out.

That message produces a process of change. You've got the dappled horse. This becomes extremely important when we compare this to the eighth vision where we have the horses and the chariots to which we will turn after we pause here and take our break.

So I'm gonna be quiet. We'll have a little time of fellowship and followed by our special music. And then we'll return and take a look at the counterpart to this vision, which is the eighth vision.

And when we look at those horses and chariots, oh my goodness, what we have just covered is really gonna open that up, I trust.