

PostExilicProphets 21-07-29a

Welcome to the Thursday night class at Grace and Truth Bible Church. We're continuing our study in Zechariah. We've been spending our time trying to understand the visions that are contained in the first five chapters, actually five and a half chapters, and we'll be wrapping that study up tonight.

We'll be sort of summarizing and concluding that. It's been very fascinating for me. I've looked at these a few times in the past.

We did it in the Kings and Prophets study and got a quick grasp of it, but we've been looking at it in more detail because this is the revelation of God's program, not just for the end of the age of Israel, but for the end of human history. This is really comprehensive in the way that the revelation is comprehensive. In the concluding prophetic word of God in the Old Testament, this is revelation.

This is like John's visions on the Isle of Patmos. Zechariah's visions here are of a different kind and require a few tools to understand, but we're going to see as we sort of step back. We've taken some pretty detailed looks here in the past few weeks, but we're going to step back and look at these visions in their entirety and move forward tonight in the second session into chapter six and the concluding scene that summarizes and brings together not really scattered, but these various pieces of revelation.

So on this 29th day of July, 2021, we find ourselves in the book of Zechariah. We'll be picking up in these first few chapters. Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study.

We'll dive in. Father, it is such a wonderful privilege and opportunity to set aside the tasks and the challenges and the requirements that tend to drive our day and move us forward through the time that remains to us and pause to refresh ourselves at the oasis of your word to receive of the living water that renews and restores us, that enables us to have perspective and inner strength to meet those challenges, to accomplish those tasks and to do so in a way that is not just useful and effective in this life, but lays up treasure in heaven by faith, lays hold of your righteousness that we can be clothed with it and reflects your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray that as we look at these wonderful revelations in your word, that the Holy Spirit will impress them on our hearts, help us to understand not only what they meant at the time, but what they mean to us, their pertinence and applicability now and in the days ahead as we await the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to take us to be with himself.

And if we are qualified to be presented before your throne, we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Well, the horses, I think we have spent enough time on.

We now know, at least as far as I'm concerned, we know, we know what Sam thinks the colors mean. And that's my story and I'm sticking to it. And the symmetry of these visions with their

central focus on the Lord Jesus Christ in his dual capacity as high priest and king.

So if you remember our study last time, looking at the eighth vision that sort of concluded our, our pass through the visions and we compared it to the first vision, you can spend any amount of time just as you could in John's revelation at the end of the New Testament. There is almost an infinite amount of, of, of material here that can be looked at, but I want to move forward in the book of Zacharias. So we're going to summarize and conclude our look at these eight visions tonight.

They began, as you know, in the first chapter and the new King James really hit the nail on the head with the caption or the superscription that begins the section at verse 12. The Lord will comfort Zion. That's right in the middle of that first vision with those reconnaissance horses.

So in a nutshell, if you were just going to put one note in the margin of your Bible for this first vision, what is it? What does the vision connote? These horsemen have been riding to and fro in the earth. They have come back to the heavenly realms. We saw the myrtle tree with those glorious blossoms, the profusion that any given healthy myrtle tree will have and the berries that it produces with that wonderful fragrance, the perfume and the medicinal value.

There is no tree more highly prized for its beauty, its aroma, and its healing value than the myrtle in the ancient world. And that's the kind of grove that this confabulation takes place. This meeting where the reconnaissance horses have met.

Patty, if you would go to my desk, in it, on it, or in that center drawer is a pair of reading glasses for our visitor. I see him straining. You don't want him to have to strain.

It's hard enough to understand without not being able to see the text. So if you don't have your glasses, this is your chance to get them. But here's the conclusion.

If you were going to summarize this, if I said, close your Bibles, close your books, think about these horsemen in the glade, in the myrtle glade, what do you come away with as a result? Here's my suggestion. God is fully aware of the currently prevailing evil in the world. Does that make sense? These have been out and have said, the world is at peace.

It's happy with its godless evil ways. It has subjugated and taken captive God's people, and it is now at ease. It's happy.

You think about the current day. Do you think society here is happy with the suppression of Judeo-Christian values, suppression of Jews and Christians, suppression of the message of Christ? Do you think that the wokeness and the canceling and the deplatforming and the taking offline of contrary ideas, you think that this is creating peace? When's the last time you saw the rioting that we saw in the final year of our previous president's term? That was unhappiness. Now we have happiness.

We don't have riots. There's a lot of crime, but you don't see rioting. Why? We've achieved our

objective.

We've pushed what we don't like off the stage. All we want to do now is consolidate that hold, increase that power, create edicts and mandates to paint these people ever further into a corner and be sure that they don't come back. It's proactive spending.

It's proactive legislation. It's proactive action without legislation that's actually illegal and unconstitutional. This is exactly the kind of thing that the scouts, God's angelic scouts, come back and report in this first vision.

The world is at rest. It's got what it wants. There is no Israel.

There is no Davidic descendant on the throne. The promises of God that this kingdom is going to rule the world are completely off the table. We have prevailed.

We have overcome. It's not we will overcome. We have overcome.

And now we're happy. The world is at rest. So what does this vision that's given to Zechariah communicate about that situation? He doesn't see a vision of the world at rest.

What does Zechariah see? He sees God's reconnaissance team reporting this condition and God doesn't like it and God is not going to let it persist. Notice there is no call to the people of God to rise up and cast off their shackles and go back and arm themselves and equip themselves and go forth and suppress these forces. Is there any call to the people of God who are now coming out of captivity, coming back to the land, trying to get the temple built and so on? Is there any call from the prophets to rise up and be the instrument of God's judgment on these nations? Is there any at all? No, there is not.

Does this have pertinence and application for us? Are we to take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them? Where are we to look for the answer to this seeming victory and overwhelming presence of pacific evil? God says, I see it. I know about it. It is reported in the heavenly realms.

Where, by the way, there is eternal peace. There is the peace of the myrtle grove. There is that idyllic, preserved, separated, sinless environment.

One might be tempted to say, well, it's easy for God to sit up there in his heaven and realize that we've been completely, even though we've been released and we're getting to go back to the land, we're not in a happy place. Let me ask you this. Think now, how much unity was there in Israel when God's tabernacle with Moses and Bezalel and Aholiab and all of those workmen, how much unity was there in Israel when that house was built? There was complete unity.

The people that had come away with treasure from the Egyptians were donating so much of it that Moses had to tell them to stop. You look around at churches today and see if you hear any pastor telling his people, stop giving, we've got too much. But that's what Moses had to say,

right? There was such unity and such harmony and such support for the building of a place where God's presence would dwell.

You see no opposition whatsoever. How about the next time? After the reign of David, Solomon comes in. David laid the plans, gathered the resources, commissioned his son Solomon to build this house.

God wouldn't let David build it because David had a different mission, had a different emphasis. His work laid the foundation, as it were. How much unity was there in Solomon's day? Do you read anywhere in 1 Kings about opposition to Solomon building God's house? Any naysayers, any protests, any picket signs? No.

The people come together. There are thousands of animals sacrificed. There are songs that are sung.

People are in one mind and of one accord, and that unity persists throughout much of the reign of Solomon. It's not until Solomon's reign is over that you find the kingdom dividing and kind of coming apart. Now, this is the third time the Bible records an effort to build God's house.

How much unity, how much common support is there for this effort? From the time they came back to lay the foundation, there has been opposition. This is not external opposition. The outside nations are not coming down saying, boo on this house of your God.

There's not Moabites or Ammonites or Syrians or Assyrians or Babylonians or Persians or name your historical group, past or present. There's nobody coming in What is their problem now? They are disunified. They are not unified.

They are not of one mind and one heart. There are people in the land, and the people themselves are mixed in their motives, mixed in their families, mixed in their status. Some are people that have been there all along.

Others have returned. Some have foreign wives. Some don't.

It is an extremely iron mixed with clay situation, isn't it? And their problem is when you think about the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, one thing about that head of gold, it's all gold. One thing about the shoulders and arms of silver, it doesn't say there's dross or flaws or impurities in that. The belly and thighs of brass, it's good, solid, shiny brass.

The legs of iron, you've got the eastern and the western pieces of the Roman Empire. They don't say, and behold, cracks developed in the shin bones. Where do you have trouble? At the end of that series of kingdoms, you've got feet of iron mixed with clay, which is unlike things mashed together and they do not unify.

Why do we think the New Testament is so emphatic? Jesus is emphatic. John is emphatic. Paul is emphatic.

Peter is emphatic that there not be divisions and schisms and disunity and lack of harmony, lack of cooperation, lack of a single spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, that we do not allow a root of bitterness to spring up, that we don't let, we saw on Sunday, lack of forgiveness can split and create these metastasizing problems. But look at the problem here in the day of Zechariah. They have had trouble from the outset.

It's going to continue when Nehemiah tries to build the wall. How many different studies have you seen? Nehemiah building the wall and he's got to have a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other, the sword and the trowel. Why does he need a sword? They're not waiting for foreign invaders from over the horizon.

It's their own people. It's nearby neighbors that are opposing it. Hear me now.

This characterizes the closing days of God's people in that dispensation. From Zechariah's time to the time of the Lord Jesus down to 70 AD, there are huge divisions and schisms of every different type. You want to talk about intersectionality and different ways that people could be divided because, well, I'm a Pharisee, I'm a Sadducee, I'm a Zealot, I'm a Samaritan, well, I'm from Galilee, well, I'm from Judea, well, I'm a Syrophenician, and well, I'm a Roman.

I mean, all of the people in the land, regardless of what they claim is their attitude toward God, they are by no means a unified people. You don't have 12 tribes. Even in the early days of Moses and Joshua, rarely do you see internecine fraternal warfare.

In the later days, in the days of the judges, you get the tribe of Benjamin and so on, but that really kind of stands out as an exception. You don't see tribe against tribe warfare much in the early days, but look at this in the later days. The world is at peace.

The people of God are not. This is exactly backwards. And you know what I almost said, it's exactly backwards from the way it's supposed to be.

The people of God are supposed to be the head and not the tail. They are supposed to be united and reflecting and transmitting the glory of God and the message of God to the world. Instead, the world has achieved a kind of peace, and the people of God are in confusion and fragments.

They're not getting anything done. They never do get this house built. Herod.

Herod builds this house. Seriously? Your house is built by the house of Herod? How shameful, how embarrassing that the people of God cannot come together, and that's why the glory of God never shows up. There's no Shekinah for this building at the beginning, in the middle, or until 70 AD.

God's glory. The only time the presence of God even approaches this building is when Jesus is there. And what does he do in the week before he was crucified at the tragic entry? What does he do? He comes down there, looks around, and leaves.

That would have been the day of habitation. That would have been the day of acceptance. That could have been the first day of the millennial kingdom, and it's all wrong.

Superficiality, misunderstanding, bad motives. Why did they want Jesus to be king? Four days later, they're going to be saying, we have no king but Caesar. Selfishness, self-centeredness.

Why did the people want to make Jesus king some months earlier? He fed them. Oh, economic prosperity. Prosperity.

Now we want you to be the king. I see economic well-being here. So does this have pertinence for us when God sends out his heavenly reconnaissance, and they return and say, well, the world's at peace.

What is it they're leaving out? The people of God are not at peace. They're not getting anything done. He's had to send not just Zechariah but also Haggai to the people to light a fire under them to even keep up with this.

You remember it laid fallow for like 18 years? It's pathetic. You look at the people of God today at the closing time of our dispensation. How unified are we? If you go to a town, how likely are you to find a church? Now, I don't mean to be trying to pat ourselves on the back.

I'm asking you an honest question because many of us have done this. You pick a town, you go to it. How likely are you to find a fellowship of believers where you would be excited to go and want to come back? How easy is that to do? How many churches are listed in the phone book? How many of them could you actually go to and feel like you were one with the rest of the believers there, that you shared the vision, you shared the understanding, you shared the enthusiasm for the Lord Jesus and for the word of God, for the music and for the appreciation of God and what he's doing, understanding what his plan and purpose means? How easy is it to find a church for you, for me? What does that tell you about the heavenly reconnaissance looking around at the people of God today? The body of Christ is in a pathetic, fragmented, misdirected, misguided, ignorant way as a whole.

There are 7,000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal. Don't get me wrong. There are many wonderful, wonderful churches, many.

Try to find one. God tells Elijah there are 7,000 that haven't bowed the knee to Baal, but Elijah never sees them. They don't show up.

There's not a, you know, yo, I will take these and make a new Israel out of them. They stay scattered amongst the crowd. So vision number one, what's the point? God is aware of this situation.

God knows exactly what is going on in our world right now. And what does he say about it? What is his word to his people? You can't help but think about the inkhorn angel that we saw in Ezekiel, where are those who are sighing and crying over Jerusalem? Was it Ezekiel or Isaiah? I

think I should have looked that up. Do you remember the inkhorn angel? And before judgment comes, he says, find those people who care enough to weep about the sad state of God's people and preserve them from the coming judgment.

There is careful accounting, careful tabulation. So that's the essence of that first vision. Now, what kind of reconnaissance? That's what the color of the horses means.

Red. There is the issue of sacrifice necessary for the issue of sin. Who is paying attention to that issue? Who's aware of it? Why did the people go into captivity? Because their sin got so bad and it was, it wasn't being forgiven.

The priest going into the Holy of Holies once a year could not cover the sins of the nation, the idolatry, the sins of the high hand, the terrible misguided people who claimed God's name and yet misrepresented him to each other and to the world. And God took them out, even though they still claimed to be his people. But look at the message to the people who are faithful, to the remnant, to those who are going to get that mark on their head from the inkhorn angel.

And it's summarized in verse 13 and verse 16. The Lord answered the angel who talked to me with good and comforting words. The purpose of this first vision in letting us know that God's aware of the state of the world and the state of his people is comfort.

Faithful believers should be comforted and partake of that peaceful myrtle valley understanding. Look at verse 16. What is the nature of that comfort? Why should we be comforted? Not just by God's knowledge, but by what God is going to do about this situation.

Verse 16, I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in it. This disorganized mess that you see people trying to get this thing built and they can't get it done.

And there's disunity and there's infighting and there's politics and there's selfishness and, and graft and all kinds of things going on trying to get this built. I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy. My house shall be built in.

It says the Lord of hosts and a line shall be stretched over Jerusalem. You see that the line stretched is the, it says the surveyor's line and that's in italics. What I've done in my Bible is I've scratched out surveyor and in parentheses, I have put God's line.

God is going to see to it that a line is stretched over Jerusalem. This is God's measure. A line is used for measurement.

A line is used to see if something is of a certain length or a certain width. When it's in the horizontal plane, we're going to see another kind of line that is vertical and that's not used to measure so much a length dimension as whether something is upright. If you want to know if something's perfectly upright, what kind of line do you use? It's not a measuring line.

It's not like a measuring tape. It's a plum line. So this is the, this is the first of these measuring

lines that we see mentioned in these visions.

And it just says, God says a line will be stretched. This means that God is going to see to it. This is going to be at God's behest.

God's standard is going to be applied for measuring Jerusalem. So I've put in parentheses, the word is not there, but God's line is going to be stretched over Jerusalem. That's the import of the first vision.

So God is fully aware of currently prevailing evil and he has allowed it. If he's aware and he's not yet done anything about it, that means he's got a purpose in allowing it, right? There's a reason why we are allowed to suffer, why we are tested. You will have tribulation 10 days.

The time of Jacob's trouble. God knows about this ahead of time. Why doesn't he just stop it? If he knows who the antichrist is, why doesn't he just have him be another one of the aborted babies and he never comes up and prevails? Why are his two witnesses during the tribulation slain when they've got the power to call down fire from heaven and are completely invulnerable until their message is complete? Why does God allow them to be defeated? Why don't they just rise on a glory cloud and go to heaven? God has a purpose in adversity.

God has a purpose in allowing evil a certain amount of free reign. He knows about it and he's got a purpose in it. So we should not be dismayed.

We should not be unduly troubled. I think we can be aware of it. We can note it.

We can decry it. We can weep over it, but we should not weep as those who have no hope because God speaks comforting words to us. I am going to return to my people with mercy and I will measure out a dwelling place for my people, says the Lord.

That's vision number one. You got the vision and you got the oracle, the words of comfort after it. The second vision that we saw there, the vision of the horns in verse 18 through 21.

That's a long verse. 18 through 21. Notice that that second vision doesn't have an oracle that follows it.

And there are these horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. These are the people of God, right? They've been scattered by forces too strong for them, overwhelming forces.

But God has artisans, craftsmen who are going to deal with each of these horns. There's four different craftsmen for four different horns and each kind of earthly power is going to be dealt with specifically in detail by God. God is going to send more than powerful adversaries, artisans and craftsmen that are going to grind these horns down to nothing.

Again, he doesn't call to his people and say, rise up and attack these horns and I will give you supernatural strength. God is going to do it. God informs himself.

God has a plan and a purpose of returning. He wants his people to be comforted by that. And he wants them to know that he has got these horns of power handled.

There are already artisans. These craftsmen have already been detailed. They've got their assignment and at the right time and at the right place and in the right way, they are going to deal with these horns.

And you notice in verse 21, what are these coming to do? He said, these horns that scattered Judah so that no one could lift up his head. The craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it. Pay close attention now.

Zachariah does not see this happen. He doesn't say, and behold, the artisans ground the horns to powder and scattered the horns powder into the water and made their people. He says, this is what they are going to do.

God says, I am going to return and stretch a line over Jerusalem, be comforted. I am going to send artisans that are going to grind these horns to powder. They are going to terrify them.

They are going to do this and that. It isn't happening in this vision. It doesn't happen in this time.

This is future. There is no Oracle following this vision. So where do you look for your application? Back.

Vision one and vision two bracket the Oracle that applies to them both. Verse 13, verse 16, be comforted by the knowledge that God is going to deal with these powers that are too strong for us. Be comforted that God knows exactly what the situation is and He has got a plan and a purpose in allowing them to prevail for a time.

In the tribulation, it will be a time, times and half a time. But you know what happens at the end? A little skirmish called Armageddon, blood as high as the horse's bridles, seven or eight months to bury the dead because they are glowing with radioactive fury. It's it's allowed to reveal itself, expose itself, show itself for what it is, and then God handles it.

Comfort one another with these words. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem. Her warfare is ended.

Her time of trouble is accomplished. God is going to handle it on behalf of His people. We do not need to start looking to run for office or get a pack or some other group and try to find a candidate and see if we can exert some kind of political, let's all get together and be the moral majority or the, you know, the Christian right or whatever, and see if we can reverse the trend of our country sliding down into oblivion.

Where do we get our peace? Vision one, vision two. Comfort yourself. God's got it handled.

God's allowed this for a reason. He knows where we are. He knows who we are.

There is, in effect, that identification of the faithful. And if we're faithful, we've got nothing to worry about, regardless of what happens. That's why Paul could say, I have determined in whatever state I find myself, whether I am abased or whether I abound, I'm content because I know that God's plan in my life is working out for His glory and my benefit.

God's plan in my life is working out for His glory and my benefit. And hopefully the benefit of those around me. That's the first two visions.

We're going to pause here and take our break. We're going to come back and speed up a little bit. You can see how these visions work.

We're going to see that that very principle is expressed in the oracle that pertains to the vision. And each of these visions has a pertinent oracle, whether it follows it or not. And it's a part of this beautiful chiastic structure.

And just as those few scattered, faithful Judahites in Zechariah's day, in Haggai's day, on down into the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, we've seen Ezra and Nehemiah, we know the confusion and the misdirection and misapplication that takes place in those days. This is a message for those faithful people on how to handle it, on how to live their lives in a way that reflects God's glory. That's what these visions are for, for the original recipients.

And that's what they're for, for us. So we'll see that when we return.