

THE MESSIANIC ANGEL RESTORES THE NEW JERUSALEM

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April 16, 2008

As a sequel to the exile of Israel, it is related that the nations God employed to execute his threatened curse-sanction would misunderstand this event and exalt themselves, discounting the God of captive Israel. Thereupon, out of concern for his maligned name, the Lord would bring vengeance on those nations and restore his covenant people. This later situation is the one that is in view in Zechariah 1:14, 15.

Through Isaiah the Lord declares: "For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great mercies I will regather you. In overflowing wrath I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will show mercy to you, says Yahweh your Redeemer" (Isa. 54:7, 8). Though the Lord would cast off Israel for breaking their covenant of works, he would remember his covenant of grace with Abraham (continuous through the Mosaic economy and foundational thereto) and fulfill its promises.

This divine purposing of good beyond the evil of the covenant curse came to expression in the Babylonian exile of Israel in the limitation of seventy years set on the judgment with a view to the subsequent restoration. Blind, however, to God's purpose and power, the nations used by him to accomplish his righteous will upon Israel misconstrued their role (as Moses also foretold, Deut. 32:26-43) and "helped for evil" (Zech. 1:15).

Moving on from the ominous consequences of God's return (v. 16a) for the nations of the deep (vv. 14,15), the oracular response announces the blessings that must follow from the divine Presence in the midst of the myrtles (vv. 16b, 17). These mercies were the implicit corollary of God's judgment on the hostile world and that means that they, like the threatened judgment, span the entire future of redemptive history and indeed concern especially the new covenant order, including its consummate stage.

Return of the holy Presence of the Lord to dwell among his kingdom people in Jerusalem calls for the reconstruction of his royal temple-residence there. Hence the assurance, "I am returned," is at once followed by the promise, "my house shall be built in it" (v. 16b).

Rebuilding of the temple was naturally, indeed necessarily, attended by the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem, the place chosen as its site. Hence, immediately following the promise of the former (Zech. 1:16b) is the statement: "a line shall be stretched over Jerusalem" (v. 16c). In view here is the builder's marking out the planned perimeters of the city with a cord. Somewhat earlier than Zechariah, Jeremiah had used the same imagery of the measuring line when he too was portraying the rebuilding of Jerusalem (Jer. 31:39) and the context makes clear that the line was being employed to establish the contemplated boundaries of the city (cf. Jer. 31:38-40).

Significantly, the setting of this parallel picture of the restoration of Jerusalem in Jeremiah is his classic prophecy of the new covenant age (cf. Jer. 31:31ff.). The new Jerusalem he speaks of is a messianic product, the eternal holy city of God's Glory-Presence provided in the cosmic re-creation at the consummation of the ages. Just as it was the Lord God who stretched the line over the earth in the beginning, so it is he who does so again as he builds the New Jerusalem in his creating of the new heaven and new earth, the event which Jeremiah, and Zechariah following him, prophesied. This heavenly city is the sum of the inheritance promised in the Abrahamic Covenant to the patriarch and his seed, and God is its architect and artisan (cf. Heb. 11:10). Agreeably, when Zechariah in his third vision resumes the theme of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, it is the divine Angel who is engaged in a related function involving a measuring line (2:1[5]). Christ, the Angel incarnate, is the builder of the new temple city, for in the new covenant the city and temple coalesce, and Christ is the one who, with his body the church, is the temple and builds the temple.

God's kingdom reaches out from Jerusalem, the temple-city focus, and embraces the full promised land with all the satellite cities in orbit around Zion. Employing this typological symbolism to picture the restoration of the kingdom, Zechariah's vision does not stop, therefore, with the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem but includes the renewal of the total theocratic domain. "Thus says Yahweh of hosts: My cities shall yet overflow with prosperity" (1:17b). Like the other promised mercies associated with it in the oracle, this outward felicity of the kingdom envisages more than the reconstruction of the cities of Judah in Zechariah's days; it too looks ahead to the new covenant and the new heaven and earth.

Zechariah's opening vision is then to be understood as prophetic of the perfecting of the kingdom under the new covenant with its better promises and better country. Not that it failed to address the typological realities of Zechariah's day. The promised mercies of Zechariah 1:16, 17 were experienced in the completion of the temple, the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls, the resettlement of other cities and the general re-establishment of the theocratic order.

The Messianic Avenger.

In Zechariah's first vision the messianic angel appeared as a warrior mounted on a red horse, present in the midst of God's people (the myrtles). Under his command stood a squadron of supernal agents (the flame-colored horses), ready to execute the judgment which the Lord threatened against the evil world-empire (the deep), usurper of dominion over mount Zion. Here was a predisclosure that when Christ was manifested, it would be to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8), to cast Satan down from heaven to hell (Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:10; 20:10), and so fulfill the primeval decree that God's champion should crush the draconic head lifted up against the holy mount in Eden (Gen. 3:15).

This theme of the ultimate divine avenging of Zion against her enemies is taken up again in Zechariah's second vision (1:18-21). The hostile nations are symbolized here by four horns and the inflictors of divine judgment by four specialist workmen.

The interpreting angel describes the horn-nations as having lifted up the horn against Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, scattering them so that they could no longer lift up the head (1:18, 21). The offense of the horn-nations consisted both in putting down the chosen folk and in exalting themselves against the Lord God.

Conjured up by the aggressive lifting of the horns (v. 21) is an attacking bull, lowering its head and then thrusting its lethal horns upward. The horns are equated with imperial powers hostile to Israel and the metaphor of monstrous beasts—"horns of the Gentiles." Marking the connection between Zechariah's horn-nations and the nations represented by the horned animals in Daniel 7 is their common place of origin. It is from the great stormy deep that the four beasts of Daniel 7 emerge (vv. 2, 3). The spawning place of the four horn-nations of vision two is the deep, which symbolizes the hostile world in vision one. By itself the image of exalting the horn signifies simply the exertion of power and achievement of success or attainment of glory, while the cutting off and casting down of one's

horn symbolizes defeat and impotence. Such then was the offense of the horn-nations: their exaltation involved a malicious trampling of the covenant people into the ground. Coming up from the dark deep at the devil's instigation, the bestial horn-nations exhibited satanic enmity against the saints. To march against Jerusalem-Zion (Zech. 1:19) is to storm the very mountain stronghold where the holy Lord is enthroned. Hence, the act becomes one of blasphemy against the God of Zion, a lifting up of the horn (or head) in vainglorious challenge to the Most High.

Psalm 74 emphasizes this blasphemous dimension of attacking the Lord's heritage. The situation is much like that in Zechariah's vision. God's people, pictured as his flock (vv. 1, 2), appeal to him, the one who broke the heads of the leviathan monster (vv. 13, 14), to raise them from the ruins wrought by their adversaries (v. 3), who are referred to as animals (vv. 4, 19). They lament that the foes "burned your sanctuary to the ground; they defiled the dwelling place of your Name" (v. 7) and they plead, "How long will the enemy mock you, O God?" (v. 10). "Rise up O God, and defend your cause" (v. 22). And in Psalm 75 such defiance of the God of heaven is described by the horn metaphor: "To the arrogant I say, 'Boast no more,' and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns. Do not lift your horns against heaven'" (vv. 4, 5a).

According to Jeremiah's reading of the situation, the horn-nations had interpreted perversely their defeat of the covenant people and their dominion over them. Exploiting the fact that Israel and Judah deserved the punishment of exile because they had violated the Lord's covenant, the captor-nations declared themselves innocent, the instruments of divine justice (Jer. 50:7). Yet in their hearts they were maliciously glad that the Lord's heritage was destroyed (Jer. 50:11). For this evil God would send destroyers and spoilers against them (Jer. 50:2ff., 9f., 12ff.). In Psalm 75 God declares concerning those who lifted up their horns against heaven (v. 5): "I will cut off the horns of all the wicked" (v. 10).

At his disposal the Lord had counteragents to dispatch against the smugly triumphant horn-nations (cf. Zech. 1:15). Zechariah saw them coming forth in the form of four *harashim*. These are craftsmen with various specialties, often smiths or carpenters. But here they are specialists in dealing with horns, experts in executing judgment. Zechariah himself prophesies how God will turn his scorned people into mighty warriors who will trample their enemies (10:5), the feeble

becoming like David in battle (12:8). The resources for vengeance and deliverance must and do come from the Lord. If there are four horn powers lifted up, there are four counteragents sent, expert at terrifying and casting down (1:21). This theme of reversing the enemy's dominant status reappears repeatedly in Zechariah. Instances within the visions are 2:9, where Babylon, spoiler of Zion, becomes a spoil to its former victims, and 4:7, where the great mountain of the hostile world lifted up to heaven is leveled into a plain.

The horn-nations missed the message that Israel's destruction held for them: "Behold, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name; and will you go utterly unpunished? You will not go unpunished, for I will summon a sword upon the inhabitants of the earth, declares Yahweh of hosts" (Jer. 25:29). Through their own role of inflicting divine judgment on Israel, God was warning the horn-nations of their own impending doom.

Why the did God enter into Israel's old covenant? Part of the answer is that old covenant history, especially its termination in the destruction of Jerusalem, was calculated to sound an alarm in a world oblivious to the wrath to come, and so capture the attention of the Gentiles for the church's witness to Jesus Christ and the way of escape offered in the gospel. Let them know that the fall of Jerusalem is, typologically, the beginning of the end of the world.

Zechariah's four experts at executing judgment (vision two) act as the agents of the messianic rider of the red horse (vision one). Their mission of casting down the horns symbolically portrays the mission of Christ as the great dragon slayer. He shall destroy the enemies of God's people. After the threat, "I will cut off the horns of all the wicked," Psalm 75 closes with the promise, "but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up" (v. 10).

The mission of the four expert exterminators is the first act in the parousia of the rider on the red horse, precursor of God's taking up his permanent dwelling in the midst of his people gathered out of all the nations into their restored heritage. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the gospel, who shall suffer eternal destruction when he comes to be glorified in his saints (cf. 2 Thess 1:7-10).

The saints praise God as the One who lifts up their head-horn. "My horn is exalted in the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:1). "You, O Lord . . . are the

lifter up of my head” (Ps. 3:3). “You [O Lord] have lifted up my horn like that of the wild ox” (Ps. 92:10).

Referring to Jesus, Zechariah (father of John the Baptist) blesses God because “he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1:68, 69). Christ Jesus is the lifting up of the head-horn; it is in him, its head, that the church’s horn is exalted.

Evangel of the Messianic Angel

By the stretching out of measuring lines, perimeters were set. Zechariah 2:1, 2 picks up the promise of Zechariah 1:16 that a line would be stretched forth over Jerusalem as part of the process of rebuilding the city and temple. Possession and use of the measuring line here signifies that the “man” is not merely some subordinate surveyor gathering information but the Lord himself engaged in sovereign construction. By the stretching out of measuring lines, perimeters were set. Divine acts of measuring performed in execution of sovereign decree and in determination of the boundaries of God’s house and city. The identification of the man with the measuring line in Zechariah 2:1, 2 is the Angel of the Lord. He is the Word of God who was in the beginning with God, who was God, the Maker of all things, visible and invisible (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16). The measurer is the Creator-Lord, seen by Zechariah as now engaged in redemptive re-creation as the architect and almighty constructor of the new cosmos, the heavenly city, New Jerusalem.

The Lord would vouchsafe to Israel his covenantal Name-Presence, and such a divine Presence is promised in Zechariah 2:5b for the future Jerusalem: Yahweh will be “the Glory in the midst of her,” the cultic focus of her cultural fulness. The New Jerusalem will be paradise restored but it will be more than a simple restoration of the holy garden-city of Eden, for in it the manifestation of the Glory is not confined to a focal center. God’s fiery Presence fills the eternal city to its unwalled limits (v. 5a; cf. Isa. 4:5). It is in its entirety a temple, hence has no temple within it. Nor does it require light of sun or moon, for the God of Glory is its everlasting light (Isa. 60:19, 20; Rev. 21:22, 23; 22:5).

Eschatological Jerusalem as described in Zechariah 2 is unwalled (v. 4), yet has a wall around it (v. 5a). By filling the city right to its distant limits, the divine Glory constitutes a wall of fire around it there at its perimeter. However, the idea is not that the city has no ordinary walls because the fiery divine wall replaces such. The absence of the

customary walls (v. 4) is clearly accounted for by the city's overflowing population.

Continuing the typological idiom of the imagery section (Zech. 2:6-8), the message pictures the covenant people of the messianic age as Israelites still in the land of Babylon, anticipating deliverance. Old Testament prophets portray Israel's return from captivity as a second exodus and agreeably these two typological events, exodus and restoration, are blended in the Angel's prophetic representations of new covenant history.

The opening directive (vv. 6-9) is expressed in a double imperative: "flee from the land of the north" (v. 6a) . . . "to Zion escape" (v. 7a). Leave Babylon, head home to Jerusalem. Get out of the oppressive world center and get back to the center of God's kingdom.

A motivation clause is inserted: "For I am spreading you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, says Yahweh" (v. 6b). Expounding the promise inherent in the image of an unbounded Jerusalem, the Lord assures those he commands to return, that their future back at Zion is one of blessing, of expansion in every direction.

While return to Zion is encouraged by appeal to its promised prosperity, flight from Babylon, is urged on the grounds of its impending doom (vv. 8, 9). The two are closely related: Jerusalem's prosperity would be achieved through the plundering of Babylon. Verses 8, 9 announce Messiah's mission of judgment against the offending world powers. In Zechariah 2:8 the Angel would then be giving assurance that his announced eschatological mission against the nations would be a Parousia event, a coming in the glory of the Father and all his holy angels.

Messiah's mission against the world powers (Zech. 2:9) would resemble the ancient judgment on Egypt. It would result in a complete reversal, the plunderers becoming a spoil to their former servants, just as the Egyptians were despoiled by their Hebrew slaves (Exod. 3:22; 12:36). Messiah would effect this defeat by brandishing his hand over these nations, an action reminiscent of the stretching forth of God's hand and the lifting up of Moses' hand over Egypt.

Conversion of the Gentiles. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion" (Zech. 2:10a) is the perfect prelude for the glad tidings that follow in the motivation section. "Lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of you" (v. 10b; cf. 11b). With this promise the messianic Angel puts into words what was expressed symbolically in the first vision by the

imagery of the rider on the red horse in the midst of the myrtles (1:8; cf. 1:16a). He heralds the evangel, good news for all people.

Centered between the two assurances that the coming Lord “will dwell in the midst of you” is the disclosure of a distinctive new aspect of Jerusalem’s restoration prospects. “Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day and will be my people” (2:11a). The last clause is the covenantal formula used by Jeremiah when prophesying of the new covenant (31:33; 32:38). Incorporation of the Gentiles into God’s covenantal people is a recurring theme in Zechariah. God’s purpose to make known the gospel unto the nations for the obedience of faith had indeed been revealed by the scriptures of the prophets (Rom. 16:26). Thus in Zechariah 2:11 the conversion of the Gentiles emerges unexpectedly as a consequence of the conquest of the enemy powers.

These messianic acts of deliverance, wrought by the Spirit-finger of God, heralded the arrival of the kingdom (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20). They were a harbinger of the penetration of Christ’s saving power into all the dark domain of the deceiver of the heathen world. By the gospel the stronger One would take the prey from the terrible foe, bringing former victims of his deception out of all the Gentile nations as converts to serve the triune God of truth. As the stronger One declared at the critical hour of his confrontation with the strong enemy: “Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself” (John 12:31, 32).

The divine Angel adds a concluding summons to all mankind (v. 13). The messianic Angel announces imminent divine action (v. 13b), a decisive intervention ending the delay that had prompted his earlier plea of “How long?” (cf. Zech. 1:12). He heralds the advent of the Lord, appearing from his heavenly throne (cf. Deut. 26:15; Hab. 2:20a; Ps. 11:4), his zeal stirred up like a man of war to do battle against his enemies (cf. Isa. 42:13; 51:9; Judg. 5:12).

So, hush! Silence all flesh (Zech. 2:13a). The summons sounds and the kings of the earth shut their mouths, speechless, awe-struck before the exalted Servant (Isa. 52:15b). His mission is authenticated as divine, for they, Gentiles deceived by the devil, now hear and understand what had been unheard-of, what the prince of darkness had kept from them, the gospel tidings of peace with God through the sacrifice and intercession of this amazing Servant. Hush! Silence all flesh before Yahweh. The day of the Lord is at hand.