

# CHAPTER 1

In this chapter, after the introduction (v. 1), we have,

- I. An awakening call to a sinful people to repent of their sins and return to God (v. 2-6).
- II. Great encouragement given to hope for mercy.
  1. By the vision of the horses (v. 7-11).
  2. By the prayer of the angel for Jerusalem, and the answer to that prayer (v. 12-17).
  3. By the vision of the four carpenters that were employed to cut off the four horns with which Judah and Jerusalem were scattered (v. 18-21).

## ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

### REPENTANCE URGED

Here is,

I. The foundation of Zechariah's ministry; it is laid in a divine authority: *The word of the Lord came to him.* He received a divine commission to be God's mouth to the people and with it instructions what to say. He received of the Lord that which also he delivered unto them. *The word of the Lord was to him;* it came in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, as a real thing, and not a fancy. For the ascertaining of this, we have here,

1. The time when the word of the Lord came first to him, or when the word that next follows came to him: it was *in the second year of Darius.* Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel; but now by the reigns of the kings of Persia, to whom they were subjects. Such a melancholy change had sin made of their circumstances. Zerubbabel took not so much state upon him as to have public acts dated by the years of his government, and in things of this nature the prophets, as is fit, complied with the usage of the time, and scrupled not to reckon by the years of the heathen kings, as <sup>270</sup>Daniel 7:1; 8:1. Zechariah preached his first sermon in the *eighth month* of this *second*

year of Darius; Haggai preached his in the sixth month of the same year, <sup><300></sup>Haggai 1:1. The people being readily obedient to the word of the Lord in the mouth of Haggai, God blessed them with another prophet; for to him that has, and uses well what he has, more shall be given.

**2.** The name and family of the prophet to whom the word of the Lord came; He was *Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo*, and he was *the prophet*, as Haggai is called *the prophet*, <sup><300></sup>Haggai 1:1. For, though in former ages there was one Iddo a prophet (<sup><425></sup>2 Chronicles 12:15), yet we have no reason to think that Zechariah was of his progeny, or should be denominated from him. The learned Mr. Pemble is decidedly of opinion that this Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, is the same that our Saviour says was *slain between the temple and the altar*, perhaps many years after the rebuilding of the temple (<sup><435></sup>Matthew 23:35), and that our Saviour does not mean (as is commonly thought) Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, for why should Jehoiada be called Barachiah? And he thinks the manner of Christ's account persuades us to think so; for, reckoning up the innocent blood shed by the Jews, he begins at Abel, and ends even in the last of the holy prophets. Whereas, after Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, many prophets and righteous men were put to death by them. It is true there is no mention made in any history of their slaying this Zechariah, but Josephus might industriously conceal that shame of his nation. Perhaps what Zechariah spoke in his prophesying concerning Christ of his being sold, his being wounded in the house of his friends, and the shepherd being smitten, was verified in the prophet himself, and so he became a type of Christ. Probably, being assaulted by his persecutors, he took sanctuary in the court of the priests (and some think he was himself a priest), and so was slain between the porch and the altar.

**II.** The first-fruits of Zechariah's ministry. Before he came to visions and revelations, and delivered his prophetic discourses, he preached that which was plain and practical; for it is best to begin with that. Before he published the promises of mercy, he published calls to repentance, for thus *the way of the Lord must be prepared*. Law must be first preached, and then gospel. Now,

**1.** The prophet here puts them in mind of the controversy God had had with their fathers (v. 2): "*The Lord has been sorely displeased with your fathers, and has laid them under the tokens of his displeasure. You have heard with your ears, and your fathers have told you of it; you have seen*

with your eyes the woeful remains of it. God's quarrel with you has been of long standing, and therefore it is time for you to think of taking it up." Note, The judgments of God, which those that went before us were under, should be taken as warnings to us not to tread in their steps, and calls to repentance, that we may cut off the entail of the curse and get it turned into a blessing.

**2.** He calls them, in God's name, to return to him, and make their peace with him, v. 3. God by him says that to this backsliding people which he had often said by his servants the prophets: "*Turn you to me* in a way of faith and repentance, duty and obedience, and *I will turn to you* in a way of favour and mercy, peace and reconciliation." Let the rebels return to their allegiance, and they shall be taken under the protection of the government and enjoy all the privileges of good subjects. Let them change their way, and God will change his. See ~~3:7~~ Malachi 3:7. But that which is most observable here is that God is called here the *Lord of hosts* three times: "*Thus saith the Lord of hosts*. It is he that speaks, and therefore you are bound to regard what he says." *Turn you to me, saith the Lord of hosts* (this intimates the authority and obligation of the command), and *I will turn to you, saith the Lord of hosts* — this intimates the validity and value of the promise; so that it is no vain repetition. Note, The consideration of God's almighty power and sovereign dominion should both engage and encourage sinners to repent and turn to him. It is very desirable to have the Lord of hosts our friend and very dreadful to have him our enemy.

**3.** He warns them not to persist in their impenitence, as their fathers had done (v. 4): *Be you not as your fathers*. Instead of being hardened in their evil courses by the example of their fathers' sins, let them rather be deterred from them by the example of their fathers' punishment. We are apt to be governed very much by precedent, and we are well or ill governed according to the use we make of the precedents before us. The same examples to some are a savour of life unto life, to others a savour of death unto death. Some argued, "Shall we be wiser than our fathers? They never minded the prophets, and why then should we mind them? They made laws against them, and why should we tolerate them?" But they are here taught how they should argue: "Our fathers slighted the prophets, and God was sorely displeased with them for it; therefore let us the more carefully regard what God says to us by his prophets." "Review what is past, and observe,"

(1.) “What was the message that God sent by his servants the prophets to your fathers: *The former prophets cried to your fathers.* cried aloud, and did not spare, not spare themselves, not spare your fathers; they cried as men in earnest, as men that would be heard; they spoke not as from themselves, but in the name of *the Lord of hosts*; and this was the substance of what they said, the burden of every song, the application of every sermon — *Turn you now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings*; the very same that we now preach to you. Be persuaded to leave your sins; resolve to have no more to do with them. A speedy reformation is the only way to prevent an approaching ruin: *Turn you now from sin to God without delay.*”

(2.) “How little this message was regarded by your fathers: *But they did not hear*, they did not heed. They turned a deaf ear to these calls: *They would not hearken unto me, saith the Lord.* They would not be reclaimed, would not be ruled, by the word I sent them; say not then that you will do as your fathers did, for they did amiss;” see <sup><2447></sup>Jeremiah 44:17. Note, We must not follow the examples of our dear fathers unless they were God's dear children, nor any further than they were dutiful and obedient to him.

(3.) “What has become both of your fathers and of the prophets that preached to them? They are all dead and gone,” v. 5.

[1.] *Your fathers, where are they?* The whole generation of them is swept away, and their place knows them no more. Note, When we think of our ancestors, that have gone through the world and gone out of it before us, we should think, *Where are they?* Here they were, in the towns and countries where we live, passing and repassing in the same streets, dwelling in the same houses, trading in the same shops and exchanges, worshipping God in the same churches. But where are they? They are somewhere still; when they died there was not an end of them. They are in eternity, in the world of spirits, the unchangeable world, to which we are hastening apace. Where are they? Those of them that lived and died in sin are in torment, and we are warned by Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, to look to it that we *come not to that place of torment*, <sup><268></sup>Luke 16:28, 29. Those of them that lived and died in Christ are in paradise; and, if we live and die as they did, we shall be with them shortly, with them eternally.

[2.] *The prophets also, did they live for ever?* No, they are gone too. The treasure is put into earthen vessels, the water of life into earthen pitchers,

often cracked, and brought home broken at last. Christ is a prophet that lives for ever, but all other prophets have a period put to their office. Note, Ministers are dying men, and live not for ever in this world. They are to look upon themselves as such, and to preach accordingly, as those that must be silenced shortly, and know not which sermon may be the last. People are to look upon them as such, and to hear accordingly, as those that yet a little while have the *light with them*, that they may walk and work *while they have the light*. Oh that this weighty consideration had its due weight given it, that we are dying ministers dealing with dying people about the concerns of immortal souls and an awful eternity, which both they and we are standing upon the brink of! It concerns us to think of the prophets that are gone, that were *before us of old*, <sup>2388</sup>Jeremiah 28:8. Those that were the glory of men withered and fell; but the *word of the Lord endures for ever*, <sup>402</sup>1 Peter 1:24, 25. The prophets that are now, do *we live for ever?* (so some read it); no, Haggai and Zechariah will not be long with you, and prophecy itself shall shortly cease. In another world both we and our prophets shall live for ever; and to prepare for that world ought to be our great care and business in this.

(4.) “What were the effects of the word which God spoke to them by his prophets, v. 6. The preachers died, and the hearers died, but the word of God died not; that took effect, and not one iota or tittle of it fell to the ground.” As the *rain and snow* from heaven, *it shall not return void*, <sup>251</sup>Isaiah 55:11. He appealed to themselves; they knew very well,

[1.] That the judgments God had threatened were executed upon their fathers, and they were made to feel what they would not believe and fear: “*My statutes which I commanded my servants the prophets*, the precepts with the penalties annexed, which I charged them with the delivery of, *did they not take hold of your fathers?*” Though God's prophets could not fasten convictions upon them, the calamities threatened overtook them, and they could not escape them, nor get out of the reach of them. God's words took hold of them as the bailiff arrests the debtor, and takes him in execution for contempt. Note, The unbelief of man cannot make the threatenings of God's word of no effect, but, sooner or later, they will take place, if the prescribed course be not taken to prevent the execution of them. God's anger will certainly take hold of those that will not be taken hold of by his authority; for when he judges he will overcome.

[2.] That they themselves could not but own the accomplishment of the word of God in the judgments of God that were upon them, and that therein he was righteous, and had done them no wrong: *They returned, and said* (they changed their mind, and when it was too late to prevent the ruin of their nation they acknowledged), *Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us according to our ways and doings, to reckon with us for them, so has he dealt with us,* and we must acknowledge both his truth and his justice, must blame ourselves only, and have no blame to lay to him. *Sero sapiunt Phryges — It is late before the Phrygians become wise.* This after-wit, as it is a proof of the truth of God, so it is a proof of the folly of men, who will look no further than they can see. They would never be persuaded to say in time, “God will be as good as his word, for he is faithful; he will deal with us according to our deserts, for he is righteous.” But now they see both plainly enough when the sentence is executed; now he that runs may read, and publish the exact agreement that appears between the present providences and the former predictions which then were slighted, between the present punishments and the former sins which then were persisted in. Now they cannot but say, *The Lord is righteous,* ~~201~~ Daniel 9:11-13.

## ~~301~~ ZECHARIAH 1:7-17

### THE VISION OF THE HORSE AND MYRTLES

We not come to visions and revelations of the Lord; for in that way God chose to speak by Zechariah, to awaken the people's attention, and to engage their humble reverence of the word and their humble enquiries into it, and to fix it the more in their minds and memories. Most of the following visions seem designed for the comfort of the Jews, now newly returned out of captivity, and their encouragement to go on with the building of the temple. The scope of this vision (which is as an introduction to the rest) is to assure the Jews of the care God took of them, and the eye of his providence that was upon them for good, now in their present state, when they seem to be deserted, and their case deplorable. The vision is dated (v. 7) *the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month*, three months after he preached that sermon (v. 1), in which he calls them to repentance from the consideration of God's judgments. Finding that that sermon had a good effect, and that they returned to God in a way of duty,

the assurances he had given them are confirmed, that God would return to them in a way of mercy. Now observe here,

**I.** What the prophet saw, and the explication of that.

**1.** He saw a grove of *myrtle-trees*, a dark shady grove, down *in a bottom*, hidden by the adjacent hills, so that you were not aware of it till you were just upon it. This represented the low, dark, solitary, melancholy condition of the Jewish church at this time. They were over-topped by all their neighbours, buried in obscurity; what friends they had were hidden, and there appeared no way of relief and succour for them. Note, The church has not been always visible, but sometimes hidden, as the *woman in the wilderness*, <sup>(66:6)</sup> Revelation 12:6.

**2.** He saw *a man* mounted upon *a red horse*, standing in the midst of this shady myrtle-grove. This man is no other than the *man Christ Jesus*, the same that appeared to Joshua with *his sword drawn in his hand as captain of the host of the Lord* (<sup>(66:3)</sup> Joshua 5:13, 14) and to John with his *bow* and his *crown*, <sup>(66:2)</sup> Revelation 6:2. Though the church was in a low condition, yet Christ was present in the midst of it. Was it hidden by the hills? He was much more hidden in the myrtle-grove, yet hidden as in an ambush, ready to appear for the seasonable relief of his people, to their happy surprise. Compare <sup>(23:5)</sup> Isaiah 45:15, *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself*, and yet *Israel's God and Saviour* at the same time, their *Holy One in the midst of them*. He was *riding*, as a man of war, as a man in haste, *riding on the heavens for the help* of his people, <sup>(66:2)</sup> Deuteronomy 33:26. He rode on a *red horse*, either naturally so or dyed red with the blood of war, as this same victorious prince appeared *red in his apparel*, <sup>(23:1)</sup> Isaiah 63:1, 2. Red is a fiery colour, denoting that he is *jealous for Jerusalem* (v. 14) and very angry at her enemies. Christ, under the law, appeared on a red horse, denoting the terror of that dispensation, and that he had yet his conflict before him, when he was to *resist unto blood*. But, under the gospel, he appears on a *white horse* (<sup>(66:2)</sup> Revelation 6:2. and again <sup>(66:1)</sup> Revelation 19:11), denoting that he has now gained the victory, and rides in triumph, and hangs out the white, not the bloody flag.

**3.** He saw a troop of horse attending him, ready to receive and obey his orders: *Behind him there were some red horses, and some speckled, and some white*, angels attending the Lord Jesus, ready to be employed by him for the service of his church, some in acts of judgment, others of mercy,

others in mixed events. Note, The King of the church has angels at command, not only to do him honour, but to minister for the good of those that are his.

**4.** He enquired into the signification of this vision. He had an angel talking with him, as his instructor, besides those he saw in the vision; so had Ezekiel (<sup><340B></sup>Ezekiel 40:3), and <sup><270G></sup>Daniel 8:16. Zechariah asked him (v. 9), *O my Lord! what are these?* And, it should seem this *angel that talked with him* was Christ himself, the *man on the red horse*, whom the rest were attendants on; to him immediately Zechariah addresses himself. Would we be acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, we must make our application, not to angels (they are themselves learners), but to Christ himself, who is alone *able to take the book, and open the seals*, <sup><660E></sup>Revelation 5:7. The prophet's question implies a humble acknowledgment of his own ignorance and an earnest desire to be informed. O let me know what these are! This he desired, not for the satisfying of his curiosity, but that he might be furnished with something proper for the comfort and encouragement of the people of God, in their present distress.

**5.** He received from the *angel that talked with him* (v. 9), and from *the man that stood among the myrtle-trees* (v. 10), the interpretation of this vision. Note, Jesus Christ is ready to instruct those that are humbly desirous to be taught the things of God. He immediately said, *I will show thee what these are*. What knowledge we have, or may have, concerning the world of spirits, we are indebted to Christ for. The account given him was, *These are those whom the Lord has sent*: they are his messengers, his envoys, appointed (as his eyes are said to do, <sup><409></sup>2 Chronicles 16:9) to *walk*, to *run*, to fly swiftly *through the earth*, to observe what is done in it and to execute the divine commands. God needs them not, but he is pleased to employ them, and we need the comfort arising from the doctrine of their administration.

**II.** What the prophet heard, and what instructions were thereby given him. Faith comes by hearing, and, generally, in visions there was something said.

**1.** He heard the report or representation which the angels made to Christ of the present state of the world, v. 11. They had been out abroad, as flying posts (*being hastened by the King of kings' commandment*, <sup><178S></sup>Esther



3:15), and, having returned, they give this account to the *Angel that stood among the myrtle-trees* (for to the Lord Jesus angels themselves are accountable): *We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold all the earth sits still and is at rest.* We are taught to pray that the will of God may be done by men on earth as it is done by the angels in heaven; and here we see what need we have to pray so, for it is far from being so. For,

(1.) We find the world of angels here very busy. Those that are employed in the court above rest not day nor night from praising God, which is their business there; and those that are employed in the camp below are never idle, nor lose time; they are still *ascending and descending upon the Son of man* (~~415~~ John 1:51, as on Jacob's ladder, ~~412~~ Genesis 28:12); they are still *walking to and fro through the earth.* Thus active, thus industrious, Satan owns himself to be in doing mischief, ~~410~~ Job 1:7. It is well for us that good angels bestir themselves as much to do good, and that here in this earth we have guardians going about continually seeking to do us a kindness, as we have adversaries which, as roaring lions, go about continually, seeking to devour us. Though holy angels in this earth meet with a great deal that is disagreeable, yet, while they are going on God's errands, they hesitate not to *walk to and fro through it.* Their own habitation, which those that fell liked not, they will like the better when they return.

(2.) We find the world of mankind here very careless: *All the earth sits still, and is at rest,* while all the church is made uneasy, *tossed with tempests and not comforted.* Those that are strangers to the church are secure; those that are enemies to it are successful. The Chaldeans and Persians dwell at ease, while the poor Jews are continually alarmed; as when *the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed.* The children of men are merry and jovial, but *none grieve for the affliction of God's children.* Note, It is sad to think what a deep sleep the world is cast into, what a spirit of slumber has seized the generality of mankind, that are under God's wrath and Satan's power, and yet secure and unconcerned! They sit still and are at rest, ~~417~~ Luke 17:26, etc.

2. He heard Christ's intercession with the Father for his afflicted church, v. 12. The angels related the posture of affairs in this lower world, but we read not of any prayers they made for the redress of the grievances they had made a remonstrance of. No; it is *the Angel among the myrtle-trees*

that is the great intercessor. Upon the report of the angels he immediately turned heavenward, and said, *Lord, wilt thou not have mercy on thy church?*

(1.) The thing he intercedes for is *mercy*; as <sup><387E></sup>Psalm 85:7, *Show us thy mercy, O Lord!* Note, God's mercy is all in all to the church's comfort; and all his mercy must be hoped for through Christ's mediation.

(2.) The thing he complains of is the delay of this mercy: *How long wilt thou not have mercy!* He knows that *mercies through him shall be built up for ever* (<sup><387E></sup>Psalm 89:2), but thinks it long that the building is deferred.

(3.) The objects of compassion recommended to the divine mercies are, Jerusalem, the holy city, and the other cities of Judah that were now in ruins; for God had had *indignation against them now threescore and ten years*. He mentions seventy years because that was the time fixed in the divine councils for the continuance of the captivity; so long the indignation lasted, and though *now for a little space grace had been shown them from the Lord their God, to give them some reviving* (<sup><387E></sup>Ezra 9:8), yet the scars of those seventy years' captivity still remained so deep, so painful, that this is the melancholy string they still harp upon — the divine indignation during those seventy years. Dr. Lightfoot thinks that whereas the seventy years of the captivity were reckoned from Jehoiakim's fourth year, and ended in the first of Cyrus, these seventy years are to be computed from the eleventh of Zedekiah, when Jerusalem and the temple were burnt, about nineteen years after the first captivity, and which ended in this second year of Darius Hystaspes, about seventeen years after Cyrus's proclamation, as that seventy years mentioned <sup><387E></sup>Zechariah 7:5 was about nineteen years after; the captivity went off, as it came on, gradually. “Lord, we are still under the burden of the seventy years' wrath, and wilt thou be angry with us for ever?”

3. He heard a gracious reply given to this intercession of Christ's for his church; for it is a prevailing intercession, always acceptable, and *him the Father heareth always* (v. 13): *The Lord answered the angel*, this angel of the covenant, *with good words and comfortable words*, with promises of mercy and deliverance, and the perfecting of what he had begun in favour to them. These were comfortable words to Christ, who is grieved in the grievances of his church, and comfortable to all that mourn with Zion. God often answers prayer with good words, when he does not immediately appear in great works; and those good words are real answers to prayer.

Men's good words will not feed the body (<sup>3016</sup>James 2:16), but God's good words will feed the faith, for saying and doing with him are not two things, though they are with us.

4. He heard that reply which was given to the angel repeated to himself, with a commission to publish it to the children of his people, for their comfort. *The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to him he signified to his servant John, and by him to the churches,* <sup>600</sup>Revelation 1:1, 4. Thus all the good words and comfortable words of the gospel we receive from Jesus Christ, as he received them from the Father, in answer to the prayer of his blood, and his ministers are appointed to preach them *to all the world*. Now that God would *speak comfortably to Jerusalem*, Zechariah is *the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare you the way of the Lord. The voice said, Cry. Cry then*. The prophets must now cry as loudly to show God's people their comforts as ever they did formerly to show them *their transgressions*, <sup>2302</sup>Isaiah 40:2, 3, 6. And if he ask, *What shall I cry?* he is here instructed.

(1.) He must proclaim the wrath God has in store for the enemies of Jerusalem. He is *jealous for Zion with great jealousy*, v. 14. He takes himself to be highly affronted by the injuries and indignities that are done to his church, as he had been formerly by the iniquities found in his church. The earth *sat still and was at rest* (v. 11), not relenting at all, nor showing the least remorse, for all the mischief they had done to Jerusalem, as Joseph's brethren, who, when they had sold him, sat down to eat bread; and this God took very ill (v. 15): *I am very sorely displeased with the heathen, that are at ease*, and have no concern for the afflicted church. Much more will he be displeased with those that are *at ease in Zion* (<sup>3061</sup>Amos 6:1), with Zion's own sons, that sympathize not with her in her sorrows. But this was not all; they were not only not concerned for her, but they were concerned against her: *I was but a little displeased with my people, and designed to correct them moderately, but those that were employed as instruments of the correction cast off all pity, and with the greatest rage and malice helped forward the affliction and added to it, persecuting those whom God had smitten* (<sup>4925</sup>Psalm 69:26) and insulting over those whom he had troubled. See <sup>2306</sup>Isaiah 47:6; 10:5; <sup>4292</sup>Ezekiel 25:12, 15. Note, God is displeased with those who help forward the affliction even of such as suffer justly; for true humanity, in such a case, is good divinity.

**(2.)** He must proclaim the mercy God has in store for Jerusalem and the *cities of Judah*, v. 16. He must cry, “*Thus saith the Lord, I have returned to Jerusalem with mercies. I was going away in wrath, but I am now returning in love. Cry yet to the same purport,*” v. 17. There must now be line upon line for consolation, as formerly there had been for conviction. *The Lord*, even the Lord of hosts, assures them,

**[1.]** That the temple shall be built that is now but in the building. This good work which they are now about, though it meet with much discouragement, shall be perfected, and they shall have the tokens of God's presence, and opportunities of conversing with him, and worshipping him, as formerly. Note, It is good news indeed to any place to hear that God will build his house in it.

**[2.]** That Jerusalem shall again be *built as a city compact together*, which had formerly been its glory, <sup><BC18></sup>Psalm 122:3. *A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem*, in order to the rebuilding of it with great exactness and uniformity.

**[3.]** That the nation shall again become populous and rich, though now diminished and impoverished. Not only Jerusalem, but other cities that are reduced and lie in a little compass, shall yet *spread abroad*, or be diffused; their suburbs shall extend far, and colonies shall be transplanted from them; and this *through prosperity*: they shall be so numerous, and so wealthy, that there shall not be room for them; they shall complain that *the place is too strait*, <sup><34D></sup>Isaiah 49:20. As they had been scattered and spread abroad, through their calamities, so they should now be through their prosperity. *Let thy fountains be dispersed*, <sup><156></sup>Proverbs 5:16. The cities that should thus increase God calls his cities; they are *blessed* by him, and they are *fruitful and multiply, and replenish the land*.

**[4.]** That all their present sorrows should not only be balanced, but for ever silenced, by divine consolations: *The Lord shall yet comfort Zion*. Yet at length, though her griefs and grievances may continue long, God has comforts in reserve for Zion and all her mourners.

**[5.]** That all this will be the fruit of God's preventing distinguishing favour: He shall yet *choose Jerusalem*, shall renew his choice, renew his covenant, shall make it appear that he has chosen Jerusalem. As he first built them up into a people when he brought them out of Egypt, so he will now rebuild them, when he brings them out of Babylon, not for any

worthiness of theirs, but in pursuance of his own choice, <sup><817></sup>Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. Jerusalem is the city he has chosen, and he will not cast it off.

## <sup><818></sup>ZECHARIAH 1:18-21

### COMFORT FOR JERUSALEM

It is the comfort and triumph of the church (<sup><259></sup>Isaiah 59:19) that *when the enemy shall come in like a flood, with mighty force and fury, then the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him*. Now, in this vision (the second which this prophet had), we have an illustration of that, God's Spirit making a stand, and making head, against the formidable power of the church's adversaries.

**I.** We have here the enemies of the church bold and daring, and threatening to be its death, to *cut off the name of Israel*; such the people of God had lately been insulted by: *I looked and behold four horns* (v. 18), which are explained v. 19. *They are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem*, that is, the Jews both in the country and in the city, because they were the Israel of God. They have *tossed them* (so some read it), as furious bulls with their horns toss that which they are enraged at. They have scattered them, *so that no man did lift up his head*, v. 21. No man durst show his face for fear of them, much less give them any opposition, or make head against them. They are *horns*, denoting their dignity and dominion — *horns exalted*, denoting also their strength, and power, and violence. They are *four horns*, for the Jews are surrounded with them on every side; when they avoid one horn that pushes at them they run upon another. The men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many of Israel that joined themselves to them, set about the building of the temple; but the enemies of that work from all sides pushed at them, and drove them from it. Rehum, and Shimshai, and the other Samaritans that opposed the building of the temple, were these horns, <sup><1348></sup>Ezra 4:8. So were Sanballat and Tobiah, and the Ammonites and Arabians, that opposed the building of the wall, <sup><1407></sup>Nehemiah 4:7. Note, The church's enemies have horns, and use them to the hindrance of every good work. The great enemy of the New-Testament church has *seven heads and ten horns* (<sup><673></sup>Revelation 17:3), so that those who endeavour to do the church any service must expect to be pushed at.

**II.** We have here the friends of the church active and prevailing. The prophet did himself lift up his eyes and see the four horns, and saw them so formidable that he began to despair of the safety of every good man, and the success of every good work; but *the Lord* then *showed him four carpenters, or smiths*, who were empowered to cut off these horns, v. 20, 21. With an eye of sense we see the power of the enemies of the church; look which way we will, the world shows us that. But it is with an eye of faith that we see it safe, notwithstanding; it is the Lord that shows us that, as he opened the eyes of the prophet's servant to see the angelic guards round about his master, <sup><1187></sup>2 Kings 6:17. Observe, Those that were to fray or break the horns of the Gentiles, and to cast them out, were,

**1.** *Carpenters* or *smiths* (for they are supposed by some to have been horns of iron), men who had skill and ability to do it, whose proper business it was, and who understood their business and had tools at hand to do it with. Note, God calls those to serve the interests of his church whom he either finds, or makes, fit for it. If there be horns (which denote the force and fury of beasts) against the church, there are carpenters (which denote the wisdom and forecast of men) for the church, by which they find ways to master the strongest beasts, for *every kind of beasts is tamed, and has been tamed, of mankind*, <sup><988></sup>James 3:7.

**2.** They were *four carpenters*, as many horns so many hands to saw them off. Note, Which way soever the church is threatened with mischief, and opposition given to its interests, God can find out ways and means to check the force, to restrain the wrath, and make it turn to his praise. Some by these four carpenters understand Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, who carried on the work of God in spite of the opposition given to it. Those horned beasts broke into God's vineyard to tread it down; but the good magistrates and the good ministers whom God raised up, though they had not power to *cut off the horns of the wicked* (as David did, <sup><985></sup>Psalm 75:5, 10), yet frightened them and cast them out. Note, When God has work to do he will raise up some to do it and others to defend it and protect those that are employed in the doing of it.