

THE FOUR HORNS & THE FOUR CRAFTSMEN

Zech. 1:18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. **19** And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. **20** And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. **21** Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

Previously, the nation of Israel was portrayed as being among the myrtle bushes, in the valley of humiliation outside Jerusalem, with the rider on the red horse, and his armies accompanying him. The people had returned from Babylon eighteen years earlier to find their city ravaged. The wall needed restoring. The temple needed built. New homes needed to be constructed. Jewish national identity needed to be re-established.

However, in the valley, among the bushes, on the red horse, was the rider, - the Angel of the Lord. He was waiting to enter the city and to bring judgment upon its pagan occupiers. ... Four years after this prophecy, the temple was rebuilt, and eighty years later the wall was restored.

Out of all the nations in the world, why is God so interested in Jerusalem and Israel? ... There is no definitive answer as to why He chose them, however, in His plan for the world, He required *a* people to proclaim and demonstrate His glory ... and He chose Israel. There is no explanation why He chose *them*, but He *did* ... **Dt. 7:1** When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee ... **2** And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: ... **6** For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. ... And for this purpose, they were chosen by God to be a witness among all nations, **Is. 43:21** This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.

A second reason, - and the ultimate reason, - He chose the nation of Israel was to reveal the Messiah through them, **Jn. 4:22** salvation is of the Jew. God told Abram, **Gen.**

12:2 I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: **3** ... and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. ... The Lord Jesus was a Jew.

A third reason God chose Israel was to be a kingdom of priests and to represent Him in the world, **Ex. 19:5** ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: **6** And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

Fourthly, God chose Israel to convey and preserve Scripture, **Dt. 4:5** Behold, I (*Moses*) have taught you statutes and judgments ... **6** Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes. ... In the New Testament, God used converted Jews to preach the Gospel to every nation. They presented Christ for they were as priests conveying and preserving God's truth.

Fifthly, God used Israel to demonstrate to the world His faithfulness. He gave the Jews His Law and when they obeyed it, they enjoyed His blessing, and when they disobeyed it, they suffered His chastisement. They never stopped being His people though, for ... **Jer. 31:37** Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. ... **Jer. 33:25** Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; **26** Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

A sixth reason God chose Israel was to display to the world His grace, **Micah 7:18** Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

A seventh reason He chose Israel was to show the world the consequences of unrepentance, **Lev. 26:14** if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; **15** And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: **16** I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague

Ichronic fever!, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart *Idim your sight and sap your strength!* and ye shall sow your seed in vain.

Fundamentally, the nation of Israel was chosen by God to display His glory to all nations. There were times when He laid them low and times when He lifted them high ... but they never lost their unique relationship with Him. And this was what Zechariah was being shown in the valley, in the second vision where he sees ‘four horns’ which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem (*Zech. 1:19*). ... These four horns are four kingdoms for the horn is the symbol of power, for example, *Ps. 89:17* For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

The verb ‘scattered’ is in a Hebrew tense known as *Piel*. It ‘expresses an intensive type of action with an active voice’, in other words, it can equally refer to the past, present, and future ... all in the one word. It requires no time factor and can be translated, “These are the [*Gentile*] horns which have scattered, are scattering, and will scatter Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem (1:19)”. During this recently commenced period, - i.e. ‘the times of the Gentiles’, - the predominant Gentile nations were prophesied by Daniel to be the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. Each of these nations committed grossly unspeakable crimes against the people of Israel, going beyond the remit God had initially given them (cf. *very* sore displeased, 1:15). By Zechariah’s time, the kingdoms of Babylon and Medo-Persia had already ‘scattered’ the children of Israel. Later, the Greek and Roman empires would act similarly.

This prophecy would continue until ‘the times of the Gentiles’ will be ended and it is a testimony to how God honours His promise. Indeed, Israel has only survived because *Ps. 121:4* He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. ... ⁸ The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

In the same vision, Zechariah was shown ‘four carpenters’ who were craftsmen, smiths, hammerers (v. 20). Their purpose was to crush and destroy the four ‘horns’ (powers) who were ‘scattering’ Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. ... God had covenanted with Abram, I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee (*Gen. 12:3*). In honouring His word, He used Medo-Persia as a ‘hammer’ to crush Babylon. The ‘hammer’ He used to crush Medo-Persia was Greece. The

‘hammer’ He used to crush Greece was Rome. ... The only empire *not* to be crushed was the Roman empire. ... In 476 AD the Roman Empire officially ended when a loose confederation of localised barbarians overran Rome ... but the Roman Empire was *never* conquered and crushed as was Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. Furthermore, Daniel prophesied the revival of Rome in the latter days, with its legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay (Dan. 2:33), and out of the revived empire will proceed the Antichrist and ten kingdoms (Dan. 7:19-26), The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, *which shall be diverse from all kingdoms*, and shall devour the whole earth (Dan. 7:23).

In the period since the Roman collapse, Jerusalem has been under the control of many nations including the Persians, the Crusaders, Egyptians, Muslims, the Turks, the French, and the British. Altogether, Jerusalem has been attacked fifty-two times, captured and recaptured forty-four times, besieged twenty-three times, and destroyed twice.

When the presently-dormant Roman Empire rises again, the ‘Hammer’ which God will use to crush it will be the Lord Jesus, i.e. **Dan. 2:45** the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ... **Zech. 14:3** Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. **4** And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. ... **9** And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one. ... God promised through Zechariah that every nation who sets out to crush Israel will itself be crushed!

God’s people are being assured He is in control of the past, the present, and the future. He cares for His people and protects them. He blesses them, and He deals sternly with those who treat them wrongly for as far as He is concerned, **Zech. 2:8** thus saith the LORD of hosts ... he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. ... The fate of the enemies of God’s people, therefore, is already sealed, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray *[terrify]* them, to cast out *[overthrow]* the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it (**Zech. 1:21**).