

Zechariah 3

Zechariah's Measurement

When one reads the works of Zechariah, one is readily drawn to the vision of the horses. According to the words of the prophecy itself, these horses go out over the earth to see how things are going and then they report back to God. God is thus informed as to what is happening, good or bad. The more significant point, however, is not that God just knows what is going on, but that God cares and is jealous for the work to be done in Jerusalem and for the city to be brought back to its place in God's plan.[1]

This must have been a very comforting for those people to know as they went out to work each day. God, the almighty one, knows what is going on and He is behind the project in every possible way. If the supreme power knows what is going on, and if He can not be defeated by the treachery of men then there is a mighty sense of confidence that is fermenting in the chest of these workmen each day. (It would not be surprising if the people remembered the queen back in Persia who helped them stave off one more attempt to destroy them as a people, Esther.)

The vision that Zechariah recounts to the people is one that says, pointedly, "Our God is on the watch, he knows what is happening." "He is going to go with the people and help them to build the city all over again." "God guarantees the success of this venture." What more could one want to bolster and motivate the people there on the face of the wall each day. What more could one as a leader of such a group want to see than a workforce that is conditioned to look to God as the supreme power and the supreme advocate for this project. It is the necessary attitude from which comes the strength to survive and to thrive.

This attitude that comes from the vision is then of very great value to a people who are learning not only to rely on God in the new granted safety of their Persian existence, but now also now in the dangerous valleys of the Jordan river. There are bandits in those valleys; there are men there whose very voice is constantly being raised to dishearten these workmen for God. But their God knows, and their God wants to Jerusalem returned to its glory. That by itself is a major bit of foundation upon which to go to work each day. It is still true today. God knows what is going on and He is still jealous that His church be built and maintained.

Well, some would say, we can do the whole job on this endorsement alone, but God gives a second clause to this vision. Coupled to this first part of the vision is the fact there will be a measuring line stretched over Jerusalem, by God. This is going to result in everyone knowing that again God's cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion, that God will again choose Jerusalem.

This 'project' is not so different from the planting of a congregation in a place where it has not been before. We still need today the knowledge that God is aware of what is going on, that He cares, and that He is at work Himself to see that the church is built. Look at the letter that Paul wrote to the Ephesians. In Ephesians 1:22, it says that God has put everything under the feet of Jesus, for the benefit of the church. Now that is impressive! It is also encouraging to those who do go out to plant the church in foreign soil.

To know that our God is still just as powerful as He was at the time of the writings of Zechariah, to know that our God still knows what is going on in every corner of the world, that our God is in control of everything, even the economies of this world, is to rest well assured that God is in charge, still. A point of application here is found in the fact that He has told us in Paul's first letter to Corinth, "if we will go out and plant and water, He will give the growth." It is still so. I just have to get to know my God ever better, trust Him ever more, and speak out for him far more often. He will be by my side, just as He was by the side of those building the wall. He will be with us as we build the temple today, in the remotest parts of the world, like the Amazon basin, or Abilene, Texas, or Northern New South Wales.

[1] The vision of the horses that one finds here in Zechariah is not related to the vision in the book of Revelation at all. In John's Revelation, the emphasis is on those that ride the horses, the horsemen. Here the emphasis is on the horses themselves. In the Revelation, the horsemen bring calamities on the earth. In Zechariah, the horses go out and report back to God what is happening on the earth. Care should be given to the understanding of the anthropomorphic nature of this vision in Zechariah. (Does God really use horses to know what is going on all over the world, or is it a bit of imagery to make it more real to the Israelite people who have just left Persia on the way back to Jerusalem? We need to remember that to the world of that day, the cavalry was the eyes and ears of the king.)