

The Conquest of Israel's Enemy

Scripture: Zechariah 1:18-21

Code: 2156

Turn in your at Psalm 2. I want to just read you the first three verses of the second Psalm as a setting for our look at text in Zechariah. Psalm 2, "Why do the nations rage or in an uproar and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rules take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed saying, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us."

Psalmist introduces us to something of the turmoil and the unrest and the anti God feeling in the world in those verses and we know that the world is in a constant state of rebellion against God. And no clearer demonstration of this rebellion can be seen in the way that the world has constantly treated the nation Israel, which is God's people.

Now this becomes the subject of the book of Zechariah. Now if you will turn with me to Zechariah. The nations who have raged against God have showed that anti God rage in their attitude toward Israel. Israel has suffered at the hands of the nations by the time Zechariah writes and will suffer continuously and far beyond the writing of this man's prophecy. And this is the subject with which Zechariah deals. He comforts Israel in the midst of the time of trial and tribulation and suffering at the hands of nations who rage against God and against God's people.

Now we saw that Zechariah comforts his people and he does it in a series of visions that he receives from God. God grants to him visions of comfort to give to the people of Israel to sooth them with the confidence that God is going to move in their behalf ultimately.

Now last time we discussed the first vision in Chapter 1, verses 7 to 17, the vision of the rider on the red horse among the myrtle trees. And we noted that the picture was the myrtle bushes literally in the hollow place or the place of humiliation and degradation, outside the city of Jerusalem. And the picture is of Israel, not yet able to ascend to prominence in its own land. The city is broken down. They've come back from captivity in Babylon, but the wall has not been rebuilt, the temple has not been rebuilt, they've not really re-instituted their national identity and they're in a situation of humiliation and degradation in a valley, in a hollow, in a low place outside and there as it were pleading with God to take them into the city, to take it back and to be again God's people in the place of prominence. And all of a sudden amidst the myrtle bushes there appears a rider on a red horse and we see him defined as the angel of the Lord, which is the Old Testament name for whom, Christ, and Christ appears in the midst of the myrtle buses and the picture is one of coming judgment. There

are red horses speaking of blood and there are white horses speaking of victory and so it is that the angel of the Lord is about to lead the children of Israel from the place of humiliation to the place of victory.

And we saw that it wasn't long after that vision, only four years, until things began to be rebuilt and the temple was built and eighty years later the walls were built and the prophecy came to pass. The rider on the red horse, the angel of the Lord, the defender protector of Israel moved in and in spite of the opposition and in spite of the nations surrounding reestablished Israel in the land. So we saw that God was comforting His people with the knowledge that they would be in the place of victory again, that they would be back as a nation with their temple and with their city and with their wall.

But also we noted that there was a far future fulfillment of that very prophecy, that while it had an immediate identity it also had a future significance. That there was coming a day when the great angel of the Lord, none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, would come and once and for all finally establish Israel in the land in the great millennium kingdom, and at that point they would come back to prominence. At that point they would reign and Christ would sit on the throne of David on Mount Zion. The times of the Gentiles would be over and God would rule the world again through His nation Israel. And so we saw an immediate historic fulfillment and a future fulfillment prophetically in that first vision.

What basically God was saying there is summed up in verse 15. "I am very much displeased with the nations that are at ease, for I was a little displeased and they helped forward the affliction." God says I was much displeased and I'm going to do something about it. God is going to move against the oppressors of His people, the persecutors of His people, the enemies of His people. And you might remember that hatred of God's people is basically identified in the Bible as hatred of God Himself. That's why anti-Semitism is so despicable to God. For example in Psalm 44:22 the Bible says, "Yes," now note this, "For Thy sake," for God's sake, "Are we killed all the day long. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter." In other words when the world is killing us it is really God that they have in mind. They are really antagonistic to Him.

Didn't we see that same thing in the New Testament? When the world persecutes the church, who is it they're really persecuting? The Lord Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul said, "I fill up in my flesh the afflictions meant for Christ," Colossians 1:24. But he said, "That's all right for I am willing to suffer the blows meant for Him who suffered the blows meant for me."

And so there is an inseparable identification between God's people and God and to persecute God's people is to persecute God. To persecute the church is to persecute Christ and when Paul, for example, was persecuting the church Jesus really said to him on the Damascus Road, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou, what, Me?" God is inseparably beautifully and forever identified with His people.

And so people have been reacting, the nations have been raging in turmoil and unrest against God and they have manifested it in a hatred against His people. It's true of the church in this age and it's been true of Israel throughout history and believe me God righteously reacts against the enemy of His people, and that is the question in Zechariah's time. The people are saying, "Look, you brought us back from captivity, but here we are in the hollow place outside and we haven't rebuilt the city and it's so discouraging and how long will the enemy nations reign around us? How long will everything go well?" You'll notice in verse 15 that the nations were at ease. Everything was great with them, but it wasn't so great with Israel.

And you remember the God squadron that appeared in verse 11, said, "We've been through the earth and the earth sits still and is at rest." There's peace everywhere, but what about us, they're saying, God, what about us? And it's at that point that He shows him the picture of the red horse rider and he's about to move and shed blood and win victory and reestablish Israel, and as we said it had an immediate fulfillment within four years, but it has a greater fulfillment when He comes to set the kingdom for His people again and Israel will reign as God's special people in the millennium.

Now as we come to the second vision we find basically the same thing dealt with only in a tremendous scope. Now remember that God has just said to them, "I'm going to come in judgment and I'm going to deal with those nations that have treated you wrongly." O, he said in verse 15, "I was a little displeased with you and I chose the nations to be a chastening nation against you, but I never wanted them to push it this far, and because they pushed it too far I'm going to come in judge them." And if you look at the long rang of that that still really hasn't happened. And you might say, if you were a Jew today and you were looking up at God, you might say, "God, it's been a long time, it's been a long time of oppression. We're small and we're weak, and we wonder if we ever hope for deliverance from the powers of our aggressors."

But you know Jesus said in Luke 21:24, that, "Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles was fulfilled." And what He meant by Jerusalem was broader than just the city. The city is representative of all the land that God gave them in the covenant promise, all the way from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean and all the north and south area as well. And all that will never belong to them until the times of the Gentiles is ended, Luke 21:24. Jerusalem will be trodden down in some way, shape, or form until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And so that's why I say the ultimate comfort that Zechariah is giving them is yet distant in the future.

And so they're saying, "How long will the aggressor mercilessly ground the Jew in the dust?" How long will this go on? And the answer comes in the second vision because here you find out just how long, and it takes you all the way to the second coming of Jesus Christ, and then it's going to end.

Now we're looking at the times of the Gentiles as we saw last time. We're seeing how far it's going to stretch. Now I want to clarify that term for just a minute so you won't be confused. The times of the Gentiles is the period of time, said Jesus, in which Jerusalem was trodden down by Gentile power, in which Jerusalem was ruled or lorded over by Gentile nations. It is a period of time that began about 600 B.C. It began when Nebuchadnezzar came in and Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the Jews were carried captive into Babylon. I think the first group were taken captive in about 604, and the major element in 586 B.C. for about a twenty year period this captivity was going on. They were being taken in and, of course, they were there for 70 years. And so from that time Jerusalem, for the first time since the land of Canaan was given to them, for the first time that land was dominated by Gentile power, the Babylonians. And that began the times of the Gentiles. And Jerusalem will continue to be trodden down until the times of the Gentiles is ended, and it hasn't ended yet. It's still trodden down.

But you say they took back the old city. Yes they have part of it, but there are all kinds of political elements all over the land that God originally gave to them. They haven't begun to touch as far east as the Euphrates, and the south, and even the north. They are just isolated in one little area and Jerusalem is anything but totally free. And all the land that God promised is not yet theirs. And so we're still living in the times of the Gentiles when Israel knows aggressors and overlords from Gentile lines.

Now the whole picture of the times, and I want you to mark this, the whole picture of the times of the Gentiles comes to a great climax under the rule of what is commonly called the anti-Christ. That's not a biblical term for him because the Bible says there are many anti-Christ's. He's the beast, he's the little horn, he's the willful king, he's the prince of the people to come; he's got all kinds of terms. If you like to use the anti-Christ it's all right if you understand what you mean. But rule of the anti-Christ will consummate the times of the Gentiles and at the peak of his rule Jesus returns and the times of the Gentiles comes to a halt and Christ sets up His kingdom, re-establishes Israel in the land and He reigns on the throne of His father, David, II Samuel Chapter 7, and the promise of the Davidic throne is fulfilled. But until that time we are seeing the times of the Gentiles.

Now I don't believe that anybody at all with any system of philosophy or any system of theology, which attempts to arrive at the meaning of history, can ignore that tremendous analysis of history. The theatre of history is Israel and you can't ignore this concept. The nations may foolishly rage against God, the nations may persecute His people, but nevertheless the Bible says that God will triumphantly place His Son on the throne in Zion, that's the rest of Psalm 2. "The Lord shall laugh and hold them in derision," and he says, "I will set My King on My holy hill," in spite of the nations. History is the story of God taking back His land for His people.

Now as we come to Zechariah, the times of the Gentiles are already in operation, but God gives the people a vision through Zechariah that shows them that it won't always be this way, and their

enemies will be dealt with before them. And the message of the vision is very straightforward. Let me read it to you beginning in verse 18. "Then lifted up mine eyes and saw and behold four horns. And I said to the angel who talked with me," that interpreter angel, "What are these? And He answered me these are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four hammerers," is the best term four hammerers, "and I said, 'What come these to do?' And he spoke saying, 'These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man did lift up his head, but these are come to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.'"

Now you say, that isn't really too thrilling at first reading. Not exactly sure what's going on, horns and hammers, so what? Well let's find out so what. This is a very comforting vision. Verse 18; let's start. Two elements in the vision, four horns, four hammers. Isn't that a great outline? That won't win any homiletical prizes, but that's what he's talking about. Four horns, four hammers. All right here we go with four horns, verse 18. "I lifted up my eyes and saw behold four horns." It's kind of interesting to note this, and just so we don't bypass anything here that might be edifying to us, "Then lifted up mine eyes." It's interesting to me that all these visions happen on one night. That night is noted for us in Chapter 1 verse 7, the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, the month Sebat, and all these visions came in succession on the same night when the prophet was awake, because a vision is not a dream, it's something that comes when he's awake. "And he lifted up his eyes," and this goes on like this. Look at verse 1 of Chapter 2, "I lifted up my eyes again." Chapter 5, verse 1, "I turned and lifted up my eyes." Verse 5, "Lift thine eyes," said interpreter angel. Chapter 6, verse 1, "I turned and lifted up my eyes."

Now, you say, "Why does he have to do that all the time?" Because it seems to him the most normal response after he sees one of these visions to bow his head in meditation and prayer and interpreter angel has to come along and poke him to look up again for the next one. He is so overwhelmed by each of them that he falls and bows in meditation. He sinks, as it were, in an attitude and response of thankfulness. And the interpreter angel nudges him a little with a supernatural poke and he pops up again and he sees the next of his supernatural pictures on God's divine screen and this is a sense that is like a sixth sense. He can perceive the imperceptible. And look what he sees. "I saw and behold," now behold means, you won't believe it! "And I saw," and wow, "four horns."

Now these are animal horns, most likely the horn of rams, though the animal is not named. The word *karin* the Hebrew often means a horn for blowing. Remember back in the book of Joshua they walked around the city and blew horns. Those were animal horns. It can mean a horn that is used as a receptacle in I Samuel 16, it talks about a horn that is used to carry fluid or something for drinking, but the most frequent use is as a symbol of power. When the horn is used it is speaking of power because that's the way an animal used it. For example in Jeremiah 48:25, it says, "The horn of Moab is cut off," and what it meant is that Moab is impotent. God has taken the power of Moab away. In Lamentations 2:3 it says, "He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel." In other words God

has cut off the power of Israel. In Psalm 75:10, it says, "All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off." To cut off the horn is the symbol of conquering the power and that's such an obvious thing today because whenever a hunter goes out to hunt a beast, as soon as he kills the beast he takes, what, the horn and he puts it up in his den, why, because it's a symbol of his power conquering the power of that beast. It's an old truth, an old principle.

To lift up the horn, a phrase that is used in Psalm 89 and Psalm 92, and other places, incidentally, to lift up the horn means to increase power. And here in Psalm 18:2, David calls the Lord the horn, and used the word *karin*, the horn of my deliverance. God is the ultimate horn. He is the ultimate power. So it is a symbol of power. And so when he lifts up his eyes he sees four powers, four symbols of power.

Now the horn can express the power of an individual or the power of a nation, as in the case of the horn of Moab, or the horn of Israel. It often symbolizes a Gentile king as representative of a kingdom. It often speaks of a Gentile king as a representative of a kingdom. Look with me for a minute in Daniel Chapter 7, 'cause we're going to look at it several times in the book of Daniel later on, but in Daniel 7 just listen to this verse 21, "I beheld and the same horn made war with the saints."

Now this horn is the one that we call the anti-Christ. So here it is used of an individual, but representative of a whole system. And verse 24, "Ten horns out of the kingdom, or ten kings that shall arise." So you can see here that the horns are used in Daniel's prophecy to refer to Gentile kings. Gentile kings who are representative of Gentile nations. For example in Daniel 8:3, there is a ram pictured with two horns and the two horns represent the kingdoms of Media and Persia that came together to be the Medo-Persian empire. So it is best to see then that these horns are Gentile kings associated with their kingdoms.

So Zechariah looks up and he sees in this vision four Gentile kings associated with Gentile kingdoms. And then he says I'd like to have an explanation please. Verse 19, "I said to the angel that talked with me," and the angel that talked with me is used eleven times in this section, as I said last week, and it means the angel who interprets this thing to him. What are these? What's the deal here, angel? And he said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem." That's simple to identify. These are the political powers, the national Gentile entities that have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem, and he uses all of the possible terms for the country in order to sum it up, all the designations for God's people are used. They have scattered God's people, Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. It's like giving their first, last, and middle name.

Now the word scattered is interesting. It appears in the English text in the past tense, but the verb *zeruin* Hebrew is a perfect tense and according to some of the Hebrew scholars I was reading this week, the Hebrew indication of the perfect tense is that it can refer to completed, it does refer to completed action, but listen, it can be completed action in the past, it can be completed action in the

present, or it can be completed action in the future. It has no time factor, and so rather than put it in the past we would read it this way: these are the horns, which have scattered, are scattering, and will scatter Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Taking it in its broadest possible sense, these are the horns, which scatter at any point in time when it's done, at any point in time during the entire era known as the times of the Gentiles.

Now you say, "Well John who are these four horns?" Well it's interesting to notice that we can't really find four nations at that point in history and clearly identify them as the four horns. So that leaves us with two basic explanations: one is that the four horns is simply a symbol of Israel's foes in general, and that the four, the number four is simply symbolic of the whole world, the four winds, the four corners of the earth, and so forth, so that four symbolizes the whole idea of world-wide universal kind of persecution. And so the four is not significant. Technically it's only significant as a symbol of worldwide persecution. Well that's possible. But there are some weaknesses with that. And there's a second view, and that is that the four horns which scatter, have scattered, and will scatter, using the fullness of that possible Hebrew tense, are the four great world empires that make up the times of the Gentiles. And I believe that this is most probable. I read extensively on both and I lean to this one.

The prophet Daniel helps me with this because he was a contemporary, at least a close to be a contemporary with Zechariah. Daniel was a prophet during the captivity. Zechariah came out of the captivity when he was relative young and no doubt knew Daniel very well and no doubt was acquainted somewhat with Daniel's wonderful ministry and perhaps with many or at least some of his prophecies. And so when he says these are the four horns, which have scattered, or are scattering, or will scatter Judah, Jerusalem and Israel, to me he is point out the four great empires in the time known as the times of the Gentiles.

Incidentally, to support that view I would simply let you know that the Jewish, Targum, which is a commentary on this and this is orthodox Jew, not Christian, but this is the ancient Targum renders this a four definite kingdoms. So it seems that the Jewish interpreters believed that it was four definite kingdoms, which they don't name. But interestingly enough Kimchi, who was a rabbinical scholar of the 12th century, a Rabbi, said this is the proper and Jewish interpretation. These are the four monarchies. They are the Babylonian monarchy, the Persian monarchy, and the Grecian monarchy and he never named the fourth one, but isn't it interesting that a 12th century Rabbi interpreted this as having reference to the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, and Grecian empires. So this isn't something that came along with C. I. Schofield. This isn't something that popped up just when Dallas Seminary was invented. This goes back to a rabbinic tradition recorded in the 12th century.

Incidentally Kimchi doesn't name the fourth one because I don't guess that he was sure what the fourth one was going to be or whether or not it was really Rome, but he does note that every one of these was guilty of grievous persecution against Israel and consequently that's why they're called to judgment here.

Now since it is consistent with these visions, and note this people, all of these visions that you're going to see in Zechariah have a future element. They can't just wind up in history in the time of Zechariah in the 6th century before Christ. They can't wind up there. There is too much future in them, too much of a future element, and since that's true of all of them, we believe that's also true of this one. So rather than say, well that's just four nations that were existing then and bang they've been scattered and that's the end of the story, there needs to be the same future element that appears in the rest, and it's obvious that even the rabbis saw this. So what we're seeing here then is something that has the same future element that the rest of the visions have and the four horns symbolize the four great world powers that will make up the times of the Gentiles.

Now, as I said, it began with Judah's captivity under Nebeuchadnezzar and the times of the Gentiles runs all the way to the second coming of Christ. And during all that time Jerusalem is trodden down and even today it is still not liberated.

Now you say, "What are these four empires?" Well Kimchi was right as far as he went. According to Daniel, and Daniel names them, they're just as clear as they can be, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, and after that comes Israel's kingdom. Now, of course, in the day in which this was written which of those kingdoms was in existence, Medo-Persia. By the time of Zechariah, the Babylon captivity, the end of the Babylon captivity Babylon had been supplanted, Babylon had been defeated, and the Medes and the Persians had taken over. And you'll remember Daniel even records how they took over, the Feast of Belshazzar, and we'll get into that in a minute.

So Medo-Persia exists. There is one great kingdom that has scattered. There is one great kingdom that is scattering and there are two yet to come that shall scatter, Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel.

Now let's look at Daniel and see how he identifies these four. Turn to Daniel Chapter 2, and this gets fascinating. Now don't get lost, 'cause if you get lost then you can't find your way back. So stay with it. Now we know what happened in Daniel 2, because it's very clear, it's very simple. "Nebuchadnezzar was the king and Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams," verse 1 says, "and his spirit was troubled and his sleep went from him." Well he had a lot of dreams and he had one specific dream and God gave him a dream that pictured the entire history of the times of the Gentiles to this first great Babylon ruler. These are the four great empires that ruled the world, that civilized world that we know in that area. And these four empires began with Nebuchadnezzar and God gave him an amazing dream of a picture of the whole thing, the way it would be all the way to the end when Christ would come. And you know what happened? He forgot the dream. He couldn't remember it.

Well that was frustrating. In verse 5, he says, "The thing is gone from me." I got to know the answer. "If you will not make known to me the dream with the interpretation you shall be cut in pieces." Now that's an awful thing to say to your wise men, because that's very intimidating, "and your houses will

be made a dump heap. If you show me the dream and its interpretation you'll receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor," so show me the dream. Don't we wish? And of course, they tell him he's out of his mind. In verse 11 in delicate terms they say, "It a rare thing that the king requires." Now I guess. They said to him there's nobody who can reveal this except the gods whose dwelling isn't with flesh. And the king was angry and furious and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon, and the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain. And he sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain," because Daniel was one of them, one of the wise men." And so Daniel requested, before he got killed, he'd like to come and tell the king the dream because he could do it. Verse 19, "The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision and Daniel blessed the God of heaven." Thank you God for telling me this. "Daniel answered and said, 'Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever for wisdom and might are His.'" He goes on to praise the Lord. Verse 22, "He revealed the deep and secret things, he knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him. I thank thee and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might hast made known to me what was desired of Thee, for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter." So now he's going to tell the king. Verse 27, "Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, 'The secret which the king has demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the soothsayers, the magicians reveal?'" Can't they do it? He sets himself up for the next verse. "But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets and makes known to the king, Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and the divisions of Thy head upon Thy bed are these:" And Daniel begins to tell him his dream.

Now go to verse 31 and let's pick it up. "Thou O king sawest and behold a great image." He saw a statue. Great huge statue. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you and the form of it was terrible. The image's head was of fine gold," now notice it's going to be different as it goes down, "its head was fine gold, its breast and its arms," which was no doubt were crossed sort of like this across the chest, "were of silver and its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet part iron and part clay. And you saw until a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on its feet were of iron and clay and broke them to pieces. Then were the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, the gold broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floor and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them, and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

Now that's some dream. What does it mean? Verse 36, "This is the dream and we will tell its interpretation before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given Thee kingdom power, strength and glory. And whereas the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heavens hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over all, thou art the head of gold." You Nebuchadnezzar and your kingdom of Babylon, that's the head of gold. The gold speaks of riches. In fact, Babylon is called in Isaiah 14:4, I think it is, the golden city. You're the head.

Verse 39, "And after these shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," not quite the same. Silver isn't quite as significant as gold, and then another a third kingdom of bronze, which shall bear rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, for as much as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things and as iron that breaks all these shall it break in pieces and bruise, and whereas thou sawest the feet and toes part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided.

Now the second kingdom of silver was Medo-Persia. We know that because the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon. The Medes and the Persians were conquered by whom? The Macedonians, the Greeks, Alexander the Great. That's the kingdom of bronze. The kingdom of iron was the Roman Empire, long in the future and was the, how fitting the Roman Empire consisted of two legs and the kingdom shall be divided. There was the eastern Roman Empire and the western Roman Empire, right on, just like God had said. "There shall be in it of the strength of iron forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with clay, miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle, partly strong and partly brittle." And the Roman Empire had its problems. It was brittle at points.

Now you have that going on and at the end of that you come to verse 44. You've got those four kingdoms and here's how it ends. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom. Now there's going to be following these four kingdoms a real kingdom set up by the God of heaven. It'll never be destroyed. The kingdom will not be left to other people, it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that stone was cut out of the mountain without hands." You know who the stone cut out of the mountain without hands is? It's Christ, and cut out of the mountain without hands refers to His virgin birth. He has no human source. Nobody made Him, no artist incrafted Him, nobody formed Him, He always was. He's the eternal God in human form. "And it broke in pieces, the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, the gold, and the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; the dream is certain and the interpretation is sure." You know what happens to that stone? It smashes the world empires, it turns into a mountain and fills the earth, and that's the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's pretty exciting.

Did you notice something interesting? Did you notice that that kingdom, that last fourth kingdom, has ten toes, feet and toes, and he makes a big thing about the toes. He keeps talking about the toes in verse 40 through 43 or so. You know many scholars have tried to figure out when was it that the Roman Empire had a ten-nation confederacy because there's ten toes on two feet and they've tried to find that in history and there's no stage of history which corresponds to the toes of the image. There's also a mention in the 7th Chapter of Daniel and the 7th verse that this fourth kingdom had, and notice this, I saw the fourth beast, and again referring to the Roman Empire, devours, breaks in pieces, stamps the residue with its feet and it was diverse from other beasts that were before it and it had ten

horns. In one vision it's a vision, it's a vision with ten toes, in another one it's a beast with ten horns. Somehow the Roman Empire is going to consummate in a ten-nation confederacy. Now that has never happened in the history of the Roman Empire yet.

You say, "What are you trying to say?" Well what I'm trying to say is that the Roman Empire was never conquered by another empire. It simply fell into abeyance because of its inside decay. What the Bible is saying is that the Roman Empire will be revived in the end time in the form of a ten-nation confederacy, nations once geographically a part of the Roman Empire will reconstitute an organization and they will be that final form of world government that the Lord Jesus Himself, will come against and smash with His own power to set up His eternal kingdom. You say, "Is that a possibility?" Well if you've been reading lately about the European Common Market that's precisely what's happening. My last indications were that they're fast closing in on the number ten, in fact they may have ten now and they were nations territorially a part of the ancient Roman Empire and God is reforming the United States of Europe, a reconstituted Roman Empire, and I'll give you some quotes on that in a minute, and it appears to me that things are getting ready for the stone cut out without hands.

Now this demands then a ten-nation confederacy does Daniel 2, to come and end this, and that ten-nation confederacy according to Chapter 2, verse 44, will be broken in pieces by the stone that comes. Now that's yet future. The Roman Empire is in abeyance now, but future will be restored. Well the king got all excited when Daniel told him his dream and he made him a big shot in the country, made him a great man," verse 48 of Chapter 2, "gave him many great gifts, made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon," and he didn't want to be alone so he requested that he have a cabinet and "he got Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon, and Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

And so Daniel gave him a panorama of world history. That wasn't the only one. He gave him another panorama. You know what I believe? I believe that it's very possible that Nebuchadnezzar actually became a believer in the true God over that incident, because in the fourth chapter verse 34, "At the end of the days," after God had really broken Nebuchadnezzar, really shattered his pride, just destroyed the man, in fact he turned him into a beast, Nebuchadnezzar kept bragging about his power and God came to him and said, "I'm going to make you like an ox," and in verse 33, "The same hour the thing was fulfilled, 4:33, Nebuchadnezzar was driven from men, and did eat grass like ox, his body was wet with the dew of heaven, his hair was grown like eagle feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Here's the great king of the Babylonian empire and he's sleeping on the ground, and there's dew all over his body, and his hair is like an eagle's feather and his nails turn like bird claws growing and he's a mad man, he's a maniac and "At the end of the days I lifted up my eyes to heaven and my understanding returned to me." I got my sanity back and "I blessed the most high and I praised and

honored Him who lives forever and whose dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom is from generation to generation." He got squared away with who God really was. Then verse 37, "I, Nebuchadnezzar, now praise, extol, and honor the king of heaven." Something happened to him because Daniel gave him these visions.

Now over in Chapter 7 you have another vision. This is even more fascinating. I want you to see it. Verse 2, now the new king has come along, Belshazzar, king of Babylon, and Daniel has another dream and a vision and he wrote the dream and told the sum of the matters. And Daniel spoke and said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold the four winds of heaven strove upon the great sea and four great beasts came from the sea diverse one from another." Four great big beasts come out of the sea.

Now let's look at them. "The first is like a lion, had eagle wings, and I beheld till it's wings were plucked and it was lifted up from the earth and made stand upon the feet as a man and a man's heart was given it." Now the first beast is like a lion, notice, and it had eagle's wings. This again is a reference to the Babylon Empire. The lion is the king of beasts and this was the king of kings, the ultimate. The eagle is the king of birds and this is the king the ultimate Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire, but its wings were plucked. It had a man's heart and some say this refers to the humiliation the humanness of Nebuchadnezzar that came during those terrible seven years of insanity that he suffered, but that's Babylon like a lion, fierce kingdom.

Verse 5, "I beheld another beast, the second like a bear, and it raised up itself on one side." Now that's interesting. Some say it actually refers to raising the arm. One this big bear that Daniel sees and one arm is in the air, it's like raising the strong arm, and the reason is because Persia was stronger than Media and so the bear had two arms but one was stronger and lifted up. That represented Persia being greater than Media. "And it had three ribs in the mouth of it between its teeth." Some say that it had devoured Lydia, Sousanna, and Asia Minor and that represents those three ribs. And it was set to expand west and they said to it arise and devour much flesh. And it did. It started with Lydia and Sousanna, and Asia Minor and just kept going and devouring flesh, the Medo-Persian Empire.

"And I beheld and lo another like a leopard," and a leopard is swift and fierce and that is a picture of Alexander the Great. That leopard swept across the east of Europe conquering rapidly in its wake. And this leopard has four wings and four heads and you'll remember that Alexander divided his empire among his four great generals, didn't he? The picture is clear. Dominion was given to it.

And then the fourth in verse 7, "and after this I saw in the night visions behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly," and we don't know what kind it is. This was a weird one. Some kind of horrible thing. It devoured, it broke in pieces, it stamped the residue with its feet and it was diverse from all the beasts before it and it had, what, ten horns. Now there's the ultimate end, the

Roman Empire, a ten-nation confederacy. It was dreadful, it was terrible, it was strong, it had iron teeth, it devoured, it broke, it stamped and that's a picture of the tremendous military power of the Roman Empire. Some say that Rome actually ruled the world for 1500 years. Powers! So God shows Daniel again the four kingdoms. Their moral character is beastly, the lion devours, the bear crushes, the leopard springs on its prey, and the different beast stamps out its enemies. That's Gentile history and the victims all the way along are often the people of God.

Now I want you to notice something. This is interesting. Each of those empires persecuted Israel. Each of them! Each of those empires persecuted Israel. The first, now watch I'm going to give you a little history. The first was Babylon and Babylon conquered and slaughtered the Jews from 605 to 586 B.C. and I mean they slaughtered them. Look with me at II Kings 25, tragic day in the history of Israel. This is the Nebuchadnezzar's siege at Jerusalem. You know what they did, whenever they wanted to take a city they just camped around the city and they wouldn't let anybody out or anybody in and pretty soon everybody ran out of food, they ran out of water, disease, plague, much cannibalism occurred, they would even begin to eat their children and the terrors of famine and disease that came. Verse 3, "On the ninth day of the fourth month," this is a four-month long siege, "the famine prevailed and there was no bread for the people of the land." They couldn't get outside to get grain because grain grew in the fields outside the wall. "And then the city was broken up and the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between two walls." They broke up the army and they all went AWOL. "The army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army were scattered and they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah and they pronounced sentence on him and they slew the sons of Zedekiah," this king and they slew his children, "and they put out his eyes." They burned out his eyes, plucked them out, "and bound him with bronze chains and carried him to Babylon." And then the next verse says, "They went in," verse 9, "they burned the temple, they burned the palace, they plundered the great houses, they burned everything with fire, they smashed the walls," verse 10 says, "they arrested the people who were left in the city and the fugitives who fell away to the king of Babylon, the remnant of the multitude did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away. They left the poor to be vinedressers and husbands of slaves."

And it goes on to say all that they destroyed. 21, the king of Babylon smote them and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land." The land of Judah became a Babylonian province. The royal house of David reigned no more. 650 years after the children of Israel had under Joshua set foot on the Promised Land they were gone and Jeremiah 34:22 came to pass. Jeremiah warned them, "Behold says the Lord I'll make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant." And William Foxwell Albright, one of the great archeologists of that part of the world says, "Archeological evidence indicates that there is not a single known case of a town in Judah being continuously inhabited during the exile." They wiped it out. Babylonians brutalized Israel. They went way beyond what God had intended.

And then came the Medo-Persians. The Medes and the Persians were not so violent in persecuting Israel because by this time Israel was just nothing but a bunch of slaves living in Babylon. But their kind of persecution was different. Remember what their persecution was? We studied it last week. We said that when Israel needed help they were indifferent. Remember that? We saw the terms used the nations are sitting still and at ease and we saw how those were used in the Bible to speak of indifference to a needy people. The persecution of the Medes and the Persians was a terrible cold calculating indifference to a nation in desperate need. And maybe that's just as tragic. Maybe that's just as bad to be indifferent. They kept a strangle hold on Israel for two centuries. And even though the city was rebuilt, and even though the temple was rebuilt Israel was poor, Israel was politically insignificant. They had very little freedom, they were quietly slaves to the Gentiles.

And it got worse because after Medo-Persia came Greece. The leopard of Greece began to sweep across and there was terrible violence, absolutely terrible. In 195 B.C. a hundred and ninety-five years before Christ and Antiochus Epiphanes became the leader or the governor of Israel for the Greeks. His name was Antiochus. He called himself Antiochus because Antiochus means the greatest. He and Mohammad Ali have something in common. He called himself Antiochus Epiphanes and the people called him Antiaca Epippines, which means the mad man. He took over the rule of Palestine for Greece and Greek influence began to dominate. There's a book that records something the history of that time, though it's not always accurate, it does give us some interesting notes. It's called the First, Second and Third Maccabees. And II Maccabees 4:7 it says this: this is not a biblical book, but it tells us a little about the history. It says Jason rose underhanded to be high priest. So a guy became high priest by the name of Jason through political stuff. He brought his own nation to the Greekish fashion where he built gladly a place of exercise, and he built this place of exercise right by the temple. "Now such was the height of Greek fashions and an increase of Greekish manner," says Maccabees, "through the exceeding profaneness of Jason that ungodly wretch and no true high priest, that the priests had no courage to serve any more at the altar but despising the temple and neglecting the sacrifices they hastened to be partakers of the unlawful allowance in the place of exercise." They all became athletes. What happened Jason came in and he became high priest and he built a stadium for athletics and all the priests gave up their priestly functions to become athletes. They left the ministry to go into athletics. Say well that's not so bad, athletics is wonderful. Well you have to know some things. All the priests are not supposed to be throwing discus and throwing javelins around. They're supposed to be serving God, but God was doubly displeased because in those days all athletic endeavors was conducted in nakedness. That's right. The body was covered only with olive oil, that's all. Stark naked. It was absolutely intolerable to a Jew to see the priests running around in the altogether in sight of the temple. That didn't set too well, stark naked in full view of the worshippers in the temple, right next to the Holy of Holies. What an incredible desecration.

To make things worse Antiochus Epiphanes thought it would be great to break the backs of Jewish religion so he slaughtered a pig on the altar in the temple and stuffed pork down the throats of the

priests. That wasn't the end of it. The Jewish athletes wanted so much to identify with the Greeks that they began to avoid circumcision and they became uncircumcised. They rejected their Abrahamic identification. And nakedness for a second time in Israel's history became a serious sin. The first time was when they got involved in the Canaanite fertility rituals. Further it might be interesting for you to know that athletics in those days were constituting a religious act of worship for Zeus and Apollo so they were involved in pagan idolatry.

Finally in 186 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes went all the way, plundered and desecrated the temple, set the city on fire, tore down the houses, took women and children captive and stole all the cattle. And he set up the worship of Zeus right in the altar of the temple of God. And most of the people decided not to fight it and they joined it. But a few decided to fight it, namely a man by the name of Matthias and his sons. Matthias started a revolution. He died and his oldest son by the name of Judas Maccabees took up the revolution and led what is known in Israel's history as the great Macabbean revolution. Happened just a hundred years before our Lord arrived, and they came out of the mountains and for a while they threw the yoke of Greece off. It didn't last very long because Greece was kind of losing anyway and very soon the great iron jaw of Rome came through and captured them again.

In 63 B.C. Pompey, the Roman General marched his troops into Jerusalem and the great crushing powerful Roman beast took over and Judah became a Roman province. It had been a Babylonian province, a Medo-Persian province, a Greek province and now a Roman one, the times of the Gentiles. And if you want to know how the Romans treated them read the gospels in the New Testament. It's all there. Within a generation after the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus they suffered what Luke 21:22 calls the days of vengeance. Jesus had said there's going to be a terrible judgment on Jerusalem. From A.D. 66, that's after our Lord, to A.D. 70 is called the Jewish war, when Rome did war on Israel.

You say what started the war? Well the Jews wouldn't sit quite under Rome's rule. There were groups called the Zealots, remember them? They were really reactionaries, nationals, Zionists, fanatics, and they were always trying to overthrow Rome, and the revolts kept coming and kept coming and kept coming and kept coming until finally actually tiny little Jerusalem threw the gauntlet down at the feet of imperial Rome and said let's have at it. And Nero called his finest general who later became the emperor himself. When Nero committed suicide a man by the name of Titus Vespasian. And Titus Vespasian was the brilliant soldier that conquered Briton and Titus took his troops and marched to Jerusalem. He first came to Galilee and he attacked the north and the bloody butchery began.

And by October 67 A.D. Galilee was subdued. Six thousand Jews were hauled off as slaves to build the Corinthian Canal. I couldn't help but think of that as I stood at the Corinthian Canal and noticed it. But you know what happened after he wiped out and butchered Galilee he was ready to go to Jerusalem, but something happened. Nero died. He killed himself and because of that there was a

political upheaval and Titus wanted to get in on the act and become emperor so he let everything kind of stay the way it was and he had an occupation of Galilee but the southern part hadn't been taken yet and he went back and worked himself into becoming emperor.

And when all that was taken care of in 70 A.D. he reappeared in the spring of that year outside Jerusalem with an army of eighty thousand men. And you know what the holy city was swarming with pilgrims because it was the Passover. And the Romans attacked with what they called scorpiones. They were quick firing engines, some kind of a mechanical thing that fired bricks and rocks. And they had things they called ballistays, which were great huge stone throwers. They said they could throw a hundred pound stone six hundred feet. And they had battering rams and they came to Jerusalem and they began to smash and smash and they burst through the north part of the wall and occupied the north of the city. And they brought in Flavius Josephus whom they had captured in Galilee and they said, "You tell those people to surrender so we don't need to destroy their city and so we don't need to slaughter the people," and Josephus pleaded with them and they wouldn't, so the Roman army just moved in.

Titus crucified as many as five hundred Jews a day on the crosses outside. In fact he wiped out the forests around the city making crosses. An unbearable stench arose from the crucified and those dead from starvation and those killed in battle whose bodies were not removed. They threw a hundred thousand bodies over the wall just to get the stench outside the city. And so that none of them could escape the Romans built a massive earth wall outside the other wall so no one could get away. Famine, disease, and plunder and people starving and reeling in the throws of death and some record that they began too to eat their children. The battering rams kept hammering until finally the temple went down and the Holy of Holies was burned to a cinder. The loss of life was unimaginably high. Arthur Cax says in his book, "There were one million, three-hundred fifty-six thousand, four hundred Jews killed, 1,356,000. The last little group fled to the south to a place called Masada, which is a high mountain down at the end of the Dead Sea and they fortified themselves there and when the Romans finally got there rather than give themselves up to the Romans they committed suicide and when the Romans came into Masada they found nothing but dead bodies and that was the end. Archeologists have found no evidence of Israel's existence in Palestine after 70 A.D., none. Not even a tombstone with a Jewish inscription. They were wiped out.

You say there's got to be more of that Roman Empire because it's got to be around in a ten-toe confederacy when Jesus comes. That's right. And little by little isn't it amazing we're seeing that happen, the European Common Market. You say, well John, how can God blame the nations after all He chastened Israel, yes, He did, but in verse 15 of Zechariah 1, He said, "I was a little displeased but you helped forward the affliction." You went way beyond in your hatred and your despising.

Obadiah, let me just read it to you. I don't want you to try to find it. Obadiah says this: "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee. Thou shall be cut off forever. In the day

that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast one of them." You joined the fray against my people and you weren't called to do that. He really lays it on Edom. "But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger, neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction, neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity, yea, thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity."

The Edomites came in and looted all the Jew's materials when they were taken captive. "Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway to cut off those of his that did escape, neither shouldst thou delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress." They had no business getting in on the slaughter and that is what God is saying, "You've all gone too far."

Now go back to Zechariah 1. So you see Zechariah sees the scene, times of the Gentiles. And then the scene has another element and this is very brief because it's going to come so quick you're going to see what happens. Verse 20, "and then the Lord showed me four, and you've got an interesting word in the Hebrew, four artisans, four workmen, four some people say carpenters, four smiths, I think the best thing is hammerers. The word can be used of a stonemason, and believe me a stonemason in those days used a hammer to break the stone, a carpenter who used a hammer, or a metal smith, a blacksmith who used a hammer. He's talking about hammerers. I saw four hammerers. A hammer for each one. Now watch. "And I said, 'What come these to do?'"

Well what would a hammerer do? He would hammer. And he comes and these are the horns that scattered Judah so that no man did lift up his head and these are come to terrify them and cast out the horns of the nations who lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it. For every horn there's a hammer to smash it. For every one of the world empires there's a crusher, hammers to smash the horn. And God is saying, "Be comforted, Israel, because for every nation that rises against you there's going to be a hammer to crush that nation." And what God is really saying is Israel is indestructible. The myrtle bush may burn but it will never be consumed. "They lifted up their heads and they're going to be crushed." Now who are the hammerers? It's very easy to see. Who was the hammer who smashed Babylon? Medo-Persia. Who was the hammer who smashed Medo-Persia? Greece. Who was the hammer who smashed Greece? Rome. Who is the hammer who will smash Rome? The Lord Jesus Christ and history has run its course.

The stone cut out without hands. This is exactly what happened. The Babylonian empire was smashed by the Medes and the Persians, Belshazzar was having a big gig in his palace. They were all stone drunk and an orgy and the Medes and the Persians came outside the city and their strategy was beautiful. The city had a river ran right through it. They diverted the river. The riverbed dried up, they walked right under the wall. At that very instant a hand appeared on the wall and Belshazzar's

feast and said Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin. Thou are weighed in the balance and found wanting. The kingdom is gone from you. God's Spirit wrote it on the wall just as they came in and destroyed the city. The hammer smashed the first one. The Medes and the Persians they were hammered by Alexander the Great.

In 333 B.C. at the great battle of Issus, Darius III, the current king of the Medo-Persian Empire was crushed by Alexander and, in fact, and it's hard for me to imagine this, Alexander defeated an army of a half a million soldiers, an incredible thing. Of course, it had been about a hundred years before that that they had destroyed the entire Medo-Persian fleet. And it wasn't long after Alexander got things going that the Roman hammer fell on him.

And in the second century B.C. the western Mediterranean became a Roman lake and it began to move and conquer. And the fourth hammer? That's the Lord Jesus Christ and He'll come to end the fourth phase of government, the revived Roman Empire, we could talk about that forever in the book of Revelation. But let me give you an interesting article, in October 1971, L. A. Herald Examiner, it said this: "The British decision to join the Common Market has brought Western Europe to the threshold of its strongest alliance since the nations involved were tied together as a part of the Roman Empire fifteen centuries ago." Isn't that interesting. The Examiner thinks it looks like the Roman Empire has been revived.

The sum of it all, people, what it is? The sum of it all is that God is running history. Isn't it great to be on His side? Fantastic! God cares for His people, God protects His people, God blesses His people, and God deals sternly with those who treat His people wrongly. Be good to Christians. Be good to people of Israel. History is going somewhere. It's going right to the consummation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where will you be when it all ends? I know where I'll be. Colossians says, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, when the stone cut comes to crush the world's kingdoms, when Christ who is our life shall appear then you also, what, appear with Him in glory. Isn't that going to be great? Let's pray.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment a thought comes to my mind. You know if you're not a Christian and you don't know the Bible I guess you look at things around you and you say, "boy what a mess." Is it going anywhere; does it mean anything? What is this world? You see the nations rage and the people imagine a vain thing and set themselves against God and everything seems so meaningless and useless and all of a sudden you hear something like this tonight and you say, "Hey, you predicted this and it came to pass. They were right on schedule, still are. God is at work in history. History is truly His story. Maybe I ought to be a part of what He's doing. I'd sure invite you to be. Wouldn't that be great? Wouldn't it be great to be a part of the protected people, beloved and accepted in Christ.

Father, we're so very thankful just to be together today. It's just exciting to know that we're a part of what You're doing. It's exciting to just realize that Jesus is coming soon to take His church, to save even His people Israel and to give them the kingdom He promised. Thank you God for keeping promises. Thank you for loving Your people and defending them. Thank you for defending us as the angel of the Lord defended Israel. And Father help us to be willing to defend You before the world. It's an act, if nothing else, for Your constant defense of us before the world and Satan himself. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).