

Zechariah 1: Visions of Messengers & Craftsmen: what does the Lord require of you?

Pre Sermon Recap (Zech. 1)

Last week we were introduced to Zechariah, a prophet to the exiles returning to Judah to rebuild a Temple at Jerusalem. We learn they were a defeated and deflated people, subsumed into the mahoosive Persian empire. Small wonder that King Cyrus had declared his divine mandate as ‘king of the universe, mighty king, king of Babylon.’ⁱ

And so, Zechariah’s vision of craftsmen defeating the four horns that each represented an empire must have come as a welcome, but it was also a surprise.

Human logic says that empires must be defeated by new empires and maybe Zechariah thought that might be the plan when the angel leading the four messengers who reported on the Persian empire’s sense of self-confidence and enforced peace across the region asked the Lord, ‘how long will you withhold mercy [from your people]?’ (Zech.1:12 NIV).

To then be shown the vision of craftsmen defeating empires is the surprise. The time had come, after 70-years of exile to being rebuilding the Temple at Jerusalem because that was the promise the Lord had made through Jeremiah and yet it didn’t feel like it. Yehud (Persian area in what was once Judah) was just a small area in a small province, a backwater. The tribes of Judah were a small, scattered people. Where is the great powerful leader who will rise up and lead them to victory?

We get it! They felt small and insignificant in a big world. The Lord certainly had sympathy for them, but not in the way we, or they, expected. Before telling them that he will return with mercy and have his house rebuilt (v16) he first tells them to repent (v2).

Repent! What from? It was a call to both turn and live in faith to him. It was a wakeup call for their sin, described by biblical scholar Barry Webb as ‘behaving like ordinary people who have no interest in the kingdom of God’ⁱⁱ.

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Later in the visions the Lord tells Zechariah that he and the people should not dare to despise the day of small things (see Zech 4:10). Notice please, it was not to build the walls of Jerusalem the city, a defensive fortification, but the place of worship where God meets with his people.

This is how I will build my Kingdom the Lord shows Zechariah – through the craftsmen and women who will faithfully and expectantly get on with the building of my Kingdom. Repent, for you are not called to be an ordinary people. As Webb also comments,

“The Kingdom of God is a *big* thing, and nothing [nor anyone] associated with it can ever be insignificant.”ⁱⁱⁱ

What does the Lord require of us?

The Lord still builds his Kingdom through his people: those who both believe and follow him. We are not called to be ordinary people: for that means we do not truly believe the Lord is sovereign and working his purposes out in the world.

Today, make the decision to no longer be an ordinary person but a Spirit-filled person with the task of being a Kingdom builder. Say sorry to the Lord for the attitude of unbelief in both his power and interest of bringing his kingdom to Earth.

Although we are an imperfect community, as the people of Zechariah’s time were, we are the community (the church) that the Lord is calling to be his kingdom builders. Far from being insignificant and powerless in a big world, we are a Kingdom people.

As Peter the apostle shared from his experiences of the same process, as he was transformed from fisherman to church builder,

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Pet.2:9 NIV)

ⁱ Cyrus Cylinder 20, cited in Tom Holland, *Dominion: The Making of the Western Mind* (London: Abacus, 2019), p.7.

ⁱⁱ Barry Webb, *The Message of Zechariah, The Bible Speaks Today* (Nottingham: IVP, 2003), p.64.

ⁱⁱⁱ Webb, p.37.