

Title: He's on the move
Text: Zechariah 1.18-2.13
Theme: The awesome and deliberate plans of God
Series: Zechariah #3
Prop Stmt: God acts powerfully on behalf of his people.

Read Text:

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine they lay down for the night, and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." Holmes asked, "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is omnipotent and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. ... "What does it tell you?" Holmes was silent for a minute, and then spoke. "Watson, you meathead. Someone has stolen our tent."

The visions that Zechariah experienced and recorded have some details that invite study and even some speculation. But, I do not want you to miss the obvious. God gave Zechariah these visions because God had a message for Zechariah to preach and a mission to send him on. Part of that mission was for Zechariah to record these visions because 2,500 years later, you and I would need to be reminded of these truths. A recent bit of history may help you grasp this.

The beginning of W.W. II is marked by Hitler's invasion of Poland. The people of Poland endured incredible hardship during the German occupation. As the tide in the war turned they looked upon Russia to rescue them from Germany, but Stalin had other plans. The hardship of the German occupation was actually less barbaric than Russia's. Poland was completely at the mercy of the empires on either side of her. Judah/Israel is in a very similar situation. Circumstantially they have many opportunities to think that God had forgotten about them. They needed to see a bigger picture. Big pictures help you see the hand of God. We are prone to forget about the big picture and get lost in our little life. Our little lives are part of the big picture.

Example: You are watching the Tigers play and the manager calls for a certain pitcher to come into the game from the bullpen and you go, "NO, not him!" At that point, Brad Ausmus calls timeout and looks up into the stands and motions for you to come down. He keeps pointing at you until the ushers come and bring you down to the dugout at which time Brad takes you down the stairs, down the hall past the Tigers locker room and into his office, where he has you sit down across from the desk. At this point he explains to you why he is making this decision. What you did not know is that the starting pitcher was developing a blister on the index finger of his throwing hand and was finding it difficult to grip the ball the way he needed to get his slider to bite, which was leaving it

hanging over the plate too long. You also did not know that two guys in the bullpen had slight injuries that Brad did not want to announce to the media, but neither did he want to use this guys and risk further problems. Also, this relief pitcher, in spite of a few rough outings had figured out his problem with the pitching coach and so Brad was confident that he could get this guy out, but again Brad did not want to explain that to the media because he did not want the other team to have that information. Besides, this pitcher has good success against this batter and when he tells you the percentages you agree. Finally, Brad has to save a couple of guys for tomorrow's game because, in case you forgot the Tigers have to play a make-up game with a noon start time which meant that his bench would not be as deep as normal. Then he asks you, "does that make sense?" And you, feeling foolish and sheepish, nod your head and tell him "sorry for the boos" and you go back to your seat and the game resumes.

Think of Zechariah as a timeout in life when God takes you into his office and lets you know some of the things that he knows that you otherwise would not know. But, here is the difference. God is not limited by the size of his bullpen. God is never caught between a rock and hard place and is left with no other choice because he has some unexpected injuries. He has a master plan and while he would be perfectly just to tell us to just shut up and follow, he, without giving us all of the details, gives us enough to know that he's got this under control.

It is February 15, 519 B.C. Thousands of Jews had returned to Jerusalem and Judah from Babylon about 18 years earlier. They rebuilt the foundation of the Temple, but ran into opposition and lost their nerve. Now, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah are urging the people of God to resume the task. God speaks to Zechariah and makes him aware as well as the people of God that God had not forgotten them. He has his eye on them. He knows their situation. But, while rebuilding the Temple is an important and necessary task at this point, there is so much more going on. So, through a series of visions, all in one night, God allows Zechariah to get a taste of what God is up to and what else is going on.

Last week we looked at the 1st vision in which Zechariah was made aware that God was constantly aware of everything that was going on in the world and that he was not a casual observer, but was, in fact, doing something about it. There were two important truths from the 1st vision. 1) God acts on behalf of his people and 2) If you are an enemy of God and his people, you are in deep weeds. This is serious stuff. That same idea is reinforced in this second vision in which Zechariah sees 4 horns and 4 craftsmen. The 4 horns are 4 empires, and the 4 craftsmen are 4 threats to those 4 empires that end up destroying those empires because they mistreated the people of God. So, the big idea is:

I. Vision 2: He's got the whole world in his hands (1.18-21)

A. The World Powers are in his hand. (18-19) (Horns)

Does four mean four literal powers like Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greek and Rome or as some argue, four is symbolic (four winds, four corners of the earth, etc.) to mean comprehensive? I'm not sure, though I lean toward it being four actual powers. The horns

refer to the horns of an animal. These horns represent the strength and fighting power of the animal (ram, goat, etc.). Zechariah's use of "behold," means that there is a level of surprise in what he sees. It could be that he is shocked at having another vision, or more likely these horns are impressive, powerful, and even overwhelming. No animals are associated with these horns (unlike Daniel's vision). Zechariah asks the obvious question. "What are these?" The angel who talks with him throughout these visions speaks again and tells him that these are the world powers that scattered God's people. Please do not miss this. We may think that the Washington D.C. is the home of the world's superpower. That is not how God sees it. We may think that New York City, and specifically, the United Nations is ground zero for the world's powers, but that is not how God sees it. God looks at all world powers in relationship to his people. And whether you take this literally or figuratively (I take it literally), the world will one day come to Jerusalem again (like the Queen of Sheba prefigured) and will bow before David's son who sits on the most glorious throne ever established. These world powers at that appeared to be invincible, but there is more to the story.

B. The World Conflicts are in his hand. (20-21) (Craftsmen)

Zechariah now sees four men that he identifies as craftsmen. He would call them craftsmen because they have tools. So, Zechariah wants to know "*What are these coming to do?*" These craftsmen represent the powers and forces that God raises up and uses to destroy the four powers or empires. But, there is a reason for these empires. There is a plan that God has put into place. God's plan has always been to have a people that he will live with and rule through. In the next vision, there is very explicit language that makes that clear. But God is not going to dwell with a sinful and rebellious people. In the OT, when the nation of Israel rebelled against him, God raised up other nations to discipline his people. He loves them, but will not tolerate their sinfulness. Some of those nations knew of the reputation of Israel. They knew that Israel claimed to be chosen by God. So, how does the world treat God? It hates God. So, how do you expect the world to treat those who are chosen by God? So, even though God raised up nations to punish his people, those nations used their influence and might in a sinful way and in many cases attempted to destroy them. So God was simultaneously punishing and protecting his people. Now, the nations that he raised up as the tools of punishment he is punishing.

So, if you were from Judah and your family was shamefully abused by the Babylonians, and you were forcibly removed from your home, wouldn't you want to see some justice? So, what happened when the Medes and the Persians conquered Babylon? Actually, the takeover was rather calm. The city was not destroyed, the people were not executed. In fact, considering they were taken over by another world empire, things, in many respects continued as they had been. It wasn't all that bad. But the Jews were waiting for her to get what's coming, and were really disappointed, because she didn't get what they thought was justice, yet. It's not done, yet. But notice that God never said anything about when this would happen. He just said that it would happen. The craftsmen are coming and they will be agents in the hands of God to terrify those who have terrified others. But here is something that is very difficult for us to understand about God. He is incredibly patient. Let me give you an example.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan, the Amalekites attacked them when they were vulnerable and killed some of them. God promised that he would deal with their sin. Do you now when he did? It was 450 years later, when Saul was king. At times God appears to be slow, but his patience is actually time for people to repent. If, however, people do not repent, God does not forget. It is a toxic mixture of ignorance and arrogance for people to look at God's judgment on certain nations and be offended as if our moral sensitivities are more righteous than God's. The truth is, that God is patient to a point, but his response reveals the intensity of his righteousness that has been offended. Know this: God is faithful to do what he says he will do. So, when God tells you to act, you need to act.

So, the big thing you need to know about this 2nd vision is that God is going to bring judgment on the world powers. Remember the 1st vision? The world was at rest and Jerusalem was in shambles. Something is wrong with that. God promised to act and now he is acting. The world powers will not be at rest for long. So, what about Jerusalem? Zechariah is about to find out.

II. **Vision 3: He takes care of his own!**

A. **The Promise.** (1-5)

God is keeping his promise to restore Jerusalem. Now, look back at the 2nd vision for a second. There are two things that I did not mention that I want you to see. 1) Compared to the third vision (and the rest for that matter) the 2nd vision is very short and yet the 2nd vision was about 4 major empires that ruled the world! God does not give much attention to it and in fact gives a lot more attention to one run-down, broken, almost ruined city. 2) There is very little detail about the horns. It's as if, they really do not matter.

Zechariah's third vision is introduced by him saying (as he did for the 2nd one), "*And I lifted my eyes and saw and **behold**...*" In this case the amazing thing that he saw was a man with a measuring line. Why is that amazing? What is astonishing is that this man is a surveyor who is planning the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Zechariah finds this out because he asked him what he was doing. At this point "*the angel who talked with me*" comes forward as well as another angel who came forward to meet him and talked with him. Now, it starts to get a little fuzzy, doesn't it? Who is the him? (end of v.3) I think that the second angel comes forward to talk with the angel who is consistently identified as "*the angel who talked with me.*" The second angel tells Zechariah's tour guide to "*Run say to that young man*" that Jerusalem will be inhabited as villages without walls because there will be so many people trying to live there. Who is the young man? Is it the surveyor, or is it Zechariah? Whichever one you think it is does not change the point of the vision. If the angel is telling this news to the surveyor, then it would appear that the surveyor's plans for the city are too small because the city is going to be overrun with people and you are not going to be able to build a wall that will protect them. But, don't worry about it. God himself will be their wall. If the message is for Zechariah, (which I think is the case) it would explain his shock at seeing the surveyor and it would mean that

this message is the reason why this vision would be so motivating to Zechariah to urge the people to rebuild the Temple, because it does matter. The city is not only going to come back and be prosperous, but there is more. God is going to rule from this city. He will be both a wall of fire around her and her glory in the midst of her. Perfect security and unbelievable joy are amazing promises, aren't they? Do you see what this promise is about? Zechariah is being told that God has an eternal plan for this city. This vision is a confirmation of God's plan for the capital city of his kingdom. Zechariah is given a hint that this kingdom is larger than Israel, it is going to be global (11). So, if you knew that this was God's plan, what should your response be?

B. Our Response (3 responses)

1. Move! (6-9)

Many of the Jews who were deported to Babylon settled down there and were able to make a living. They built homes, raised their families and started a new life. The idea of moving back to Jerusalem was, well, going to be quite an inconvenience, so many stayed. Now comes the word. You had better get out of Babylon. God is about to lower the boom on them. Why is God bring down the house on them? Because (v.8), they touched the apple of my eye. When God's people are abused, God reacts as if someone just jabbed him right in the eye, with his eye open. The point is clear. God has to react to that. God is reacting to that. Look at v.9 and you have another "behold". That draws our attention to another amazing point. The slaves are going to plunder their rulers. (v.9) This is the result of God, shaking his hand over them. Therefore, get out of there (Babylon) and back to Jerusalem. Babylon is not your home. Jerusalem is. You will not be protected in Babylon, but you will be protected in Jerusalem.

2. Sing and rejoice! (10-12)

The motivation for singing and rejoicing is the promise of God's presence in their midst. That is THE promise. The Bible is full of examples that foreshadow this awesome event. The children of Israel made the Tabernacle and God took up residence with them. Solomon built a Temple and God took up residence with them. Now, Zechariah tells people to come back to Jerusalem because God is going to take up residence with them. In so doing, God promises to use them to reach other nations. A few hundred years later, God does take up residence with them, doesn't he? Christ comes to the earth and is born in Israel. God's glory is in the midst of her and you know how he lived and died and ascended. But then what happens? When Jews have gathered in Jerusalem from around the world for the celebration of Pentecost, God comes down and dwells with the disciples and followers of Christ and tongues of fire appear on their heads. That is the birthday of the church and in a matter of months, the good news of redemption through Christ not only goes out to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but it starts going out into the rest of the world. But that wasn't the end game. That event in Acts 2 did not fulfill this promise, but was another preview of it.

So, don't miss the point. This world is Babylon and heaven is Jerusalem. This world is not our home. This world and all of her powers are going to one day finally do what everybody has talked about for years. They are going to be unified. One day, the world will finally band together because the world powers will come together in rebellion against God and in their folly and blindness will think that they can come against Him and against His Christ. But they will not succeed. In fact, they will meet a violent end, while God's people will dwell with him forever. Sing and rejoice now in view of that day that is coming because it is coming! We sing with rejoicing about the things where we put our happiness. God is telling us to put bury the treasure of our happiness in his kingdom and not in this world.

Rome, Babylon, and Egypt are all names that refer to places that were at one time, the focal point of hatred and abuse of the people of God. Egypt enslaved Israel. Babylon exiled the Jews and Rome persecuted the followers of Christ. Together they stand for this world. This world is Rome, Babylon and Egypt, and like those empires, it is going down. For many years followers of Christ wondered where America fit into that picture. Here was a nation, that was not mentioned in prophecy but was a superpower and besides that she was home to many in powerful positions who were explicit about their faith in God. Now, I fear that we are seeing why this country is not mentioned in prophecy. It is becoming more and more apparent that we are Rome, Babylon and Egypt. The halls of government, wheels of justice and forces for freedom are turning into tools of hatred against the church and the gospel. No politician can make America great without America turning to God. But even as we mourn our country's loss of her moral compass and grieve as her wickedness and arrogance and folly is continually exposed, we can still sing and rejoice. God's plan for the kingdom of Jesus Christ who will reign from the New Jerusalem, cannot be stopped. Like Zechariah experienced, there will be cloudy days, but behind the clouds, God's plan is unfolding right on schedule.

3. **Be silent.** (13)

The plan of God is like the Word of God. It is a double-edged sword. The blessings that await those who trust in God now are beyond our ability to comprehend. We will be overwhelmed. But, the terror that awaits those who reject are also beyond our ability to comprehend. For most of history, the acts of God have been expressed more indirectly through what we call his providence. He works through the political and military aspirations of leaders and countries to fulfill his promises. It is convenient as well as naïve to credit the return of the Jews to Babylon to simply the change in empires and the change in policies. Oh that happened, but because God directed it. But, all of that and the events that succeeded that including the rebuilding of the Temple and the first coming of Christ were further evidences of God's direct involvement in this world. Yet, many still ignored it. These prophecies all point to a day when God's involvement is so unmistakably direct that we will all be in awe. In view of that Zechariah's word is fitting. When it is evident that God has roused himself from his throne and steps directly into our world and confronts the rebellion in person, there will be nothing to say. We will be in awe.

Conclusion:

- 1) Move (if you are complacent, or not even a follower of Christ) get out of Babylon, this world is going down. Get your affections out of this world, and seek first the kingdom of God. Stop pretending as if you are going to live forever in this life, while ignoring the one that really matters, that is coming.
- 2) Sing and rejoice (if you are weary). Living as a follower of Christ brings grief in this world as we face hostility and rejection. But sing and rejoice. Our king comes and his kingdom will not be denied. Sing by faith. Rejoice by faith. Sing and rejoice in view of what is coming.
- 3) Be silent. Guard your heart against bitterness and spite. There are many forces at work even in our land that hate God and are hell-bent on bringing as much evil as possible into our land. Guard your heart from wishing destruction upon them. When you witness God's hand of judgment, it will be terrifying. Be humble and be amazed in anticipation of that day. We will have no words on that day.