

## The College Press Commentary in loc.

The horn is a frequently used symbol for the military might of a nation or a ruler. To a pastoral people, the horn of the lead ram lends itself quite naturally to such symbolism. In this case, the four horns refer to the four powers who had had a hand in the scattering of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

Assyria, of course, as the destroyer of the northern kingdom, answers to the first of these horns. Babylon, who actually smote Judah, and Egypt, upon whom the Jews had depended for protection from Babylon, are easily seen as the second and third powers involved in their scattering.

It is a bit more difficult to account for the fourth horn. Traditionally the commentators have divided into three schools of thought on the matter. Some have said that the four horns are Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and the Medo-Persians. Assyria and Babylon are obvious. Egypt is understandable since their failure to provide the protection for which Judah had entered into an alliance with her contributed to the scattering of the people.

The difficulty lies with the Medo-Persians. It was this empire which overthrew the Babylonians and opened the way for the return from exile. It was first Cyrus and later Darius, rulers of the Medo-Persian kingdom, who issued the edicts permitting the return and allowing the rebuilding. It seems highly unlikely, therefore, that this power should be included among those who scattered Judah.

The second school of thought among the commentators indicates that the number four is figurative of the four points of the compass. The powers therefore would be: to the north the Assyrians, Chaldeans and Samaritans; to the south Egypt and Arabia; to the

east Ammon and Moab, and to the west Philistia. To see this interpretation of the four horns requires the ignoring of the historic relationships among the powers indicated.

The third hypothesis presented is that the first two horns were Babylon and the Medo-Persians. The third and fourth powers had at the time of Zechariah not yet risen. These would be the Graeco-Macedonians under Alexander and the Roman Empire. This interpretation results from an attempt to force Zechariah into the mold of Daniel, chapters two and seven, where four powers are predicted prior to the coming of the Messianic kingdom.

This view presents many difficulties, not the least of which is the previously mentioned fact that the Medo-Persians are historically cast in the role of deliverer and protector of the remnant rather than among the scatterers of Judah and Jerusalem.

If we will examine the pre-exilic history of Judah's neighbors, we will discover a fourth, almost forgotten power. Prior to the rather confusing shift of alliances which finally produced the Medo-Persian empire, the Medes had themselves been a power to be reckoned with in the middle east. It was they who warred against Assyria, finally destroying the capital city of Nineveh and swept across western Asia to the gates of Sardis.

Within a generation after having destroyed Nineveh, the Median empire came to an end. Its tenure was short, so short in fact that it contributed little to the rise of civilization as we know it. The exploits of Tiglath-Pileser and later of Sargon write a brief but bloody chapter in ancient history.

It was Sargon who placed several Israelites in the cities of Media (cf. 2Ki\_17:6; 2Ki\_17:24), thus contributing to the scattering of God's people.

It was under Cyaxares that the Median confederation reached the zenith of its brief power. Nobopalassar, the satrap of Chaldea joined Cyaxares in an alliance against Assyria and his daughter was given as wife to Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who “scattered Judah and Jerusalem.”

The Medes later, under the corrupt influence of Cyaxares’ successor son, became weakened to the point that they were easy prey for the rising power of Cyrus the Persian who annexed Media to form the Medo-Persian empire.

The horns of Zechariah are then, in my opinion, Assyria, Egypt, Media and Babylon. The four pre-exilic powers who contributed to the scattering of both Israel and Judah.

Read Ezekiel 40-47.