

# Horns of Destruction

by Connie W. Adams

God often revealed His will to prophets through visions. Such was the case in Zechariah 1:18-21 when the prophet saw four horns. In answer to his question "What be these?" the Lord replied: "These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." The word 'horn' was used in the Old Testament as a symbol of power and often of destruction. Obviously, the horns of the prophet's vision referred to the nations that had perplexed and scattered God's people, Israel. In the same vision, the prophet is assured that these powers shall be justly punished for their havoc and destruction, for he is told that the four carpenters or smiths "are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it." (Zech. 1:21) These horns had reference to nations, thus designating evil and harm to Israel from external forces. However, many of Israel's troubles came from within. There were several "horns" or powers of destruction which ultimately led God's family down the trail of sorrow and ruin.

I am borrowing the expression from the prophet to use accommodatively, in order to bring out three points that show the reasons for Israel's decline, and to show that these same features can produce harm and possible ruin in spiritual Israel, the church. It is in this sense that the expression "horns of destruction" is herein used.

## Horns Of Destruction For Fleshly Israel

1. Israel succumbed to a common weakness, that of a desire to be popular. They had not enjoyed the blessings of the land of promise long, before there arose a clamor for a king. God had arranged for them to be governed and that in His own appointed way. But that did not please them. They said "... we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations." (1 Sam. 8:19, 20) A consciousness that they were different from other nations seemed to disturb them. They were not concerned about having a king in order to please God, but wanted one in order to be like other nations. Their motive in this was certainly faulty. They were warned of the consequences of their choice, but to no avail. A king they wanted, a king they would have. That was the beginning of innumerable sorrows for Israel.

2. Another "horn" that worked from within to destroy Israel was the corruption of its leadership. When they were granted a king they were told that God would be with them only when both they and the king obeyed the voice of the Lord, but that if either they or the king disobeyed, evil consequences would follow. (1 Sam 12:14-25) First Samuel 15 relates the story of Saul's disobedience when he refused to destroy all the Amalekites and their cattle as he was commanded to do. God rejected him for his disobedience and the people suffered the consequences along with Saul. Solomon bowed before idols ere his reign was done and that brought harm upon the people as well as upon himself. The reign of the other kings show a deepening of corruption that always affected God's

people.

3. Underlying the evils already mentioned was an attitude which led to many abuses, There was a change in attitude toward God and His laws. God has always employed understandable terms in dealing with men. They knew what God wanted but substituted their own intentions in its place. They became indifferent to God's desires. What difference did it make that God had established judges to lead the people? After all, did they not have a right to their own choice? Their attitude toward God and His will was basically wrong.

### **Similar Horns Of Destruction In Spiritual Israel**

1. If fleshly Israel was engulfed in a desire for popularity, the church of our day is no less affected by this monster. Whence comes a desire for huge and elaborate cathedrals and temples costing tremendous sums of money and rivaling every sectarian-owned building in town, if not to be "like the other nations"? Who will be facetious enough to claim that spires and steeples costing thousands of dollars and which serve no purpose except to attract attention and to extract the praise of the world, are erected for any other purpose than to be like the nations about us? This craze for popularity has made inroads into the pulpits in a good many places. Ear-scratchers and back-patters may please luke-warm brethren as well as the world, but they do not please the Lord. Congregations which resort to all sorts of church-supported social fandangos, for which some have even been known to sell tickets, had better ponder seriously the consequences of their desire to "keep up with the Jones'."

2. A corruption of leadership in the church has led to many evils. Elders and deacons who are more concerned about the affairs of the world than the work of the church are a discredit to the Lord's body. Many are asleep or at least totally unaware of the great responsibilities that are theirs. Those who serve as "examples to the flock" would do well to constantly keep before them Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders, "take heed unto yourselves . . ." (Acts 20:28) A corruption in leadership can only lead to corruption on the part of those who follow. It is not here charged that all elders fit into this category, for certainly all do not. Perhaps only a few will fit, but the warning is timely nonetheless.

3. Perhaps one of the greatest "horns" confronting the Lord's church is a change in attitude toward the truth. In the past we have been readily recognized because we called for "a thus saith the Lord" in everything pertaining to religion. Some have lost that attitude. The cry for "positive preaching" has produced an apologetic, half-hearted, Dale Carnegie-approach that in no way resembles the plain, understandable kind of teaching that sparked the restoration movement. Many now are quick to come forth with their "I think so's" in matters that are of the utmost importance. Some are even willing to "quarantine" those who are "impudent" enough to request a "thus saith the Lord." Whatever work the church undertakes, let it be done in consideration of the Book we claim to honor and respect. Without the proper attitude toward God's will, there is little hope for spiritual Israel.

That these horns of destruction may be avoided by God's church is the fervent prayer of this writer.

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