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Title: What happens when God shows up?

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What happens when Prince Harry and Meghan Markle turn up to Australia for the Invictus Games? Well the whole country goes Ga Ga! The prince is in town and so the media follows his every move. And because he is for the Invictus Games, he wants to showcase the ability of those who have disabilities due to war injuries. He also has a special commission in the Commonwealth to be a youth representative and so he will visit young people in various places and highlight with their issues.

And Meghan’s fashion sense was followed ever so closely. What Australian designers has she chosen, what outfits did she wear? What causes will she champion? Isn’t she interested in the rights of women and their specific needs? So when the Royals turn up the spotlight is on them and the issues that they want to highlight.

But what happens when the God of this world turns up? When God steps into this world and comes into our lives, what begins to happen then? Kaylene got an email a week or two ago from someone on a mission trip and when God turned up overseas there were miracles and healings and people from other countries miraculously started speaking in English.

But if God was to come to us this morning, to our home town, to our Church would we see illnesses healed? Marriages saved? Material blessings? Speaking in tongues? What actually happens when God shows up? Well funnily enough the same things happen that has already happened when God has shown up in the past. God is spectacularly consistent for the same things happen in the OT, in the gospels & in the book of Revelation. So what happens? In the book of Zechariah we find out that when God turns up he firstly deals with our sin.

1. **Sin (chapter 5)**

God’s first priority is not your health, your job, your family, your bank balance. That might be our first priority. But that is not God’s first priority. So if God is going to return to his world, if he is going to live amongst his people as symbolised by the building of a new temple, something must be done about our sin. Because God can’t stand sin.

And in the 6th vision that Zechariah saw in the one night, in chapter 5:1-4, we see sin is cursed. v.1 “*I looked again, and there before me was a flying scroll.* ***2****He asked me, “What do you see?” I answered, “I see a flying scroll, 9 metres long and 4 ½ metres wide.”*

They say that if you eat cheese before you go to bed you can have some crazy dreams. Well Zechariah on this night must have eaten a whole cheese platter with plenty of blue vein because this is his sixth vision in the one night & it’s now beginning to get very strange. For Zechariah sees a flying scroll & I can imagine the blood draining from the prophet’s face. In the Old Testament Scriptures a scroll almost invariably spells coming judgements. But if we have a giant scroll, one that is flying around like a giant banner trailing a plane might do today, then Zechariah will be thinking, “Oh boy, this is not going to be good.”

No one is holding this scroll, no one is reading this scroll, no one is eating this scroll. There is no human agent involved at all. This scroll is doing God’s work **directly**. Slide 7

***3 “****And he said to me, “This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished.*

The scroll has on one side of it the curses involved in breaking the eighth commandment “do not steal.” And on the other side it has the curses involved in breaking the ninth commandment “do not bear false witness against your neighbour.” So do you get what the scroll is saying? As you start your new life in the Promised Land don’t forget what God has said to you in the past about living a life that pleases him. The Ten Commandments still stand. The commandments of God are still important. So important that

*Slide 8*

***4****The Lord Almighty declares, ‘I will send it out, and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name. It will remain in that house and destroy it completely, both its timbers and its stones.’”* If you do the crime, you will do the time. If you lie, if you swear falsely, actually if you break any of my commandments there will be no place to hide when God shows up. He will judge you. He will send out His curses upon you and it will be so painful that your whole life, **your whole house** will be destroyed.

Slide 9

God says I will deal with your dishonesty. I will deal with your theft. I am interested in what you do and say in all parts of your lives, at Church yes, at home, at work, even what you do when you think no one else will see you! And that is a warning to us like a giant billboard flying around the sky. “You think you’re doing well by coming to Church?  That’s good. But if you lie, you cheat, you steal, you deceive and if you do that there is a curse coming to a suburb near you, actually it’s coming to you!” God hates sin. A curse is on the sinner. If you want God to show up then make sure you have done something with your sin, quick smart.

Slide 10

In the sixth vision sin is cursed and in the seventh vision sin is covered. ***5****Then the angel who was speaking to me came forward and said to me, “Look up and see what is appearing.”* ***6****I asked, “What is it?” He replied, “It is a basket.” And he added, “This is the iniquity of the people throughout the land.”* ***7****Then the cover of lead was raised, and there in the basket sat a woman!  Slide 11* ***8****He said, “This is wickedness,” and he pushed her back into the basket and pushed its lead cover down on it*. ***9****Then I looked up—and there before me were two women, with the wind in their wings! They had wings like those of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between heaven and earth.*

Now this image is quite confronting to us in our modern world. Pushing a woman into a basket, putting a lead cover over her gives us a picture of domestic violence which has no place in our world. And saying this woman is wickedness, is that just the Bible demonising women again and holding them back? Well no. In the book of Proverbs wisdom is described as a woman. And in this image two women are part of the solution for they are taking this basket far, far away from the land of Israel. So this is not an attack on women at all.

Slide 11

Because this woman symbolises wickedness. God has just cursed sin now he wants to cover up sin. He wants to put wickedness back in its box so to speak & not let it loose on his

people. He wants to cover it up with a lead lid so it can’t get out and wreak havoc on his

people. God controls evil. God is even now restraining wickedness.

Wickedness is not free to ensnare and deceive us howsoever she wills. The sovereign Lord keeps her malice in check. That knowledge alone ought to reassure us in the fight, so that even though we might lose a particular skirmish because of strong temptations we remember it’s the Lord, not wickedness, who has ultimate dominion in our lives. Sin, however strong & mighty it may appear is not now the ruling power in your heart.  Sin is not in charge, it does not hold the reigns of your life if this morning you are a believer. When God turns up he restrains the wickedness around us. Sin cursed, covered & sin carried away

Slide 12

***10****“Where are they taking the basket?” I asked the angel who was speaking to me.* ***11****He replied, “To the country of Babylonia to build a house for it. When the house is ready, the basket will be set there in its place*.” The sin is so heavy that it requires two women with the wind in the wings to take it away. And where do they take all that sin, all that wickedness? To Babylon. Not so that it can flourish there but to remove it far, far away from God’s people. And to quarantine it so to speak ready for God’s judgement to come upon Babylon.

And God’s judgement will come on Babylon. We will see that in the next chapter but let’s not get there too quickly. For what this passage is saying to us today is that if God shows up, the first thing he will do is to do something about our sin. We saw when we looked at chapter 1 that Jesus first words were a call to repentance and his last words were also a call to repentance. And when God shows up at the end of the Bible and makes a new heaven and a new earth one of the first things he does is get rid of sin forever.

Slide 13

Revelation 21:7 says***“****Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.****8****But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters &* ***all liars***(that an interesting reference) *they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur, this is the second death.”*

Slide 14

When God shows up sin is dealt with. It is cursed, covered up and carried away. Sin is what separates us from God. Sin is what stops us from living the life that God wants us to live. So sin has to be dealt with decisively. And it is. As John Owen famously put it once, that “*if we are not always killing sin, sin will be killing us.*” God knows that our sin does not sleep, it does not stop and I don’t know about you but I have found that to be true, very true.

I have been a Christian for over 35 years and there are still sins that I have to work on. I concentrate on one, I repent of it, I ask God’s Spirit to strengthen me to stop doing it again & bit by bit as I take off the old self and put on the new self which is made in Christ’s image, & real change does come into my life. Only for another sin to make itself known to me. It was there all along for everyone to see but I didn’t see it. So I start the whole process again.

Slide 15

But let us not forget that Jesus can forgive me of my sin. He placed himself under the curse of sin, the curse of my sin. Galatians 3:13 says “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us.  For it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’*” The curses that should fall on the sinner who flees to Jesus instead fall on our Saviour and not upon us. He is cursed, he restrains the sin around us and he carries it away from us as far as

east is from west. When God shows up sin is decisively dealt with & God shows himself to

Slide 16

1. **Be Sovereign (chapter 6:1-8)**

That is what is happening in the eighth and last vision that Zechariah sees. **6 “***I looked up again, and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains—mountains of bronze.****2****The first chariot had red horses, the second black,****3****the third white, and the fourth dappled—all of them powerful*”.

Slide 17

Before Zechariah were four chariots. Now the chariot was the most versatile and deadly weapon in the arsenal of the armies of the Ancient Near East, the enemies of God’s people. It is, if you like, the Biblical equivalent of an F-15 fighter jet, agile and deadly and devastating in its effects. And so Zechariah’s vision begins straight out of the starting blocks with unavoidable military overtones, only this time it’s not the Babylonians or the enemies of the people of God, it is the sovereign Lord of all the earth who is flexing his military might.

**4**I asked the angel who was speaking to me, “*What are these, my lord?”* (Don’t you love that Zechariah has about the same idea that we do of what is going with all of this!)***5****The angel answered me, “These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world.****6****The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south*.”

Actually if you look at the NIV footnote to verse 6 it says that the second lot of horses, the white ones don’t go out to the west but “go out after them” or the first horses, who also are going north. The Hebrew is difficult but I think the footnote is a better translation and that would mean that the last horses the dappled ones are going to the south and dealing with Israel’s long term enemy the Egyptians while the black and the white horses are going to the north and what is to the north of Israel? Babylon is!

Whereas in the first vision in chap 1 the horses are going out as scouts, to see what is going on, this time they are going out to do battle. God is going to decisively deal with his enemies. He will win the final battle against sin. God is turning up this time in judgement. One day he will show the whole world who is boss, who is in control, who is completely sovereign. Because God is sovereign He will completely judge all sin, throughout the world.

Slide 18

You want God to show up? Well when he does he promises to come showing his sovereignty as he comes to judge the whole world. Once again the book of Revelation picks up the same sort of imagery. And so in Revelation 6, seven seals are opened, each of them describing a different facet of the judgment of God on a rebel world, each of them in terms of the coming of one of four different coloured horses - white and red and black and a pale horse.

You want God to show up? Well make sure your relationship with Jesus is right before he comes. Because God is a God of judgement. He has come to root out sin, ship out sin & wipe out sin. And if you haven’t asked Jesus to do that for you then you will be in big, big trouble.

Slide 19

Let me put it this way. This passage says the Lord is going to deal with sin a bit like a bomb disposal unit deals with a potentially explosive device. It is sealed in a container, carefully transported away from us and then detonated at a safe distance. But the question is, when? When is this going to happen? And who is going to do all this on God’s behalf? That is what the last part of chapter 6 will help us with.

Slide 19

1. **Sin, Sovereign, Saviour (chapter 6:9-15)**

**9 “***The word of the Lord came to me:****10****“Take silver and gold from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah.****11****Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jozadak*”.

For Zechariah the visions have now stopped. He doesn’t see anything but now he must do something. He must act. He is to take some silver and gold from some recently returned exiles. You can image that some of the Jews who were still in Babylon wanted to support the work of building a new temple back in Jerusalem and so have sent some gold and silver for this task and so Zechariah is to take some of this to a jeweller who will make a crown and set it on the head of the Governor, Zerubbabel.

Wait a second, not on Zerubbabel, not on the man who stands in the line of David, in the line of the Messiah but instead Zechariah places it on the head of Joshua the High Priest. But you don’t crown priests! You crown kings. But look what Zechariah is told to do.

Slide 20

**11***Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jozadak.****12****Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord.  Slide 21* ***13****It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’****14****The crown will be given to Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen son of Zephaniah as a memorial in the temple of the Lord.*

Slide 22

Try and imagine the scene with me. Zechariah knocks on poor old Joshua’s door, he puts a crown on his head. He calls him the branch, the Messiah. He challenges him to build the temple of the Lord, which Zerubbabel has been doing for the last few months and then he takes the crown off Joshua and goes and puts it in the Temple to remind everyone about what God is going to do in the future.

It has to be a symbolic act doesn’t it? It has to be pointing to someone coming into the future. The branch, the Messiah will one day be crowned king. That we knew already from other parts of the OT. But this King will also be a priest. He will be a priest on the throne.

Slide 23

And those of us who live after the writing of the New Testament are meant to see here a picture of Jesus. Jesus is the Branch from the stump of Jesse.  He is the King who is also a Priest.  That’s the argument you may remember of Hebrews chapter 7.  He is the Priest in the order of Melchizedek, the Priest-King of Salem.  He is the one who builds the true temple. “*As we come to Jesus*,” Peter says, 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 5, “*we are living stones, built up as a spiritual house.*”  Or as Paul puts it, “*The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord*.”

When will sin be dealt with and God shown to be sovereign? When the Messiah, the King, the High Priest, the Saviour Jesus comes. And the really stunning thing that Zechariah tells us is that those who are afar off who have been gathered into the kingdom get to participate in the work of temple building that the Branch Himself performs.  Those whom Jesus saves and makes His own, do not become passengers along for the ride, passively watching as Jesus builds His kingdom.  No, we are to share in the work of temple building.  We are to become His agents in bringing the good news to the world that there is a King in Zion, a Priest who can deal with your sin and reconcile you to God - Jesus Christ the righteous Branch.  We are to share in the gathering of living stones that they might be built upon the chief cornerstone that is Jesus Christ.

Slide 24

So how do we know whether God has shown up or not? Well we may be healed of our sickness or not healed of our sickness? We may have our marriages restored or our marriages may remain a mess. But He will deal with our sin. He will show us his sovereignty and he will put the emphasis on his Saviour Jesus. For Jesus will be shown to be the one ruling the world. And Jesus will be the one who will stand between us and God like a true high priest, taking our prayers before the throne of grace and bringing his answer through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Well has God shown up today? Here at this Church? Well I would say he has. His word has been spoken to us as we have read the Bible and as we have done our best to think about it and apply it to our lives. We have been warned to get rid of our sin. We have seen again God’s sovereignty over the whole earth and we have been pointed again to our Saviour Jesus. We are to make him king over everything we do. We are to approach God only through His high priestly work.

Slide 25

But do you know what? One day soon this Jesus is coming again? Revelation 19 says *“Then I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse.  The one sitting on it is called faithful and true and in righteousness he judges and makes war.  His eyes are like a flame of fire and on his head are many diadems and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood & the name by which he is called is ‘the Word of God’ & the armies of heaven arrayed in fine linen white & pure are following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written: King of Kings & Lord of Lords*”

One day God is going to show up in power. He will not come to us through His Word or through His Spirit, he will again come to us in person. Are we ready for that? Are we serious about the wickedness in our lives? Right now are we warning others of the judgement that is to come. Right now are so thankful for the work of Jesus that we are living for him and following him in all that we do? The time for visions & dreams is over. The time now is for action. We must believe in Jesus. Trust in Jesus. Follow Jesus. Right here. Right now. For our sakes and for the sake of a lost world.