



ZECHARIAH, Being the People of God

A Tale of Two Kings

Lesson 9 Zechariah 9:1-17

9:1 “The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus *shall be* the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, *shall be* toward the LORD.”

In contrast to earlier chapters where Zechariah saw the night visions (1-6) or received a word from the Lord (7-8), chapters 9 through 11 will constitute a “burden of the word of the LORD” and chapters 12 through 14 will constitute a second “burden of the word of the LORD.” The idea of a burden is that it is a heavy message. In chapter 9, Zechariah will prophesy the coming of an earthly king named Alexander the Great who will conquer many countries, but God will protect Israel. This earthly victor is then compared to a coming king who will have total dominion, namely Messiah Jesus. Chapter 10 will describe the conditions during Jesus’ kingdom rule.

The message concerning Alexander, who would defeat the Persians (the reigning empire in Zechariah’s day) in October 333 B.C. at Issus, is a message of comfort to Israel about its future. Alexander will march toward Egypt and conquer Syria, Phoenicia and Philistia along the way, and these are all historic enemies of Israel. And yet, Alexander will not attack Israel. This can only be explained by the supernatural working of God in the situation.

Hadrach refers to Hatarikka, an Aramean city-state near the cities of Damascus and Hamath. Damascus is in Syria. It is a heavy message concerning these cities, and necessarily, the nations where they are located. The eyes of the world will be on Alexander and his army, but the eyes of people of Israel “*shall be toward the LORD*” as their protector in this time.

9:2 “And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.”

Hamath was a region now called Hama, located some 130 miles north of Damascus on the Orontes River. This was, like Hatarikka, an Aramean city-state. Tyrus and Zidon (or Tyre and Sidon) were coastal cities in Phoenicia (now Lebanon). These two cities are called “very wise”, and yet they are included in the judgment to come. Their wisdom may be their commercial skills, although it may also indicate their arrogance. Just as the judgment of Damascus is indicative of the judgment on Syria, so also the judgment on Tyre and Sidon is indicative of the judgment on Phoenicia.

9:3 “And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.”

Tyre considered itself invincible. It was really two cities, a mainland city and an island city a half-mile off the coast surrounded by a 150 foot high wall. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the mainland city after a thirteen year siege (585 – 573 B.C.) but never conquered the island, to which the mainland residents retreated with their wealth. This was a rich town, in which silver and gold were plenteous as the dirt and mud of the streets.

9:4 “Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.”

Notwithstanding Tyre’s defenses and money, God decreed its destruction (“*the Lord will cast her out*”). We know from history that Alexander attacked the island city for seven months in 332 B.C. He used the stones from the destroyed mainland city to build a bridge across the water to the island city (even today, this is a peninsula). This was what Ezekiel had in mind when he wrote, “*And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of*

a rock” (Ezekiel 26:4). Alexander caused a bridge 2,600 feet long and some 600 to 900 feet wide to be built across the water, and by it, his soldiers conquered the island, executing 10,000 of its inhabitants, selling 30,000 into slavery, and burning the city. Hence, God writes of this 150 years ahead of time, saying he “will smite her power in the sea” (the island city) and that the city would be “devoured with fire.”

9:5 “Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.”

Zechariah now describes Alexander’s conquest of Philistia on his march toward Egypt. Ashkelon was a coastal city that observed what Alexander’s forces did to Tyre, and naturally, its inhabitants were afraid for their future. As a result of Alexander’s attack on them, its population would go away (“shall not be inhabited”). Gaza was a city fortress atop a 60 foot mound that the Persians had used in their attacks on Egypt. The city fought for two months in defiance of Alexander before it was taken. Alexander slaughtered 10,000 of its inhabitants and sold the rest into slavery. Its king (Batis) was tied to a chariot and dragged to death in the city streets. Note what Zechariah says, “The king shall perish from Gaza.” Ekron was another Philistian city, located west of the coastal city of Ashdod. Ekron “shall be ashamed” because of her false expectation that Tyre would survive Alexander’s attack. The fall of Tyre portends the fall of these other cities.

9:6 “And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.”

Alexander had a policy of mixing together the peoples he conquered. Ashdod was another coastal city in Philistia, and the point is that their people would lose their identity as a people through the intermingling of the peoples (“a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod”). This phrase probably indicates that this will be done by force, i.e., the native women are ravished by Alexander’s forces or sold into involuntary servitude and will bear children to their new owners. Alexander’s forces will so decisively route the Philistines that their pride will be completely removed (recall Goliath’s pride when taunted Israel before David slew him). The unfolding picture of Alexander is that of a brutal man that forces his will on people through his military forces.

9:7 “And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.”

The Philistines ate their idolatrous sacrifices with blood (not kosher, see Leviticus 7:26, 17:10, 12). God would judge (“take away”) their idolatry. At the same time, God intended to ultimately bring them into His family, so that this idolatrous gentile people would be “for our God” and “be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.” In verse 5, Zechariah said Ekron would be ashamed because its expectation of Tyre’s victory would not come to pass. In contrast, in the future Ekron will be an object of God’s blessing “as a Jebusite,” a term used in the Old Testament to refer to early inhabitants of Jerusalem (see Judges 19:10). The idea is that they will be blessed just like Israel will be blessed.

9:8 “And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.”

History indisputably records that Alexander conquered everywhere he went, but did not conquer Israel. God refers to Israel as “mine house” and says He will personally “encamp about” Israel “because of the [Alexander’s] army, because of him [Alexander] that passeth by, and because of him [Alexander] that returneth.” Israel will be protected by God from harm. The latter part of the verse (“and no oppressor shall pass through them any more”) begins looking to a future king and protector of Israel, namely Messiah Jesus. During His reign, no oppressors will pass through Israel conquering the way Alexander will do to the other nations.

The Jewish historian Josephus recorded that Alexander went to Jerusalem, was presented with Daniel's prophecy, believed it referred to him and left them in peace: "And when he had said this to Parmenion, and had given the high-priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city. And when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifice to God, according to the high-priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high-priest and the priests. And when the *Book of Daniel* was showed him wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended. And as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present."

QUESTION

1. In what ways do we see God's providential protection on behalf of His people in the time under consideration in verses 1 through 8? What is recorded in extra-Biblical history about the fulfillment of verse 8?
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9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

God speaks to Israel ("O daughter of Zion"; "O daughter of Jerusalem") and tells her to rejoice greatly and shout with joy. The reason for the rejoicing and the shouting of joy is that Israel's king is coming to her. We know from New Testament revelation that this passage looks to Jesus' first coming, and would be fulfilled in the first century (Matthew 21:1-10; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-15). This future king, by implication, will come in the future (from Zechariah's viewpoint) sometime after Alexander comes on the world scene. The future king will be just, will be a deliverer, and will be humble. Moreover, he will present himself publicly as the king by riding on a colt. Jesus, and only Jesus, fulfilled this prophecy. These qualities, and the way Jesus presents Himself as king, are in stark contrast to Alexander, the ruthless and brutal conqueror of so many peoples.

QUESTION

2. How is the Messianic King, Jesus, different from Alexander and other earthly kings?
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9:10 "And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Verses 9 and 10 are like distant mountains that appear to be side by side when in fact, as you approach them, you realize that one mountain is a great distance behind the other. Between the two, although not mentioned here, is a chasm of many years that we sometimes refer to as the Church Age. Verse 10 looks forward to Jesus' second coming. In contrast to his first coming at the Second Advent, the coming King will "cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem." He will come as a conqueror, not on a colt but a victor's white horse (see Revelation 19:11). He will clear out the invaders from Israel ("the battle bow shall be cut off"). Again, there is an emphasis on the idea that in the future, God's family will include Gentiles. Jesus will "speak peace unto the heathen," that is, the Gentiles. Jesus' kingdom will be global and without exception. There will be no corner of the earth where he does not exercise absolute dominion. The "river" likely refers to the Euphrates, the northern border of the Promised Land. Jesus' kingdom will extend from the river to the ends of the earth, which is to say it includes everything. Alexander conquered most of the known world at lightning speed in his day, but his empire was never worldwide like the kingdom Jesus will rule over. We should note that we often refer to the "Triumphal Entry," but really there are two triumphal entries, the one in verse 9 and the second one in verse 10.

9:11 “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. 12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;”

Jesus will lead his people to victory. In accordance with the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (“*blood of thy covenant*”), Jesus will set the prisoners free. They are pictured as being in “*the pit wherein is no water*,” that is, in dry cisterns. Their being freed is consistent with the promise in verse 10 that Jesus will conquer and remove the Gentile forces from the land. They are no longer prisoners without hope, but prisoners with hope. The king will provide the people a double blessing.

9:13 “When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. 14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.”

Here, God uses a metaphor. Judah is bent like God’s bow, which bow is filled with Ephraim, God’s arrow, and Zion is God’s sword. With these weapons, God will destroy Greece. Of course, Alexander was Greek and his rise to power was the resurgence of the Greek Empire. He died in 323 B.C. and his empire was split between his four generals. Palestine (which included Israel) went to the Ptolemy, but later was acquired by the Seleucids (Seleucus was another of his generals). There was war during the reign of Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.), with a Jewish family known as the Maccabees leading the Jewish resistance against Antiochus IV and ultimately winning Jewish independence. This near term victory from Zechariah’s viewpoint also pictures the future deliverance of Israel. Antiochus IV is a type for the anti-Christ (see Daniel 8:8-25), and God’s victory over him foreshadows God’s victory over anti-Christ (see Revelation 19:11-21). In verse 14, God is pictured as the victor (“*the LORD shall be seen over them*”), and He will conquer with lightning speed. The trumpet is often associated with announcing the beginning of a battle, as in a call to the troops to attack. Here, God is blowing the trumpet, and God is moving like a storm. Although the Maccabees were instrumental in defeating Antiochus IV over a course of years, verse 14 is looking to a time when God Himself takes the role of a warrior and the defeat is sudden and catastrophic. This pictures the future defeat of the one Antiochus IV pictures, namely anti-Christ, and this victory at Armageddon is recorded in Revelation 19.

9:15 “The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.”

Zechariah refers to God as the “*LORD of hosts*” or LORD of armies, which certainly fits the overall tenor of the passage. The hosts are the armies of angels in heaven at God’s disposal. Revelation 19:14 reads, “*And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.*” God’s armies will devour His enemies and conquer them with sling stones (i.e., stones used as weapons, as in a catapult). God’s people will celebrate the victory with a feast (“*they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine*”). They will be “*filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.*” The bowls used for sprinkling the corners of the altar were always filled to the brim, and so the emphasis here is on the fullness of God’s blessing.

9:16 “And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.”

God will deliver His people Israel “*in that day.*” This idea of a particular “*day*” of God’s judgment and deliverance permeates the Bible, especially the Old Testament. It does not speak of a specific day, but a specific period of time when God judges His enemies and blesses His people. In this future day, God’s people will be treasured by Him “*as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.*” This latter phrase refers to their being a beacon to the world. This idea was referenced in chapter 8 where

God spoke of a future time when ten Gentiles would seek one Jewish person to lead them in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Zechariah will return to this theme in chapter 14.

9:17 “For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.”

Here, Zechariah praises God for his goodness to His people. This future time of deliverance will be a time of complete restoration, a time of plenty and a time of joy.

QUESTION

3. What does the Lord's future return mean to you?
