

World Peace

Lesson for July 2, 2023

Unit I: The Prophets Proclaim God's Power

Scriptural Background: Zechariah 9:9-17

Printed Text: Zechariah 9:9-13, 16-17

Key verse: *"The Lord their God will save his people on that day as a shepherd saves his flock. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown."* (Zechariah 9:16, NIV)

Author Leo Buscaglia tells this story about his mother and their "misery dinner." It was the night after his father came home and said it looked as if he would have to go into bankruptcy because his partner had absconded with their firm's funds. His mother went out and sold some jewelry to buy food for a sumptuous feast. Other members of the family scolded her for it. But she told them that "the time for joy is now, when we need it most, not next week." Her courageous act rallied the family.

Christopher News Notes, August 1993

In this week's lesson, Zechariah similarly rallies the Jews by prophesying the first and second coming of Christ.

Key Terms

1. **Ephraim** (verse 10) – A son of Joseph, also his descendants and their territory. The use of the name is related to the historical development of Ephraim to the strongest tribe or area in the Northern Kingdom.
2. **Peace** (verse 10) – Freedom from disturbance; tranquility. A state or period in which there is no war or a war has ended. Completeness; soundness; welfare; ease.
3. **Restore** (verse 12) – To turn back; to bring back to or put back into a former or original state; renew.

Lesson Background

Zechariah, grandson of the priest Iddo, prophesied to the people of Judah after they returned from their seventy years of exile in Babylon (Zechariah 1:1; Nehemiah 12:1, 4, 16). Zechariah's grandfather returned from Babylon, his young grandson in tow, with the first group of Israelites allowed back, in 538 BC under the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. Because of his family lineage, Zechariah was a priest in addition to a prophet. He, therefore, would have had an intimate familiarity with the worship practices of the Jews, even if he had never served in a completed temple. As a "young man" at the time of his first prophecies (Zechariah 2:4), his life more than likely extended into the reign of Xerxes I (485–465 BC), the king best known in the Bible for making Esther the queen of Persia (Esther 1:1).

Zechariah delivered messages from the Lord to the Jewish remnant recently returned from Babylon. While Haggai's overall message had more of a cautionary tone to it (pointing out the Jews' sin and self-focus), Zechariah emphasized a tone of encouragement to the struggling Israelites trying to rebuild their temple.

Zechariah's dated visions and messages in chapters 1–8 all take place in the same general time period as Haggai's, beginning in October–November 520 BC with a call for the people of Judah to repent (Zechariah 1:1). He then received eight visions on the restless night of February 15, 519 BC (1:7), followed by four messages that he preached on December 7, 518 BC (7:1). Though his final messages in chapters 9–14 go undated, the mention of Greece in 9:13 suggests the prophecies came much later in his life, presumably sometime in the 480s BC, before Ezra (458 BC) and Nehemiah (444 BC) arrived to again revitalize the Jewish people.

The book of Zechariah contains the clearest and the largest number of messianic (about the Messiah) passages among the Minor Prophets. In that respect, it's possible to think of the book of Zechariah as a kind of miniature book of Isaiah. Zechariah pictures Christ in both His first coming (Zechariah 9:9) and His second coming (9:10–10:12). Jesus will come, according to Zechariah, as Savior, Judge, and ultimately, as the righteous King ruling His people from Jerusalem (14:8–9).

Lesson In Depth

I. Your King Comes! (Zechariah 9:9-10)

The first eight verses of Chapter 9 deal with God's judgment against the cities of Hadrach or Lebanon (Damascus), against Hamath (Tyre and Sidon), and against the cities of the Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod). God was going to deal with the nations that oppressed Israel. The chapter continues by showing how God would cleanse and accept once more their civil leadership and religious leadership, and that best of all one day the Lord himself would literally dwell among his people.

Rejoice greatly.... Shout.... Behold, your King is coming: This clearly prophesies what is known as the triumphal entry of Jesus (Matthew 21:5), when He presented Himself as the Messiah to Jerusalem and the people of Israel.

Unlike Alexander the Great, this King comes riding on a donkey (Jeremiah 17:25). This was fulfilled at Christ's triumphal entry (Matthew 21:1-5; John 12:12-16). The Jews should have been looking for someone from the line of David (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17). Four elements in this verse describe Messiah's character:

- He is king;
- He is just;
- He brings salvation; and
- He is humble.

The “ass” (donkey), was an animal of “peace.” The kings of the earth come to bring destruction and devastation. Israel’s “King” comes to bring peace. The prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:4-7; Mark 11:7; Luke 19:38; John 12:14-14).

This is speaking of the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. At this time, Jesus did not come as conquering King, but as King of Peace. This is their Messiah. Not only should the natural Jew shout at this, but the coming church as well. The fact He was riding on a donkey, spoke of His humbleness.

The fact the donkey was a colt which had never been sat upon symbolizes the peaceable character of His mission. He was, and is, King of the Jews, as well as Savior of the lost. His name, Jesus, means Savior.

In Verse 10, Zechariah moves to the Second Advent of Christ and the establishment of His universal kingdom. Not characterized by bloodshed, Messiah’s rule will be a kingdom of peace in which weapons of warfare will be destroyed or converted to peaceful uses (Isaiah 2:4; 9:5-7; 11:1-10), and peace spreads from the Euphrates River (the terminus of civilization) to the world.

Ephraim: This is another name for Israel, used often in the Old Testament for the northern kingdom and occasionally for the whole nation.

The river: Refers to the Euphrates.

Cutting off the chariot: Speaks of no more war. Ephraim, in this particular instance, speaks of the ten tribes of Israel. Jesus is not just King of the Jews but of the entire world.

“And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.” (Romans 15:12)

“But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace”. (Ephesians 2:13-15)

Summarily, from the holy land, which will then be extended to the limits originally promised to the fathers, and which will be the center of Messiah’s blessed rule, His dominion will extend even “unto the ends of the earth”.

II. Prisoners of Hope (Zechariah 9:11-13)

Blood of thy covenant: Why is Israel to be so blessed? It is not because of her faithfulness through the centuries, but because of God acting towards Israel in light of the blood of the covenant of Moses (Exodus 24:1-8). As Israel turns to God, He will turn to them and rescue them as if they were trapped in a dry cistern (I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit).

The pit wherein is no water: Prisoners in ancient times were often kept in dry wells or pits, like Joseph was (Genesis 37:24, 28; Jeremiah 38:6). The exiles of Israel, pictured as being in a dry well of captivity, suffering, and despair, will be freed because of His unbreakable covenant with them.

They are thus called “prisoners who have the hope” (verse 12), who are to receive “double” blessing (Isaiah 61:7).

This is spoken to the natural house of Israel and is speaking of a blessing in addition to the promise of Messiah. In the 24th chapter of Isaiah, their captivity was spoken of as a pit. This, probably, has to do with them being freed from captivity. It also speaks of a time when they are gathered home to Israel. They have the seal of the everlasting covenant, sealed with the blood of Jesus.

Like Joseph who was thrown into a pit without water, Israel will also live. Eventually, at the Word of God, Israel, like Joseph, shall be freed from the pit and lifted up from a position of humiliation and suffering to become a nation of princes on the earth.

Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope: These promises have accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel which we enjoy by Jesus Christ. As the deliverance of the Jews was typical of redemption by Christ, so this invitation speaks to all the language of the gospel call.

Sinners are prisoners, but prisoners of hope. Their case is sad, but not desperate; for there is hope in Israel concerning them. Christ is a Stronghold, a strong Tower, in whom believers are safe from the fear of the wrath of God, the curse of the law, and the assaults of spiritual enemies.

To him we must turn with lively faith; to him we must flee, and trust in his name under all trials and sufferings. It is here promised that the Lord would deliver his people. This passage also refers to the apostles and the preachers of the gospel in the early ages. God was evidently with them; his words from their lips pierced the hearts and consciences of the hearers.

They were wondrously defended in persecution and were filled with the influences of the Holy Spirit. They were saved by the Good Shepherd as His flock, and honored as jewels of his crown. The gifts, graces, and consolations of the Spirit, poured forth on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), and in succeeding times, are represented.

Sharp have been, and still will be, the conflicts of Zion’s sons, but their God will give them success. The more we are employed, and satisfied with his goodness, the more we shall admire the beauty revealed in the Redeemer. Whatever gifts God bestows on us, we must serve him cheerfully with them. And, when refreshed with blessings, we must say, how great is His goodness!

I will render double unto thee: A double measure of blessing in compensation for past suffering (Isaiah 40:2; Isaiah 61:7).

This is very much like what happened to Job. After his great trial was over, God poured out a blessing that was twice what he had before the trial.

Job 42:10 “And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

This is saying their blessings from God will be a double portion, as Job’s were.

When I have bent Judah for me: By whom are meant the apostles, who were mostly Jews, and whose ministrations were made use of as a bow with arrows, to strike the hearts of men, and bring them into subjection to Christ. They were a bow of the Lord’s bending and preparing, and which abode in strength, being made strong and effectual through the hands of the mighty God of Jacob.

Filled the bow with Ephraim: or rather, “filled Ephraim with the bow”. Filled his hand with it; meaning, that some out of the ten tribes, as were the apostles, should be employed in drawing the bow of the Gospel, and shooting its arrows, the doctrines of it. Which are comparable to them for swiftness, suddenness, and secrecy, and for their piercing and penetrating nature.

Judah is the drawn bow, Ephraim is the arrow and Zion the sword in the Hand of Jehovah, by means of which the foe is thoroughly subjugated.

And raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece: That is, persons of the land of Judea, as such the apostles were, and who belonged to Zion the church of Christ. Who were raised up, qualified, and sent forth by him into the Gentile world, with weapons of warfare, not carnal, but spiritual.

Against the Gentiles in general, and the wise men of Greece, as at Athens. In particular, to confound some, and to conquer others, and bring them to the obedience of Christ. Some understand this of the Maccabees raised up against Antiochus, and the Greeks that possessed the kingdom of Syria.

And made thee as the sword of a mighty man: That is, made the Gospel in the hands of the church, and of her sons, as a sword in the hand of a mighty man, by whom execution is done with it. This is the sword of the Spirit, even the word of God; and is sharp and cutting and is the power of God unto salvation. As it is girted upon the thigh and is in the hands of Christ the most Mighty. And as it is accompanied with the Spirit of God, and of power.

This is showing that Jesus Christ is victorious over Satan, sin, and death. The world is defeated by the king of peace, Jesus Christ. They are a powerful nation because they have God on their side.

The wars of the Jews against Greece, under the heroic leadership of the Maccabees, were occasioned by the attempt to overturn the Jewish religion and substitute in its place Grecian customs. Those wars were essentially religious in their character.

The Maccabean heroes went forth to the contest with the full conviction that the cause in which they were engaged was the cause of God, and that the Lord was with them in all their various difficulties and trials.

In the glowing language of the prophet (in verse 14), Jehovah was seen over them, and His arrow went forth as the lightning. Yea, the Lord Jehovah blew with the trumpet, for He was the real Captain of His host, and the war waged by the Jews was in defense of His truth.

The defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes (Antiochus Epiphanes was a Greek king of the Seleucid Empire from 175 BC until his death in 164 B.C.), and his successors at the hands of a comparative few Jews to which this passage may primarily refer, foreshadows the final conflict with world power.

And the judgments to be inflicted on the confederated armies who shall be gathered against Jerusalem, not only directly by the hand of God, but also in the hand of Israel, who shall be made strong in Jehovah.

III. How Great is God's Goodness (Zechariah 9:16-17)

Verses 14 and 15 are omitted from the lesson. However, these verses continue the fact that God's people will be protected by the LORD. The sling stones seem to be the helpless enemy who is trampled under their feet like stones. They will be like drunken men. This is almost as if they are a sacrifice to God.

The prophet describes the victorious Jews as being filled, like the sacrificial bowls in which the priests were used to, (an established custom or habit), to catch the blood of the victims which were slain. And they would sprinkle it in the corners of the altar, which expression includes the horns of the altar, that they would sprinkle with the sacrificial blood.

In verses 16 and 17, abundant prosperity, such as the world has never seen, results in excessive rejoicing and praise, results for God "saving" His people, Israel (Deuteronomy 33:28; Psalm 4:7-8).

And the Lord their God shall save them in that day: Still all should be God's doing; they themselves were but as a flock, as sheep among wolves, ready for the slaughter. But they were "the flock, His people," as He says, "I will increase them like the flock", men, as the flock of holy things, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts. So shall the waste cities be filled with flocks, "men".

“Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD.” (Ezekiel 36:37-38.)

They shall be as the stones of a crown: While God’s enemies shall be trampled underfoot, as a common thing which has failed its end, these shall be precious stones. A consecrated jeweled crown or headband of king or priest, “raised aloft,” so that all can see.

Upon His land: It was laid down, as the title deed to its whole tenure, “the land is Mine” (Leviticus 25:23), and much more our Christian land, bought and purified by the blood of Christ.

The picture in verse 16 changes from war and bloodshed to that of the Shepherd and His flock.

In contrast to their enemies who are likened to “sling stones”, which shall then be contemptuously trodden under foot, saved Israel shall be “stones of a crown” lifted on high over His land which reminds us of:

“For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.” (Isaiah 62:1-3)

For how great is His goodness?: Not of the land of Judea, as Kimchi; nor of the doctrine of the law, as the Targum; nor of the people of the Jews; but of the Messiah. And designs not his essential nor his providential goodness. but his goodness as Mediator which He has in His heart, and has shown unto his people, in being their surety, and becoming their Savior.

In assuming their nature; bearing their sins, and obeying and suffering in their stead, He has in His hands for them, and communicates to them, His fullness of grace. All those spiritual blessings that are in him; the large measures of grace given at conversion; and the numerous instances of his goodness afterwards. Yea, it includes glory, as well as grace.

And how great is his beauty? not as God, nor as man, but as Mediator. As beheld in the covenant and promises in the Gospel and in the truths and in the ordinances of it.

Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids: By “young men” are meant the same as in (1 John 2:14), believers in Christ. Who are lively, warm, and zealous for Christ, his cause and interest. Who are active, diligent, and industrious in the discharge of duty; and are strong in Christ, and in his grace. And particularly in the grace of faith and quit themselves like men.

And by “maids” or “virgins” are meant the same. So called because of their chaste adherence to Christ; for their beauty, comeliness, and attire; and for their purity of divine worship and conversation. And the Gospel is intended by “corn” and “new wine”; which is compared to “corn”, in opposition to the chaff of human doctrines.

And because it contains Christ the bread of life and is nourishing and comfortable. And to “new wine”, not because it is a novel doctrine, for it is the everlasting Gospel ordained before the world was. But because, under the Gospel dispensation, to which this prophecy refers, it is newly and more clearly revealed (see Zechariah 9:15).

The effect of which is that it makes saints “cheerful”, fills them with joy and spiritual mirth, for it is a joyful sound. Or “shall make fruitful”; it causes them to grow and increase, and makes them fruitful in every good word and work.

Or “shall make them speak” eloquently; or cause them to put forth the fruit of their lips, in giving thanks to God for the abundance of grace bestowed upon them. Or “shall” make “them sing”, as others; in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

This new wine may be interpreted as the gifts and graces bestowed in great plenty on the day of Pentecost. Both on sons and daughters, on servants and handmaids, whereby they prophesied, and saw visions (Acts 2:16 see Ephesians 5:18).

“Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!” (Psalms 31:19)

“Corn and wine” symbolize plenty.

The mention of young men and maidens heighten the picture of prosperity given by the prophet. And is in some respects a parallel to the prophetic description of the prosperity of the land and people, where the streets of Jerusalem are spoken of as being again “full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof” (8:5).

Lesson Summary

In order joyously to welcome Jesus as our King, we need to understand properly who He is. Our text is one of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Even most Jewish commentators down through the centuries have agreed that this is a prophecy about Messiah (Charles Feinberg, *God Remembers* [American Board of Mission to the Jews], pp. 167-168). Zechariah 9:9-10 teaches us that because Jesus Christ is King and He is coming to reign, we who are subject to Him should rejoice greatly.

The news that a king is coming is not necessarily a cause for great joy. The first part of this chapter predicts the coming of Alexander the Great, who ruthlessly conquered Israel's neighbors. The news of his coming would have struck terror into the hearts of those in his path. He often slaughtered all the men in a city and sold the women and children into slavery. He was not concerned about the well-being of his subjects, but only about his own power and dominion.

It is also difficult to accept the news of a coming king because there is a sense in which all of us want to rule our own lives. We can accept governmental interference to a limited degree, as long as it doesn't get too close. But if a king started trying to control every aspect of our lives—how we do business, how we relate to others, including our families, and even how we speak and think—we resist the very thought! We certainly would not rejoice at the news of the coming of that kind of king!

But that is precisely the kind of King that Jesus is! He is rightfully Lord of all people and of all aspects of all people's lives. Regarding this King, Zechariah exhorts, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you." The rest of verses 9 and 10 describe this King and explain why His coming gives cause for great joy. If we understand who this King is and what His coming will mean for all the earth, we will rejoice greatly at the news of His coming.

The phrase translated, "your king is coming *to* you" can also be translated, "your king is coming *for* you," that is, "for your benefit" (Kenneth Barker, *Expositor's Bible Commentary* [Zondervan], 7:662). To receive the benefits that this King brings, we need to recognize our need. Israel was under the domination of powerful foreign rulers. They were incapable of freeing themselves. But this King had the power to deliver them and He had their best interests at heart. Spiritually, we must admit that we are under the domination of sin that will destroy us and that we are unable to free ourselves. Then we will welcome the promised King and the benefits that He offers. He comes *for you*! But who is He?

Zechariah says that Israel's king is just (some translate "righteous," but the sense is justice). The primary reference in this context is to a king who administers justice in his kingdom. He is not corrupt, like so many world rulers. Much of the poverty and suffering around the globe stems from corrupt leaders who have no regard for justice. But Jesus Christ will be just in the administration of His kingdom because He is righteous in His person. He is not out to take advantage of His subjects for personal gain. He has their best interests at heart.

God's future deliverances of His people show that God brings down the proud, but helps those who are helpless, who depend on His deliverance (9:11-17).

Biblical prophecy often has multiple fulfillments leading up to the final fulfillment. Such prophetic events (or people) are centuries apart, although the prophecy doesn't specify that fact. For example, Malachi 4:5 predicts that God would send "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord." In Matthew 11:14, Jesus explained that John the Baptist was that Elijah to come. But the great and terrible day of the Lord is yet to come, almost 2,000 years after John's ministry. Thus when Revelation 11 predicts that two powerful witnesses will prophesy just prior to the Lord's coming, many believe that one of these will be Elijah himself, the ultimate fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy.

That prophetic mode of multiple fulfillments, culminating in the final fulfillment, is used in Zechariah 9:11-17. On one level, Zechariah describes the victory that God granted during the Maccabean revolt against the wicked Antiochus Epiphanes in 166-160 B.C. This was the only time that the Jews fought against the Greeks (9:13). This wicked ruler suspended daily sacrifices, abolished the Sabbath, destroyed copies of the Scriptures, forbade circumcision, and erected pagan altars. To crown it all, in December, 167 B.C., he set up a pagan altar in the temple and offered swine's flesh on it (an initial fulfillment of Daniel's "abomination of desolation," Daniel 11:31, 12:11). Antiochus is a type of the Antichrist who will come to world domination, setting himself up as God in the temple of God, the ultimate abomination of desolation.

While Zechariah 9:11-17 pictures on one level the victory that God would grant the Jews during the Maccabean revolt, on another level it looks ahead to the final victory when Messiah will return in power and glory to crush Antichrist and his followers. Since both Antiochus and the Antichrist are the epitome of worldly pride and power, their defeat and Israel's deliverance illustrate the principle: God brings down the proud, but He helps those who are helpless, who depend on His deliverance.

These verses should encourage us because they show that God prepares deliverances for His people years before we even know that we need them. When Zechariah prophesied, it would be almost 200 years before Greece would pose a threat, and 300 years before the Maccabean revolt. And yet the Lord knew all of this in advance and prepared the victory for His people long before they knew that they even needed it. As Revelation shows, God has already prepared victory for His people in the Great Tribulation, when Israel will be hemmed in by the forces of evil. Just in time, Christ will return and "cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem," and will reign over all the earth (9:10).

This means that the Lord has prepared deliverances for situations that you may encounter this week, later this year, and for the rest of your life. Our emergencies never take the Lord by surprise! When we are overwhelmed by some trial, we can trust in the Lord and know that He cares for us.

Note the assurances that He gives to encourage us to trust Him: We are in a blood covenant relationship with Him (9:11). He promises to give us victory over powerful enemies (9:13-15). We are the flock of His people, sparkling stones in His crown (9:16).

You may wonder, "But what about God's people who have been tortured or slaughtered? What about those who go through horrible trials? What about the situations where wicked tyrants prosper and God's people suffer? How does God deliver them?"

Revelation 6:9-11 pictures many martyred saints in heaven, waiting for the day of their vindication. God tells them to wait because there are still others to be killed for their testimonies. Their vindication comes at the very end, when Jesus returns in power and glory to crush all opposition. At that time, the multitude in heaven cries out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God... Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him" (Revelation 19:1, 7).

Notes collected and developed by Ethel Williams

When we experience God's deliverance, whether it is the minor deliverances of day-to-day trials and temptations, or the final deliverance of His victory over all the forces of evil, praise and glory to God are the result. Zechariah 9:17 should be translated with the NASB margin, "For what comeliness and beauty are His!" The singular pronoun refers to the Lord. Verse 17 is a burst of praise coming from God's people who have just experienced His deliverance.