

The Visions to Zechariah Zechariah 9:1-10:12

Lesson 5

The prophecy of chapters 9 and 10 is an oracle, not a vision. In this oracle, also properly called a burden in some versions, the Lord speaks a word through Zechariah that will have disastrous consequences for those to whom it is spoken. In Zechariah's day, this oracle must have seemed farfetched and extremely difficult to understand. For the student of the New Testament, some portions of it are clearly understandable yet they are followed by strange events that can confuse the reader. For the student of the entire Bible and the history of the five major empires of the world, the oracle can be easily understood since most of it was fulfilled within 200 years of its being given to Zechariah. It is a sketch of details that will transpire two centuries later as well as significant prophecies about the first and Second Advent of the Lord. The people who heard Zechariah repeat this oracle understood and knew quite well the names and places in its message. From the perspective of 20/20 hindsight, we can see that the oracle is a road map of an invasion that began well to the north of Israel, crossed its coastal territories, entered into Egypt and returned to the north where a road to the east was followed to overtake the Persian Empire. It is a prophecy of the protection of the Lord's people in the midst of turmoil and shifts of power in a changing world.

Burden against the North Zechariah 9: 1-4

Zechariah 9:¹ The burden of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (~~for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord~~), ² And Hamath also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. ³ For Tyre built herself a fortress and piled up silver like dust, And gold like the mire of the streets. ⁴ Behold, the Lord will dispossess her and cast her wealth into the sea; and she will be consumed with fire.

By this time in history, the Old Testament was complete and the Lord would be silent for four centuries although He still involved Himself in the lives of people as indicated in the fulfillment of this oracle. The land of Hadrach included much of today's Syria. Damascus was its capitol and it is Syria's capital today. Its northern neighbor was the land of Hamath whose capitol used the same name. Over time, the capitol city modified its name to Hamah. When the Greeks overran it, it was changed again to Epiphaneia, but the old name of Hamah was still used by the local people through the centuries and even today. On the western coast and situated on the Mediterranean Sea stood two cities, Sidon and Tyre, just 20 miles south of Sidon; both were known for their wickedness. Both were known for their seaports filled with markets, glass shops, dying and weaving businesses and precious stone engraving shops. Both were known for their cunning merchants who manipulated the market of the entire Mediterranean Sea because they were the owners of the majority of the ships that transported goods from Spain to Egypt and back. Merchandise from every coastal nation could be purchased within its markets and businesses.

Sidon fell fairly quickly after the Assyrians began their advance against Israel but Tyre was a fortified city with high stone walls. Nebuchanezzar spent many years trying to conquer the city and finally did so in 573 BC, an event that occurred before this oracle was given to Zechariah. During the time of the Persian Empire, Tyre rebuilt her walls in the old city on the mainland and established a new portion of the city on the island just half a mile offshore. These two parts of the city were equally prosperous and equally fortified against invaders.

At this point in the oracle secular world history confirms the fulfillment of this prophecy. In 336 BC, Philip of Macedonia was assassinated and his son, Alexander the Great took his place. After revolting against and crushing Athens, Thebes and other Greek cities, Alexander began his march across Asia Minor, modern day Turkey and Syria, with his eyes on the Persian Empire. In 333 BC, Alexander overran Hamath and Hadrach; He then marched down the coast to Tyre where for five months, he laid siege against the new city of Tyre on the island. Alexander did not possess ships; the calvary and foot soldiers were his strengths, so Tyre's residents felt safe and secure. Alexander's men tore down the stone walls of the old city and cast them into the sea, thus building a land bridge to the island. Once completed, Alexander's men easily took the new city and destroyed its 150 foot wall.

Askelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashod the Philistines Zechariah 9:5-7

Zechariah 9:⁵ Ashkelon will see *it* and be afraid. Gaza too will writhe in great pain; Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded. Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon will not be inhabited. ⁶ And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. ⁷ And I will remove their blood from their mouth and their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, and be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.

Alexander continued down the coastal road to what is known today as the Gaza strip. He was on his way to Egypt and the coastal road ran through two fortified Philistine cities, Ashkelon and Ekron. Ashkelon was easily defeated by Alexander's men. The battle at Gaza was brutal, a two-month siege that ended with the death of more than 10,000 inhabitants of the city. Holes were bored in the feet of the king and ropes were tied through them. The ropes were attached to a chariot and the king was dragged through the city. Ekron, the most northern city of those listed, had expected Tyre to withstand Alexander's onslaught but their hope changed to shame when he defeated Tyre and proceeded to march through Ekron. Alexander left men in Ashdod to intermarry with the Philistines, fulfilling the prophecy of the inhabitation by a mongrel race. This action cut into the power of the bloodthirsty Philistines, virtually bringing their heritage to an end. The Greeks looked on Judah in a favorable light in the following years until the time of Antichus Epiphanes. The Philistines of Ekron were removed and the Jebusites (Canaanites) repopulated the town. It is interesting that Gath, the fifth major city in the Philistine territory, is not mentioned. It was the only city not on the coastal road to Egypt. Since it was not on the road, Alexander did not attack it, fulfilling the 200 year old prophecy to Zechariah.

Camp around House Zechariah 9:8

Zechariah 9:⁸ But I will camp around My house because of an army, because of him who passes by and returns; and no oppressor will pass over them anymore, for now I have seen with My eyes.

Alexander continued the trek to Egypt and then returned to the Hadrach land where he could follow the Euphrates River and continue his campaign against Persia. He passed within 30 miles of Jerusalem on both his trip to Egypt and his return, but the Lord protected His city.

Coming on a Donkey Zechariah 9:9

Zechariah 9:⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The prophecy of the oracle moves ahead 362 years to the triumphal entry of the Lord into Jerusalem on a colt accompanied by its mother. It was common for kings to ride donkeys in that day; it was a symbol of peace. When a king mounted his horse, it was a symbol of war. His coming in peace was not for His own gain, but for the sake of the Jews. By this time everyone knew of His healing and miraculous powers. His entry into the city was in contrast to Alexander's conquest. Alexander rode his horse intent on conquering; Jesus rode His colt intent on salvation, not His, but ours. Although He was on a donkey for His triumphal entry at His first advent, He will be on a horse prepared for war against all enemies at His second.

His Dominion Zechariah 9:10

Zechariah 9:¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The oracle moves to the future after the Lord's Second Advent. At that time war will be unheard of and He will be the authority throughout the world. After the Battle of Armageddon, peace will prevail under His direction with all 12 tribes restored.

Protection against Greece Zechariah 9:11-17

Zechariah 9:¹¹ As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you, I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. ¹² Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope; this very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you. ¹³ For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; and I will make you like a warrior's sword. ¹⁴ Then the Lord will appear over them, and His arrow will go forth like lightning; and the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and will march in the storm winds of the south. ¹⁵ The Lord of hosts will defend them. And they will devour and trample on the sling stones; and they will drink *and* be boisterous as with wine; and they will be filled like a *sacrificial* basin, *Drenched* like the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ And the Lord their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people; for *they are* as the stones of a crown, sparkling in His land. ¹⁷ For what comeliness and beauty *will be* theirs! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

In God's unchanging pattern, the oracle returns to Zechariah's day with a promise to keep the promises He made while Israel was still in the wilderness under Moses' leadership. The exile was over for Israel in Zechariah's day and no nation would ever remove them from their land again. Never again would they be prisoners in the dungeons of another country. Under Persian rule they were allowed to return to their land. The Greek and Roman powers allowed them to remain there where they finally became a nation again in the 20th century, 2553 years after they were exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. In 167 BC, Antiochus Epiphanies tried to destroy Jerusalem. He desecrated the Temple with pig's blood and made it a shrine to worship Zeus. The Israelites became the Lord's warriors and ran Antiochus out

in 164 BC, overcoming his powerful Greek influence on the land. Israel's power came from the Lord in those days as He protected her through the fulfillment of this oracle. Under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus, the Israelites fought like a wind storm. Greece was defeated as Israel marched over the stones that would normally have been used in their sling shots. It was important to the Lord that Israel, specifically Jerusalem, be preserved because many other prophecies still require the Jewish presence in that city. The sacrifices must go on. In 164 BC, Judas Maccabaeus cleansed the temple and reinstated the ritual sacrifices. The purification process included the drenching of the horns of the altar with blood from the sacrificial basins. It was a new day for Israel when Antiochus was removed. In 157 BC, Judea became an independent principality, but its independence did not last. In 141 BC, Judea claimed it was an independent kingdom, but its independence did not last. By 63 BC, Pompey annexed Judea for Rome.

Ask for Rain Zechariah 10:1

Zechariah 10:¹ Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain— The Lord who makes the storm clouds; and He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to *each* man.

The former rains were needed in October to germinate the seed in the ground. The latter rains of the spring were necessary to ripen the grains in the field. They were especially needed in February and March. Both rains were important, but the volume of rain in the latter season needed to be greater because it was nourishing the full mature plant. If Israel would ask, the Lord would deliver. Why does the Lord not just send the needed latter rain? It is because He wants His people to constantly remember that He is the provider and that they must rely on Him for their every need, something they failed to do in the past.

Teraphim and Diviners Zechariah 10:2

Zechariah 10:² For the teraphim speak iniquity, and the diviners see lying visions and tell false dreams; they comfort in vain. Therefore *the people* wander like sheep, They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.

During the days of the Divided Kingdom, almost all the houses in the north possessed teraphim, household idols, which were the object of Israel daily prayers. The mere presence of the idols in the home broke one of the Ten Commandments. Additionally, the Divided Kingdom was filled with false prophets who divined lies. Their leadership, their spiritual words of religious hoopla, was empty and meaningless. Although the Lord always had a true prophet or shepherd for the people in those days, most of the people would not follow them. The people wandered in sin because of their own choices to ignore the voice of the true shepherd. The Lord kept His promise by sending His wayward people into exile, and He will keep His promise by making that same people a mighty and majestic nation.

Judah, His Majestic Horse Zechariah 10:3

Zechariah 10:³ "My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the male goats; for the Lord of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like His majestic horse in battle.

The civil and religious rulers of Israel and Judah did not shepherd the people, they did not lead them to green pastures or beside still waters; they led them in the way of wickedness. The Lord will punish them all as if they were male goats which are symbols of headstrong wantonness driven by offensive lusts. The Lord's mercy will redeem the flock and turn them into a mighty majestic horse, His horse, ready to battle the enemy. It is a promise the Lord will keep just as He has kept every other promise.

Mighty Judah Zechariah 10:4-6

Zechariah 10:⁴ "From them will come the cornerstone, from them the tent peg, from them the bow of battle, from them every ruler, *all* of them together. ⁵ "They will be as mighty men, treading down *the enemy* in the mire of the streets in battle; and they will fight, for the Lord *will be* with them; and the riders on horses will be put to shame. ⁶ "I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them back, because I have had compassion on them; and they will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.

When the Lord keeps His promise to make Judah a mighty nation, it will occur after the coming of the Messiah, the Cornerstone from the line of Judah. Several prophecies which span centuries are summarized together in this passage. Five hundred years after this prophecy, Jesus, the Cornerstone, came. He was hung on the cross like Judah hung its valuables on a nail in their tents. In the future Judah will be prepared for battle and all her soldiers will come from her tribe and the Lord will be with her as they fight against their enemies who ride against them on white, black, red and green horses. Jews were forbidden to mount horse to fight in battle in Deuteronomy 17:16, but they will be the Lord's war horses and will tread on the Lord's enemies. However, it will not be just for the tribe of Judah; it will include the tribes of Joseph, which symbolize 10 tribes. All will be saved and brought back to the Promised Land.

Mighty Ephraim Zechariah 10:7-12

Zechariah 10:⁷ "Ephraim will be like a mighty man, and their heart will be glad as if *from* wine; indeed, their children will see *it* and be glad, their heart will rejoice in the Lord. ⁸ "I will whistle for them to gather them together, for I have redeemed them; and they will be as numerous as they were before. ⁹ "When I scatter them among the peoples, they will remember Me in far countries, And they with their children will live and come back. ¹⁰ "I will bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon until no *room* can be found for them. ¹¹ "And they will pass through the sea *of* distress and He will strike the waves in the sea, so that all the depths of the Nile will dry up; and the pride of Assyria will be brought down and the scepter of Egypt will depart. ¹² "And I will strengthen them in the Lord, and in His name they will walk," declares the Lord.

The victory over all the enemies of the Lord and the salvation of all the tribes of Israel as well as their return to the Promised Land to possess it with the Lord will change the heart of Ephraim, one of Joseph's sons. The passage is actually referring to the land that was once controlled by Ephraim, located just north of Jerusalem. The major part of the Battle of Armageddon will occur in that land just a few miles north of Jerusalem. Once the battle is over, the Lord will whistle for all the Jews who are scattered throughout the world to return to their homeland where He resides.

The Jews were scattered throughout the world like seeds sown far and wide. Even though they dwell in foreign lands, their blood is still Jewish and their allegiance is still to Israel, even today. In history, the Jews were scattered by the Egyptians and Assyrians. These people were never brought back officially. Many Jews were exiled into Babylon, but they were officially released to return home and many did. Jews persecuted Jews who accepted the Messiah causing a great dispersion throughout the world in the Greek and Roman days. In the coming days, Jews in Israel will scatter for their lives because of the threat from the Revived Roman Empire and the Beast at its head. But from wherever they are scattered, the Lord will make a way for them to return and fill their Promised Land to capacity. In that day, they will worship the Lord as their one true Messiah.