

This chapter begins what many consider to be the second section of Zechariah that is written in a style referred to as apocalyptic. This means it is referring to the end times and the language used is often enigmatic or metaphorical. That does not mean specific predictions will not come to pass, but rather that they also refer to a broader picture of what the Lord is doing in the earth.

The first eight verses of this chapter refer to powers that harassed Israel in the past but had in Zechariah's day been subdued and were no longer a threat. Israel was paying taxes to Persia, the dominant world power at the time. By reminding them of the powers that had harassed Israel, God was conveying the message that though this world's powers come and go, He is keeping watch to fulfill His promises toward Israel and the whole of mankind. The main promise is that the Messiah would come (Malachi 3:1). That is the subject of the last portion of this chapter.

*<sup>1</sup> The oracle of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place. For the LORD has an eye on mankind and on all the tribes of Israel, <sup>2</sup> and on Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. <sup>3</sup> Tyre has built herself a rampart and heaped up silver like dust, and fine gold like the mud of the streets. <sup>4</sup> But behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions and strike down her power on the sea, and she shall be devoured by fire. <sup>5</sup> Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited; <sup>6</sup> a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia. <sup>7</sup> I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites. Zechariah 9:1-7*

The first region mentioned was Syria. It was the main enemy of Israel in the ninth and eighth centuries before Christ. Tyre and Sidon never threatened Israel, but they are mentioned because they are among the enemies of God. Their chief god was money, the main rival of God in the world even today (Matthew 6:24<sup>ii</sup>). They were merchant cities whose ships plied the seas for trade. They would soon be utterly destroyed by the Greeks just as this prophecy foretold. Both these nations were already subdued by Assyria and Babylon. God was encouraging the remnant in Jerusalem that all the enemies of God will one day be like these nations.

Some see this as the harsh God of the Old Testament who is different from the God of love in the New Testament. He is the same God forever. We should not be ashamed that the enemies of goodness, grace, love, and mercy would one day be destroyed. Rather, it should be the hope of all who desire love to reign. We have a hard time accepting the fact that so many people end up with diamond-hard hearts we read about in the chapter seven (7:12<sup>iii</sup>), because we want to think man is basically good. That man is basically evil and can only be good by the grace of God should be obvious to every honest person. This fallen world would like to think that all are destined to

heaven. Jesus told us that was not the case. God will be just. Many will so harden their hearts toward love and truth to the point that they will never change.

*<sup>8</sup> Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.* Zechariah 9:8  
ESV has translated this verse as God's eye is on all mankind and Israel, but others have translated it that the eyes of all, especially Israel are on the Lord. Either way, the sense is of expectancy. God is at work and is going to do a work that is amazing to mankind. Chapter two told them to *<sup>13</sup> Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.* Zechariah 2:13 Verse seven tells us that many survive God's dealing with the nations and will become a part of the people of God, even like the lead nation, Judah. We've already seen that Gentiles would be included as God's people in earlier passages (2:10-12<sup>iv</sup>; 8:20-23<sup>v</sup>). This theme of nations becoming people of God is seen throughout the prophets, but especially in Isaiah and Zechariah which are the prophets who spoke the most on the coming Messiah (Isaiah 2:3<sup>vi</sup>). And all of us who are Gentiles say, "Thank you Jesus!"

We can sum up these eight verses by saying that the past foreshadows the future. What they once feared they need no longer fear. The day is coming when the world will be as these nations, but not only subdued, even more wonderful, many will become worshipers of God. What we once feared, God has already helped us overcome by His Spirit. This should encourage us that God can help us to overcome what we are concerned with now, for nothing is too hard for God (Luke 1:37<sup>vii</sup>). God dealt with our past problems, so we need not fear the future (1 Corinthians 10:13<sup>viii</sup>). He will one day put an end to all our problems. The main one, death, has already been dealt with by Jesus (Revelation 1:18<sup>ix</sup>). The problem of sin and temptation will be finished once and for all, never to oppress us again. That's why we can focus on building the temple of living stones in spite of problems that come with being in the present fallen world. Just as these Jews looked forward to the first coming and the salvation it would bring, we look forward to Christ reigning over all the earth which is mentioned in the next verses. (See verse 10).

The passage now moves from the northern nations to the south where the temple was being rebuilt. The rebuilding of the temple, the remnant of the nations worshiping God, and God bringing lasting peace to Jerusalem takes us to the last portion of the chapter about the coming Messiah. Verse eight tells us that the day is coming when no oppressor will again march over them. This is an indication that it is speaking of a final work of God.

*<sup>9</sup> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.* Zechariah 9:9-10 This section begins with one of the most well-known passages in Zechariah. It is quoted in Matthew 21:4-5<sup>x</sup> as referring to Jesus and

the triumphal entry. The first portion of Zechariah pointed to the expectation of God arriving to change curse into blessing and bring security to the returning remnant. So, it is somewhat of a shock to see the arrival of the Savior is on a donkey. It doesn't seem to match the expectation that has been building throughout these prophecies. But isn't that just how God often works. Little things bring about big changes.

There is a new song called Dream Small by Josh Wilson. God often does great things through seemingly insignificant acts. God can do great things through a humble person's prayer (James 5:16b<sup>xi</sup>). He can use a prophet's word to turn a nation (2 Chronicles 28:10-11<sup>xii</sup>). He can take a child's lunch and feed thousands (Matthew 14:17<sup>xiii</sup>). He can take a cross and save a world (1 Corinthians 1:18<sup>xiv</sup>)! **Don't underestimate the results of little acts done in obedience to the Spirit of God.** The little life you nurture today may change an entire culture. Here is the chorus of that very Scriptural song: "Dream small. Don't bother like you've gotta do it all, Just let Jesus use you where you are, One day at a time. Live well, Loving God and others as yourself. Find little ways where only you can help, With His great love. A tiny rock can make a giant fall. Dream small!" This humble king on a donkey was about to save the world!

In verse ten God is the speaker. It is God who announces the arrival of a king who will proclaim peace to the nations. He is God's king. If we take a closer look, we can see that the One who is coming to reign has already been described by Zechariah. In chapter three we see the high priest Joshua was symbol of One who was to come (3:8<sup>xv</sup>). In chapter six we saw the coming One predicted to be both priest and king (6:12<sup>xvi</sup>) symbolized in the crown placed on the head of the high priest Joshua. In those chapters He is referred to as God's servant the Branch, alluding to Isaiah's term for the Branch of Jesse, the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1<sup>xvii</sup>). He is God's king who will reign over all.

**He is a unique king in that He is righteous!** All kings who have come before have had their faults, but this One is flawless. He comes to Zion. That reminds us again of Isaiah who tells us that to us a child is born and to us a Son is given (Isaiah 9:6<sup>xviii</sup>). The extent of His rule is beyond that of all other kings (Isaiah 9:7<sup>xix</sup>). He has salvation! That is an interesting way to express it, for of any other king one would say that he would save us from our enemies. That is true of the Messiah too, but this king HAS salvation. Jesus (Yeshua in Aramaic/Hebrew) means the salvation of God. He is our Savior. Salvation for the lost would be provided through the sinless blood that he HAS and would shed for our sins (John 1:29<sup>xx</sup>).

I want to remind you that in our study of John's gospel we saw that when Jesus on that donkey presenting himself to Jerusalem as the Lamb of God. It was the very day that Jews were commanded to choose their sacrificial lambs, five days before Passover (John 12:1, 12; Exodus 12:3,6).

He is also the divine warrior. Because man is not righteous and so often errs in judgment, there must come a righteous One with the power to set wrongs right and to cause wars to cease. *The Bible is testifying to the fact that evil must be actively resisted and done away. It does not disappear by itself. Hitlers must be made to cease their*

*holocausts; civil rights must be guaranteed with the force of law. Someone has got to break the swords and fashion the spears into pruning hooks. But by testifying that God is the Divine Warrior, the Bible is saying that the ultimate destruction of evil belongs to him.<sup>xxi</sup>*

Though He is the divine warrior, He is also different in that He is gentle. His first coming is not on a war stallion but on a donkey, offering peace to Jerusalem and to the nations. This is more than the absence of war, but the Hebrew implies "wholeness", or everything that is good and blessed in life. He is also preacher in that He proclaims peace to the nations. That is the good news Isaiah predicted (Isaiah 52:7<sup>xxii</sup>). This is peace with God through His sacrifice, but also peace when He reigns over the earth.

This is the hope of peace to which the rebuilding of temple looked. There was an alternative to One coming in judgment. It was to receive this gentle king and the peace He would bring. He was coming for the sake of all mankind (John 3:16<sup>xxiii</sup>), but to Zion first. How sad that the Jews did not recognize the fulfillment of this passage! Or maybe they did but misinterpreted it. They shouted Hosanna ("save now" Matthew 21:9<sup>xxiv</sup>), but they rejected the salvation He came to bring. It was no coincidence that Pilate put a sign above the cross that declared Jesus to be the King of Jews. No wonder the religious leaders wanted Pilate to change the message it sent (John 19:19-21<sup>xxv</sup>)! To the Jewish person who knew Zechariah's predictions, it was declaring Jesus was indeed the Messiah of God.

*<sup>11</sup> As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.* Zechariah 9:11-12 "As for you also" - the prophecy turns to the present. They needed to be reminded that the covenant made on Sinai was still in effect. They were still the chosen people of God. Though they were prisoners of hope, the day was coming when God would free them from the waterless pit, which is a term used for death. It was dry cistern used to store bones until the resurrection. God's purposes still stood intact though they were under Persian rule and struggling with their neighboring countries. This life is not the end! This One who was to come would one day raise them from death. Their labors weren't in vain.

As Christians today, we are also prisoners of hope, a blessed hope (Titus 2:11-13<sup>xxvi</sup>). We do not yet see Christ reigning in the earth (Romans 8:24-25<sup>xxvii</sup>). Sin still causes us pain. We suffer the conditions of this fallen world. We wonder if our labor is important. However, we know that we will be set free from death when that last trumpet sounds (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)<sup>xxviii</sup>. We have an even better blood covenant than the one made on Sinai, for the blood of Jesus sealed the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:13-14<sup>xxix</sup>).

We are not prisoners of optimistic hope like those in the world. The world keeps placing its hope in wealth or health or governments which all will disappoint and eventually fail them and leave them in despair. Nor are we prisoners of despair who give up because the world doesn't satisfy. We have a sure hope from a God who cannot lie and who has sealed the promise with His own blood (Hebrews 6:17-18<sup>xxx</sup>). That is why we are to

constantly return to our stronghold. All throughout the Psalms, the stronghold of Israel is the LORD God. God was encouraging them to return to Him. He had returned to them, and now He was inviting their return to Him (1:3<sup>xxxix</sup>).

The LORD promised that all they lost would be more than restored. They would have double. That prosperity they would have in the future would be greater than before the captivity. We can apply that as spiritual prosperity. We learn from the dealings of God in our life and forsake our wicked ways and compromises with evil and go from glory to glory when we fix our eyes on our Stronghold (2 Corinthians 4:18<sup>xxxii</sup>).

*13 For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.*

Zechariah 9:13 ESV study notes help us with verse 13. This is best understood as a predictive prophecy regarding future events, much like the mention of "the king of Greece" in Dan. 8:21<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Zechariah was writing between 520 and perhaps 480 B.C., but the Greek ruler Alexander the Great did not conquer Palestine until 333. The Jewish people did not successfully rebel against domination by the Seleucids (the Greek-speaking successors to Alexander's rule) until the Maccabean period (the revolt was 166-160 B.C.; they gained full independence in 142). The name "Greece" (Hb. *Yawan*) was known at the time of Zechariah, for the Greeks had defeated the invading Persian armies of King Darius at the battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., but Greece was never an enemy of Israel or a conquering world power until Alexander the Great.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

At the time of the prophecy, Israel did not see Greece as an enemy. When the Macabeans conquered the Seleucids, it was like a David fighting a Goliath. What an amazing prediction of what was to come in a future dark time leading up to the coming of the Messiah. Some interpreters, not allowing the possibility of such predictive prophecy, see this as a later insertion added into the text, but there is no manuscript support for this idea, and it is not necessary. They just can't accept the supernatural.

Ultimately, Greece represents the nations of the world that resist God. The verses that follow, like the opening verses, predict the ultimate defeat of all such forces that oppose God. If these previous predictions of the coming Messiah and restoration of the nation seemed impossible at the time and yet came to pass with such accuracy, we can be sure the predictions of future events are just as certain to be fulfilled.

Our Stronghold cannot fail! Are you trusting Him in your circumstances today? The little things you do today in obedience to the Holy Spirit have eternal consequences. Your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Are you trusting Jesus to forgive your sins and accept you into heaven when your time comes? He has come to us gently, inviting us to accept Him as our good and gracious King. Have you received the humble King? One day He will come and defeat all the enemies of goodness and truth. Every knee will bow. How much better to accept His love and grace today!

## Questions

- 1 Why does it help us to remember how God helped us in the past?
- 2 What is the promise in verse seven?
- 3 Why was verse 9 shocking?
- 4 How can small things be so significant? Give examples.
- 5 Why is this king so unique?
- 6 Why must the Messiah be a divine warrior?
- 7 What choice was before the Jewish people on Jesus' final Passover?
- 8 Why is our hope certain?
- 9 How was verse 13 fulfilled?
- 10 How did this passage speak to you today?

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<sup>i</sup> **Malachi 3:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> "Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

<sup>ii</sup> **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

<sup>iii</sup> **Zechariah 7:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from the LORD of hosts.

<sup>iv</sup> **Zechariah 2:10-12 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD. <sup>11</sup> And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. <sup>12</sup> And the LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem."

<sup>v</sup> **Zechariah 8:20-23 (ESV)** <sup>20</sup> "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. <sup>21</sup> The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.' <sup>22</sup> Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. <sup>23</sup> Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

<sup>vi</sup> **Isaiah 2:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

<sup>vii</sup> **Luke 1:37 (ESV)** <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."

<sup>viii</sup> **1 Corinthians 10:13 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

<sup>ix</sup> **Revelation 1:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

<sup>x</sup> **Matthew 21:4-5 (ESV)** <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, <sup>5</sup> "Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

<sup>xi</sup> **James 5:16b (ESV)** <sup>16b</sup> The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

<sup>xii</sup> **2 Chronicles 28:10-11 (ESV)** <sup>10</sup> And now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. Have you not sins of your own against the LORD your God? <sup>11</sup> Now hear me, and send back the captives from your relatives whom you have taken, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you."

<sup>xiii</sup> **Matthew 14:17-18 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." <sup>18</sup> And he said, "Bring them here to me."

<sup>xiv</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

<sup>xv</sup> **Zechariah 3:8 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men who are a sign: behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.

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<sup>xvi</sup> **Zechariah 6:12 (ESV)** <sup>12</sup> And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.

<sup>xvii</sup> **Isaiah 11:1 (ESV)** <sup>1</sup> There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

<sup>xviii</sup> **Isaiah 9:6 (ESV)** <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>xix</sup> **Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

<sup>xx</sup> **John 1:29 (ESV)** <sup>29</sup> The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

<sup>xxi</sup> Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching - Nahum-Malachi.

<sup>xxii</sup> **Isaiah 52:7 (ESV)** <sup>7</sup> How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."

<sup>xxiii</sup> **John 3:16 (ESV)** <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

<sup>xxiv</sup> **Matthew 21:9 (ESV)** <sup>9</sup> And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

<sup>xxv</sup> **John 19:19-21 (ESV)** <sup>19</sup> Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. <sup>21</sup> So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"

<sup>xxvi</sup> **Titus 2:11-13 (ESV)** <sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, <sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,

<sup>xxvii</sup> **Romans 8:24-25 (ESV)** <sup>24</sup> For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

<sup>xxviii</sup> **1 Corinthians 15:51-53 (ESV)** <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

<sup>xxix</sup> **Hebrews 9:13-14 (ESV)** <sup>13</sup> For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, <sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

<sup>xxx</sup> **Hebrews 6:17-18 (ESV)** <sup>17</sup> So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

<sup>xxxi</sup> **Zechariah 1:3 (ESV)** <sup>3</sup> Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

<sup>xxxii</sup> **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> **Daniel 8:21 (ESV)** <sup>21</sup> And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> ESV Study Bible