

Zechariah Chapter Nine

Zechariah 9 commences the final section of the prophecy and concerns the re-establishment of God's **government** in the earth. Zechariah 9-14 contains *two* oracles beginning: 'the burden of the word of the Lord' (9.1; 12.1). The *first* oracle emphasises the punishment of the Gentile nations (and blessing of Israel) whereas the *second* oracle concerns the purifying of Israel (and blessing of the Gentile nations). Again, the first oracle focusses on the *first* advent of Christ and *rejection* of the King. The second oracle speaks of the *second* advent of Christ and *return* and *reign* of the King.

The Foes of the King [9.1-8]

Oftentimes, when God gives a *distant* prophecy, He also exemplifies it in *near* history. Like a signpost along the road (or dress-rehearsal), it indicates the certainty of the ultimate fulfilment of every Divine promise. These verses a perfect example. The expeditions of Alexander the Great are apparent in the details of vv.1-8, a prophecy which was given at least 150 years before he was born (cf. Daniel 7.6; 8.5-9; 11.1-4). Thus, these verses received a *preliminary* fulfilment in a 'mighty king' (Alexander) but their *ultimate* fulfilment awaits the 'King of kings'. The verses describe the victory march of the King as He moves in an orderly fashion from north to south, ultimately coming to His house in Jerusalem (v.8). The enemies described are not the world powers of the day (cf. 1.18-21) but smaller enemies that bordered Israel to the north and south and troubled them in earlier times. There is thus divine preparation for Israel to occupy the whole land that God had promised them.



v.1: A 'burden' describes divine revelation to a prophet whose responsibility it was to 'bear' and 'lift up' (i.e. proclaim). It was often a message of judgment, and thus weighed upon the soul of the prophet. This 'burden' concerned the land of 'Hadrach', likely a province or district in the vicinity of Damascus, the capital city of ancient Aram (**Syria**). The pronouncement of divine judgment would 'rest' (to cause a camel to lie down) or 'remain' on Damascus until its purpose was accomplished. This beginning of judgment causes all the eyes of mankind and especially the tribes of Israel to be fastened on the Lord in *fear* and *expectation* (cf. Isaiah 17.1, 7) – God is at work! **v.2:** 'Hamath' was a city and district located about 125 miles north of Damascus in the modern-day country of Lebanon and northern end of the promised land (Joshua 13.5). 'Tyre' and 'Sidon' were the chief cities of **Phoenicia** and had a reputation for 'wisdom'. **v.3:** Tyre was an evil city, promoting the worship of Baal (cf. 1 Kings 16.31) and the location of Satan's throne (Ezekiel 28.2). After a thirteen-year siege by Nebuchadnezzar (586-573 BC; Ezekiel 26.7ff) the city was destroyed, but survivors moved to a small, rocky island half a mile offshore. This was 'fortified' by a 150ft wall and was virtually impregnable. Being located on the coast, Tyre was a prominent commercial port and accumulated excessive wealth (cf. Ezekiel 28.4-5). **v.4:** But their strength and wealth were no match for the 'Lord' (*Adonai*, sovereign Master). A chiasm in the Hebrew suggests her *wealth* would be dispossessed, and *fortifications* cast into the sea. What remained would be devoured by fire. This was fulfilled in 333-332 BC when, during a seven-month siege, Alexander built a causeway from the rubble of the old city and destroyed the 'new' Tyre (cf. Ezekiel 26.3-5). **v.5:** Having seen the devastation of Tyre, the **Philistines** will 'shake in their proverbial sandals' (MacArthur). *Ashkelon* will be filled with fear and become depopulated. *Gaza* will writhe in anguish and her king will 'perish'. Apparently, Alexander dragged him through the city bound to a chariot by thongs through the soles of his feet. *Ekron's* hope of any deliverance will 'wither'. **v.6:** As for *Ashdod*, the city would become inhabited by 'one of a foreign race' (JND). Ultimately, proud Philistia would be humbled and shamed. **v.7:** With the destruction of every *political* (Damascus), *commercial* (Tyre) and *proud* (Philistia) enemy represented, attention turns to the *religious* pagan. God will 'remove' or 'lift off the earth' the representative Philistine pagan pictured as a man drinking the blood and eating the flesh of idolatrous sacrifices. But note divine grace. A remnant of Philistine converts 'belonging to God' (JND) will emerge. They will even become a 'clan' (or 'tribal leaders') in Judah, and 'Ekron as a Jebusite' suggesting their incorporation into the people of God. The historical Jebusites adopted the religion of Israel after the conquest of Jerusalem by David (Judges 1.21; 2 Samuel 24.16-24). **v.8:** According to history, Alexander marched past Jerusalem on his way to Egypt and returned again without attacking the city. God had used him as His instrument of judgment, and yet 'encamped' or surrounded His house (i.e. the temple, 1.16) with His protecting presence in Jerusalem. This is not merely a promise of preservation from Alexander, but still future deliverance from every 'oppressor' (foreign tyrant) during the reign of the coming Christ. God is carefully keeping watch. He has seen the affliction of His people (Exodus 3.7) and will again deliver them for good.

The Features of the King [9.9-10]

v.9: These two verses are a beautifully constructed Hebrew poem – each verse contains six lines. v.9 refers to the *character* of the King (first advent); v.10 to the *conquest* of the King (second advent). Thus, two verses of Scripture are divided by two thousand years (cf. Isaiah 9.6-7). Living in a day of partial and progressive revelation, the prophets often saw and spoke of the two advents of Messiah as one. The close connection with Alexander the Great invites a contrast.

- ‘Rejoice’. Both Zion and Jerusalem are personified, standing for her inhabitants and representing the whole nation. The coming of Christ incites *ecstatic merriment* and a ‘shout’ of triumph and applause (cf. Zephaniah 3.14-15).
- ‘Behold thy King cometh’. This is Israel’s long-promised Sovereign of the seed of David (6.13; 14.9) coming for their *benefit* and *good*. He is God’s King (Psalm 2.6) and will reign in righteousness (Isaiah 32.1).
- ‘Just and having salvation’. Because He is just He has salvation. ‘Just’ describes both his character and reign. He will execute justice and govern faithfully (Psalm 72.1-2). ‘Having salvation’ is a normal *reflexive* and means ‘showing Himself a Saviour’. He is the personification of salvation, not only from the penalty of sin, but also deliverance from the enemy (Psalm 72.13). Some say the verb should be *passive*, meaning the King is the recipient of salvation, having been delivered out from death (Psalm 22.8; Hebrews 5.7). As such He is able to deliver His people!
- ‘Lowly and riding upon an ass’. ‘Lowly’ primarily means ‘meekness and modesty’ but has the additional thoughts of suffering affliction (Isaiah 53) and one without possessions (poor). The Lord Jesus manifested his ‘lowliness’ by riding into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal (lit. ‘son of she-asses’) of an ass. Once Solomon had brought horses into Israel, the donkey lost its dignity (cp. 2 Samuel 16.2; Jeremiah 17.25). The horse is symbolic of warfare, power and might, but the Davidic ruler was prophesied as coming on a donkey – a beast of burden and humiliation (Genesis 49.10-11; 1 Samuel 16.20). *Spurgeon: Christ is the king who put aside the pomp and pageantry in which eastern monarchs delighted; and, instead of riding on a horse, he mounts a lowly donkey.*
- Each of the gospel writers speak of the ‘triumphal entry’ (Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12). Matthew records both an ass *and* a colt – Christ would not violate the sympathies of nature by taking an unbroken colt away from its mother. His *omniscience* knew where the colt was; His *omnipotence* rode the colt. Matthew and John both quote Zechariah 9.9, but omit the words ‘rejoice’ and ‘having salvation’ for the nation had rejected their King. Matthew mentions His ‘lowliness’ (cf. Matthew 11.29) but not John for he is concerned with the *glory* of the Son of God.

v.10: With the entire church age fitting between v.9 and v.10, this verse looks on to the reign of the Prince of Peace. ‘Battle chariots’, war horses and the ‘battle bow’ (representing the whole arsenal used in ancient warfare) will no longer be required. In fact, Christ will ‘proclaim’ or ‘announce’ peace to the nations and the removal of all hostility (Isaiah 2.4). *Shalom* means far more than the absence of war; it suggests wholeness, well-being, harmony and tranquillity. This is the fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12.3). This King’s ‘dominion’ (sovereignty) shall be universal, stretching from ‘sea to sea’ and from ‘the river’ Euphrates (Joshua 1.4) to the ‘ends’ (extremity) of the earth, cf. Psalm 72.8.

The Favour of the King [9.11-15]

v.11: The closing verses of the chapter focus on the deliverance and blessing the King will provide for His subjects. ‘As for thee’ (feminine singular) refers to daughter Zion and Jerusalem (v.9). The exile of the nation is likened to ‘imprisonment’ (Psalm 107.10; Isaiah 42.7; 51.14), even incarceration in a dry well or ‘pit’ (Genesis 37.24; Jeremiah 38.6). But Christ will ‘release’ and restore them to the land again, according to the ‘blood of *thy* covenant’ (i.e. made for their benefit). This is possibly a reference to the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 15.18) which guaranteed the land from ‘the river of Egypt’ to the ‘great river Euphrates’ and was ratified unconditionally by blood. **v.12:** Responsibility rests upon the exiles to ‘turn’ to the ‘strong hold’, namely the presence of Messiah in Zion (v.8; Psalm 18.2; Joel 3.16) – a place of *security* and *shelter* in contrast to the pit. The exiles are ‘prisoners of *the* hope’ – it is time for the glorious hope of Israel to be realised – the coming of Messiah and associated blessings (Acts 28.20). God will then ‘render a double portion’ of favour and blessing upon his first-born son (Isaiah 61.7). **v.13:** Jehovah is pictured as the divine **warrior** using Judah (representing the southern tribes) as His *drawn bow* and Ephraim (representing the northern tribes) as His *arrow*. The ‘sons of Zion’ are as the sword of a mighty man of valour in His hand. The Lord raises them up against ‘Greece’, a prophecy which found *preliminary* fulfilment in the victory of the Maccabees (166-160 BC) over Antiochus Epiphanes but awaits *fulness* at end of the age. **v.14:** The image changes to a divine **storm** as the Lord appears ‘over them’ in security and protection (Exodus 14.19-20, 24; 1 Corinthians 10.1). The lightning goes forth as the Lord’s arrow, and the thunder sounds as His trumpet. The storm moves from the south – these being the most destructive and violent storms which swept in from the desert. **v.15:** The final picture is that of a divine **captain** ‘defending’ (lit. ‘a shield over them’, Psalm 3.3) His people and leading them to victory. They are divinely enabled to destroy their enemies, devouring their flesh like lions (Numbers 23.24; Micah 5.8). They will trample their enemies underfoot like sling stones that have missed their mark and fallen into the mire. They shall raise a loud noise as those drunk with the blood of their enemies (rather than wine). They will be ‘filled to the brim’ with the same, like a ceremonial bowl used to catch the sacrificial blood of victims slain for sacrifice. They will be splattered with the blood of their victims as the ‘corners’ or horns of the brazen altar (Exodus 27.2; 29.12). What victory for the ‘sons of Zion’!