

Zechariah Chapter Ten

The Flock of the King [9.16-10.3]

The *first* oracle (9.1-11.17) emphasises the punishment of the Gentile nations and millennial *blessing* of Israel under the reign of Messiah. This section (9.16-10.3) introduces the prominent theme of shepherding and sheep. Israel's shepherds of the past have proved to be false, unfaithful and selfish (vv.2-3), but God will deliver them from such leadership and guide them under the hand of His faithful Shepherd. In fact, Zechariah 10 describes *'the blessed and prosperous condition of restored and converted Israel under the care and leadership of their true Shepherd-King'* (Baron).



v.16: *Jehovah Elohim*, the covenant-keeping and all-powerful God will 'save' His people. This is not mere help and deliverance from captivity, but true spiritual regeneration (12.10-14; Romans 11.26-27). In a figure which occurs frequently in the next few chapters, Israel are likened to the 'flock' of Jehovah (Psalm 80.1; 100.3). Not only will He seek, deliver and gather them to Himself, but in the person of Messiah, He will tend, feed and lead them (Isaiah 40.10-11). Psalm 23 and Psalm 100 shall be the millennial testimony of the entire nation. Changing the figure to a priestly crown [*nezer*] studded with gems, the nation is depicted as 'lifted up' or sparkling in the land, reflecting the glory of their Messiah (cf. Exodus 19.5-6; Malachi 3.17). This is a fitting image for a restored nation of priests (Isaiah 61.6). **v.17:** Though difficult to interpret, the opening line of the verse appears to be an outburst of worship from the remnant. When Israel sees the greatness of kingdom blessing they shall laud His 'goodness' (moral excellence actively manifested) and 'beauty' (Psalm 45.2; Isaiah 33.17). Alternatively, the phrase describes the remnant themselves. *NIV: How attractive and beautiful they will be!* Such is the shepherd care of Jehovah that He will lead His people to pasture. Grain and wine symbolise prosperity (Psalm 4.7) and stand for the *beginning* (corn) and *end* (vintage) of the harvest, thus the seasons will be full and abundant. 'Cheerful' means 'flourish' or 'fruitful' – this is a scene of *gladness* and *growth*. The practical application is clear. If the flock is to flourish, shepherds must feed them with the rich pasture of the word of God.

Chapter Ten. v.1: Though Jehovah would supply corn and wine (9.17), His people are not absolved of responsibility to 'ask' in prayer for the 'latter rain' (March-April, to strengthen and mature the crops). *Spurgeon: When we cease to pray for blessings, God has already ceased to bless us; but when our souls pour out floods of prayer, God is certain to pour out floods of mercy.* This is a clear reference to the covenant promise of Deuteronomy 11.13-16. The Canaanites claimed Baal was responsible for sending rain and producing fertility (cf. 1 Kings 18), but they were wrong (Jeremiah 14.22)! Moses had declared that if the people worshipped and obeyed Jehovah alone, He would bless them with the 'first' and 'latter rain'. Thus, the blessings of rain and subsequent fertility are symptomatic of a people in fellowship with their God. When we **ask** of the Lord, He **gives** – both 'bright clouds' (thunderstorms) and 'showers of rain', lit. 'pouring rain' and 'to every one grass' – individualising His gifts (Matthew 21.22; 1 John 3.22). Whilst the rain in view here is physical, the 'latter rain' is also symbolic of spiritual gifts and blessings (Proverbs 16.15). Spiritually speaking, Israel enjoyed the blessing of the 'first rain' on the Day of Pentecost. Had they repented, further 'times of refreshing' from the presence of the Lord could have been theirs (Acts 2.17-18; 3.19). The 'latter rain' of the Spirit's outpouring therefore awaits the day of Israel's conversion. **v.2:** In the past, Israel was like sheep without a shepherd, turning to idols for direction and help. The 'idols' [*teraphim*, cf. Genesis 31.19, 34; Hosea 3.4] were small household gods, possibly representing deceased ancestors, and were used for 'divination' (Judges 17.5; 18.5), i.e. seeking direction from the spirit (demonic) world (Ezekiel 21.21). This was forbidden by God and merely brought deception and false comfort. Consequently, Israel deliberately 'went their way' (used of *loosening* a boat from its moorings) or 'wandered' from their faithful Shepherd into captivity. They experienced 'trouble', being bowed under severe affliction, and had 'no shepherd' (can refer to any *leader*, but primarily *kings*). May we never forget, our help and our direction are always to be found in God alone (Psalm 121). *Stubbs: The child of God should consult the word of God and pray to God for guidance in the pathway of life and not rely on Satan's deceptions.* Prayer brings blessing; trust in idols brings sorrow. **v.3:** Nevertheless, the Lord of hosts did not forget His people. He has 'punished' [*paqad*, to attend to another *either* for ill or good] Israel's leaders of the past who advocated idolatry and led the people into sin (1 Kings 16.31; 2 Kings 1.2; Jeremiah 10.21; Ezekiel 34). He has also 'visited' [*paqad*] the people of Judah who will be transformed from wandering sheep to a glorious warhorse fitting for the God of majesty to ride forth upon in battle.

The Features of the King [10.4]

v.4: This verse supplies *four* beautiful pictures of God's true Shepherd (13.7) who comes forth 'out of' Judah.

- Cornerstone [*pinnah*]. Used as a metaphor for a leader (Judges 20.2; Isaiah 19.13). A cornerstone ensured the support and stability of the whole structure, uniting two adjoining walls. As the first stone laid, it also established the *location* and *orientation* of the building (character). Christ is a 'precious cornerstone' (Isaiah 28.16) and the 'chief cornerstone' of the church (Ephesians 2.20; 1 Peter 2.6). Not only have Jew and Gentile been *united* in Him (Ephesians 2.14-15), but the coming kingdom will be *founded* upon Him.
- Nail [*yated*]. *Yated* refers to *two* kinds of nail; a tent-peg (for security) and a wall-peg inside the centre of the tent on which all the valuable ornaments of the house were hung. Christ will bear the burden of rule, and the glory of the kingdom will be displayed in Him (2.5; 6.13). *Eliakim* is a type of Christ but was unable to bear such a weight of office as governor of the king's house (cf. Isaiah 22.20-25). We can still hang burdens upon Him (1 Peter 5.7).
- Battle bow [*qeset*]. The 'battle bow' is a symbol of strength for military conquest. Christ is a conqueror without equal. In 9.13, Judah was the bow, and Ephraim the arrow; now Christ is the bow itself. He is the mighty and skilful archer who shall send forth His 'sharp arrows' into the heart of the king's enemies (Psalm 45.5). This is the mighty victor who has already defeated death, the grave and the devil (1 Corinthians 15.55-57).
- Every oppressor [*noges*]. The word 'oppressor' can have negative (taskmaster) or positive (just rule) connotations. Therefore, the statement may mean that Christ will ruthlessly remove every oppressive false shepherd from Judah (v.3) and exercise His own absolute, autocratic rule. Alternatively, the phrase may be rendered as: *From him every exactor together (JND)*. A conquering king collected tributes from his subjects, often in the form of heavy taxes. But Christ is the 'chief exactor'. When He has established His kingdom, gifts of praise, worship and thanksgiving will be brought to Him (Psalm 72.10-11; Isaiah 60.6). Today, all our tributes of praise and worship are due to Him.

The Favour of the King [10.5-12]

v.5: As in Zechariah 9 (Alexander the Great), the following verses had a *preliminary* fulfilment in the victories of the Maccabees (167-160 BC), but ultimately look beyond to Armageddon and the coming of Christ. The people of Judah shall become as 'mighty men' [*gibborim*], even skilled warriors such as Nimrod, Gideon, Jephthah and Goliath (1 Samuel 17.51)! Trampling upon their enemies like the mud of the streets (cp. 9.15). Even the cavalry, symbolic of an army's chief strength, will be ashamed (or disgraced) by the might of Judah's warriors. But their strength comes from the 'mighty God' (Isaiah 9.6). He is not only 'about' them (security, 9.8) and 'over them' (guidance, 9.14) but also 'with them' (presence). **v.6:** This verse forms a transition of emphasis from Judah (southern kingdom) to 'Joseph', or 'Ephraim' (northern kingdom). In *seven* verses, the phrase 'I will' is repeated *nine* times. Millennial blessing depends entirely upon the *compassionate* (mercy) and *covenant* keeping God – 'I am the Lord their God'. Thus, not only Judah but also the 'house of Joseph' (i.e. the northern kingdom, Psalm 78.67; 80.1; Amos 5.6; 6.6) will be saved – that is, delivered from physical and spiritual captivity. They will be fully and permanently restored to the land, dwelling in peace and security (cf. Jeremiah 32.37). Such is the grace of God, they shall be 'as though I had not loathed them' (lit.). Their long, sad history of failure will not be remembered! **v.7:** As Judah (v.5), Ephraim (northern tribes, Hosea 4.17) shall become mighty warriors, rejoicing in the *Lord* and His *deliverance* as those made merry by wine. The highest and only lasting source of joy is always found in Christ. This is no short-lived restoration – their *children* will see it and be glad.

v.8: These verses recall the exodus of Israel from Egypt as a *pattern* of the great re-gathering to come (as also the restoration from Babylon, cf. Isaiah 48.20-22; 51.9-11). Note the references to Joseph (v.6), redemption (v.8), Egypt (v.10) and 'smiting' the sea (v.11). The word 'hiss' [*sharaq*] depicts a shepherd gathering his flock together by piping a tune. Jehovah is the true Shepherd of His people – and they know His voice (John 10.1-5). After all, they belong to Him by right of redemption, i.e. a full and complete redemption from exile and 'all their iniquities' (Psalm 130.8; Isaiah 53.4-6; 62.12). As in Egypt (Exodus 1.10, 12), the nation's population will greatly multiply in the kingdom (Isaiah 54.1-2; Zechariah 2.4; 8.4-5). **v.9:** The dispersion is further described in terms of 'sowing' which implies the hope of harvest (Hosea 2.23). Having been scattered and buried in the soil of foreign nations, they shall again remember their God (Ezekiel 6.9) 'turn' to Him in repentance and 'come alive' like a germinating seed (Ezekiel 37.3-6, 14; Romans 11.15). **v.10:** Egypt (where they were *slaves*) and Assyria (where they were *exiles*) are possibly used as representative nations to the south and north of Israel. Such will be the abundance of people, there will be no room in the land except for the *eastern* (Gilead) and *northern* (Lebanon) reaches. **v.11:** Jehovah is depicted as leading His people out of exile as He once did under the hand of Moses. He will lead them through the (Red) sea, symbolising the affliction and suffering of captivity, and cause the depths of the 'river' (Nile) to 'dry up' (reminiscent of Jordan). Nothing can impede the eternal purpose of God. The proud Assyrian will be humbled, and the sovereign authority (sceptre) of Egypt removed. God's people will never be *exiled* or *enslaved* again. **v.12:** In a wonderful contrast, it is the people of God who will 'walk up and down' – a technical term which suggests *liberty* and the exercise of *dominion* (Genesis 13.17; Micah 4.5). They will be known as the 'priests of Jehovah' (Isaiah 56.6) conducting themselves in full accord with the *character* of God as His representatives. What a privilege to bear the 'name' of the Lord Jesus (Acts 11.26).