

# God's Message to Us in Zechariah 9-14

*Halifax, NS*

23 December 2018, 2:00 PM

## **Introduction**

This afternoon we will continue our sermon series in which I am preaching through every book of the Bible.

- With a few exceptions, I have been preaching one sermon on each book.
  - Today we have one of those exceptions with the book of Zechariah.
  - This second to last book of the Old Testament is so full of messianic prophecies and so full of relevance to us today that it seemed to call for two messages.
- So last week, we looked at Zechariah 1-8, and this week, we will look at 9-14.

Last week, I told you that Zechariah is among the three minor prophets that were written after the exile.

- Like Haggai, it was written to encourage God's people to press on in the work of rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem.
  - God had, in His sovereign purposes, sent Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and its temple some 70 years before and had taken the people into exile.
    - God had bought this about because of the sin of His people and their refusal to heed His many calls and disciplinary acts to lead them to repentance.
  - But now in His grace, the LORD had raised up Cyrus the Persian who had ordered the Jews to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the temple.
- They started on the project, but soon were discouraged and distracted so that in 520 BC the Lord sent the prophet Haggai to call them to get back to work.
  - We saw how they responded and got back to work before the month was out.
  - Then we saw how Haggai came to them again to encourage them to keep on working when some of them realised how inferior the temple they were building was to the one that Solomon had built...and when they felt their weakness before the nations...
    - What was the point of all their work when the restoration was only a half-measure and was likely to be ruined by invaders anyway?
- I showed you last week how the prophet Zechariah also stepped in at this time of discouragement to add his voice to that of Haggai.
  - Month by month, the LORD would have either Haggai or Zechariah encourage the people to keep going in His service, small as it may have seemed to them.
- Both of these prophets encouraged the people by showing them that even though their work might seem small and insignificant,
  - It was in fact an essential link in God's ultimate plan to bring salvation to them and to the nations!
- There are times in redemptive history when you are involved in great events like the crossing of the Red Sea or the conquest of Canaan or proclaiming the resurrection of Christ on the Day of Pentecost...
  - but there are also those times when you are one of the slaves in Egypt whose task it is to encourage your children that God has plans to one day bring salvation to you and your people and through you to all the nations of the earth.

- You may even be one of only a few voices at such times who, by God’s grace, has faith—but it is you and those who have that faith that maintain the kingdom of righteousness—
  - that link the former promises with the future fulfillment.
- We live in a time when those who believe God’s promises are not in the seats of power.
  - In our land, we are not even in the great churches, but we are among those who cling to the LORD in faith, knowing that what He has promised, He will perform.
  - And the LORD encourages us with His word that tells us that our labour in the LORD is not in vain—as we serve Him without a lot of recognition in the world, and with most the recognition we do get as negative.
    - What makes it so wonderful is that we know we are part of the glorious kingdom that will be established.

Last week, we saw in the first 8 chapters of Zechariah how the LORD gave Zechariah a series of eight visions in the night,

- all of them showing them that the LORD was committed to preserving them and bringing forth to them the Saviour of the world.
- We saw, in addition to the visions, prophecies about the coming BRANCH, who would be but a branch—a shoot from them as a stump cut down—that would become a priest who was also a king.
  - He would build a temple that would encompass not only Jerusalem, but the nations of the world.
  - We saw that all of their fasting would one day be turned to joyful feasting.
    - Instead of the nations ignoring them, or coming to plunder them, they would come to worship God with them!
  - The last verse we looked at was this one, Zech. 8:23: **Thus says the LORD of hosts: “In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’ ”**

TRANS> That is what we have to look forward to.

- That is the reason that we have good reason to keep on serving the Lord. Our labour in the LORD will not be in vain.
- But let no one suppose that the way will be easy.
  - Zechariah makes it clear that God’s people will pass through many trying times, all appointed by the Lord, before the kingdom comes.
  - He outlines the broad phases of history that are yet future to them...
    - The Greek conquest in which God will preserve them until Messiah comes.
    - The Roman conquest in which God crushes them for rejecting the Messiah, yet delivers a remnant to receive His salvation.
    - The church’s conquest which will begin with a remnant that will receive the Messiah and come to completion through much tribulation when the Messiah returns.
  - In this broad sweeping outline of church history, we can learn how God works in us in the more localised ebbs and flows of church history,

- all the while recognising that it all leads to the glorious conquest of Christ at the last day.

Let's look at these three phases and at how they speak to us.

**I. Phase 1: the Greek conquest when the church is small, yet visible; attacked, yet marvellously preserved.**

A. In the microcosm of reformed churches in Canada, this is rather like our situation.

1. The Jews were building a temple for the Lord; we are planting churches for Him.
  - We are maintaining a gospel witness with worship and preaching as the Jews were maintaining it with worship at the temple.
2. They were small and insignificant among the nations as we are small and insignificant within our nation.
  - Even though we are part of Christ's glorious kingdom, we are presently hardly recognised (though often more than we might realise).

B. Zechariah 9-10 gives us remarkable prophecies about the Greek conquest.

- Certainly, as the people were labouring to build the temple, they would wonder if their work would last... they did not have the means to defend their city.
  - What good would it be to build the temple only to have it torn down by invaders who would want to get the precious materials?
  - But Zechariah gives prophecies to tell the people that the LORD will preserve the temple until the Messiah comes!

1. First, the LORD describes how He will protect His people from a coming invasion.
  - a. See Zechariah 9:1-8. Here the invasion of Alexander the Great is described in remarkable detail, even though it occurred in the 330's BC, almost two centuries after Zechariah's prophecy.
    - Alexander's pathway through Damascus, then to Tyre and Sidon (which were thought to be impregnable) and in verses 5-7, through the cities of Philistia and finally in verse 8 to God's house.
    - But look at what the LORD says about His house (the temple they were building) in verse 8!
      - **Zech 9:8: "I will camp around My house Because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, for now I have seen with My eyes."**
      - We are told in the history books that, to quote T.V. Moore,
        - "It is a remarkable fact, that when Alexander was advancing upon Jerusalem with great fury, he was arrested by a dream, and induced not only to spare it, but also to confer upon it great privileges."
        - That is how God protected His house!
  - b. What an encouragement it must have been to those building the temple to be told that God Himself would protect His house until Messiah comes.
    - And what an encouragement it must have been to those who saw this fulfilled 200 years later, knowing that God was true to His word in those hard times!
  - c. In verses 9-10, the LORD explains why He will preserve the temple.

- It was because the Messiah was going to come to the temple!
    - The LORD would preserve Jerusalem until He rode into it.
    - This is what Zechariah says: **“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup> I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be ‘from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”**
  - Here is the Messiah—their promised king—coming in peace.
    - He does not come on a war horse, Israel’s kings were not supposed to multiply horses, but on a donkey.
    - Horses will be cut off from God’s people because they will not be needed.
      - The message of the Messiah will be a message of peace to the nations—and in the end, He will have dominion of the whole earth.
  - What an encouragement this is to us!
    - We see the fulfillment of the Messiah riding into the city in Matthew 21, and we can be sure that the dominion of peace will also be fulfilled when God is so pleased.
      - Our God reigns!
- So when Alexander came, God protected His people without His people fighting—
2. But in the time when Antiochus Epiphanes comes, God will protect His people by raising them up to fight with great courage.
    - This is described in the rest of chapter 9.
    - Antiochus Epiphanes (whose name means God manifested) was the ruthless Greek king from 175 BC to 164 BC who sought to Hellenize the Jews by force, defiling their temple.
    - In 9:11-17, Zechariah explains that this time God’s people will be the weapons by which the invaders will be stopped.
      - Look at verse 13: **For I have bent Judah, My bow, fitted the bow with Ephraim, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like the sword of a mighty man.**
      - This speaks of the Maccabees who, with remarkable courage, stood up against Greece and saved Jerusalem from their hand... as verse 16 says: **The LORD their God will save them in that day, as the flock of His people. For they shall be like the jewels of a crown, lifted like a banner over His land—**
  3. In chapter 10, the LORD describes a time of relative peace that will follow.
    - The chapter begins with a description of how they will seek the LORD instead of their idols for the seasonal rains.
    - The Maccabees, you see, were greatly used to bring about a time of reformation.
      - They arose from the people and became great leaders, replacing some of the corrupt leaders as described in 10:3-5...
    - And the prophecy goes on to speak of this time of reformation as a harbinger of much greater days to come!

- When the prophets speak of God’s deliverance in the near future, they always end up speaking of the greater fulfilment that will come in the more distant future.
- One especially noteworthy verse is the last one of chapter 10.
  - Here the LORD speaks to the LORD (the Father to the Son), saying:
    - **“I will strengthen them in the LORD, and they shall walk up and down in His name,” says the LORD.**

TRANS> What an encouragement this is...

- We can know that, as we labour to raise up churches, our LORD will preserve these churches, either by His secret power (as with Alexander) or by raising us up in strength (as with Antiochus and the Maccabees).
  - He will preserve His church with a view to bringing forth the peace that He has promised us in Christ at the end!
  - Despite the frailty of His people, He maintained the temple until Jesus came, the King, lowly, riding on a donkey.
- But know, of course, that it is not always suited to His purposes to preserve the church in a highly visible way as He did while the temple stood.
  - The visible temple was destroyed in the exile...because the people’s lives were such that they defiled the holy place and distorted its very message.
  - So also, after Christ was manifested and rejected by the Jews, the temple was destroyed again by the Roman conquest when instead of preservation of His house, we see Him tearing it down.
    - So let’s look at:

## **II. Phase 2: the Roman conquest when the LORD destroys the temple, yet brings a remnant of His people to salvation in the spiritual temple of the Messiah.**

A. The Roman conquest is described in chapter 11.

1. The chapter opens (verses 1-3) with the imagery of great leaders being brought to ruin as portrayed by mighty trees being destroyed and shepherds wailing.
  - a. First, He shows that His own shepherds will destroy His people.
    - Look at 11:4-5 where it speaks of the leaders of God’s people who were so wicked that they devoured the people—just how Jesus found them in His day: **Thus says the LORD my God, “Feed the flock for slaughter, <sup>5</sup> whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich’; and their shepherds do not pity them.”**
    - When He came, Jesus accused the Jewish leaders of devouring His people.
      - They had gotten so bad that they were more concerned about maintaining their positions than acknowledging their own Messiah!
  - b. But the people were no better... they deserved such leaders—that is why God allowed them to be prepared for slaughter.
    - Look at 11:6-8: **“For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land,” says the LORD. “But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor’s hand and into the hand of his king [The Roman emperor they chose instead of Christ]. They [the Romans] shall attack the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their hand.” <sup>7</sup> So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock.**

**I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock. <sup>8</sup> I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.**

- What terrible words!
    - God loathes His people and they can't stand him either.
  - c. As result, He is leaving them to destruction...
    - verse 9-10: **Then I said, "I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh."** [Josephus describes this in his history] <sup>10</sup> **And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples.**
2. But why is God so angry with them again? We are told in verse 12 and 13!
- a. It is for rejecting the Messiah who had been sent to them according to God's promise to be the Saviour of the whole world!
    - Look at verse 12: **Then I said to them, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain."** So they weighed out for my wages thirty *pieces* of silver.
      - That is the value they placed on the LORD Jesus when He came to them to be their Saviour. Thirty pieces of silver—the price of a slave!
      - He was worthy of their all, and they paid thirty pieces of silver to Judas to get rid of Him.
    - b. So with biting sarcasm, the LORD orders the silver (that princely price) to be thrown to the potter... <sup>13</sup> **And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter" — that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.**
      - This was literally fulfilled when Judas took the thirty pieces of silver that were paid to him for betraying Christ and threw it to the priests...
        - who then took it and bought the potter's field for burying the dead, a place of uncleanness because the money was blood money.
- What could be a greater offense than to count Christ who shed His precious blood for our sins as a worthless one!
3. Therefore, the LORD raised up a shepherd that truly was worthless to devour them.
- This is described in verses 15-16: **And the LORD said to me [Zechariah], "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd [the Roman emperors]. <sup>16</sup> For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land *who* will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces."**
  - And then verse 17 tells us that this worthless shepherd will be cut off himself.
    - **"Woe to the worthless shepherd, who leaves the flock! A sword *shall be* against his arm and against his right eye; his arm shall completely wither, and his right eye shall be totally blinded."**
  - This was what happened to the emperor of Rome—when Rome fell...
    - First the emperor destroyed the temple of the LORD at Jerusalem.
    - Then a few generations later, the Goths and Vandals came and destroyed him.

- B. But then something very marvellous will happen...
- Something that arises in a rather quiet, almost imperceptible way...
    - God will raise up Jerusalem again... as described in chapter 12 and 13.
  - 1. Zech 12:1 makes it clear that it is God's work: **"The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him:"**
    - He is the one who made the heaven and the earth and who gives us life...
    - And you see what He says what He will do:
      - vs 2: **"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem."**
        - In other words, it will come about that when the nations try to attack Jerusalem, it will make them like drunkards.
      - Surely this is not the Jerusalem of earth built by man's hands, but the Jerusalem above that was established by Jesus Christ to replace it.
        - As we saw in chapter 11, the earthly Jerusalem would be given over to destruction by the Romans.
    - Look at what else we are told about this invincible Jerusalem in 12:3-9.
      - In short, we are told that the nations who come to destroy it will end up being destroyed... they will be broken.
      - Zech 12:3-6: **"And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. [Try to attack Jerusalem and you end up getting hurt. Look what happened to these attackers of God's city:] 4 In that day," says the LORD, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah [to protect them], and will strike every horse of the peoples [those who attack Jerusalem] with blindness. 5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.' 6 In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem."**
    - Isn't that just the way it is with the church of Jesus Christ?
      - The more the nations rage against the church, the more they discover the church's strength.
        - They try to lift the stone and they get cut to pieces...
      - He goes on to say in verse 8 that even the most feeble among them will be as strong as David, and the strong ones will be like the Angel of the LORD.
        - How it unnerves the enemy when an old man gladly accepts death by fire for the sake of Christ.
        - The victor is not the one who lights the fire, but the young woman who sings psalms of Jesus as her body goes up in flames as a sacrifice to God.
        - Time and again it has been seen—the more martyrs there are, the more converts there are.

2. But how do we know that this quiet strength that is described, this invincible Jerusalem, is indeed believers in Christ?
  - a. Because they are described for us in verses 10-14!
    - They are described as those who have the Holy Spirit poured out on them.
    - And they are described as those who mourn for having pierced God.
    - Look at verse 10 where the LORD says:
      - **10 “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. 11 In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem...”**
    - Notice... the LORD, Jehovah, is speaking, and He says that they will look on ME whom they have pierced!
      - How could the LORD of glory be pierced?
        - Only because He became flesh and dwelt among us.
        - It was God the Son who was pierced.
      - What conviction came to those who crucified the LORD when the Spirit was poured out on them and they saw what they had done!
        - In Acts 2, we are told how they were cut to the heart and cried out saying, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”
  - b. And then chapter 13 explains how these inhabitants of Jerusalem will find a fountain of cleansing for their sins... which indeed they did!
    - Verse 1 says... **In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.**
      - The very One that they crucified becomes a fountain of cleansing for sin by that very crucifixion. Glorious mercy!
  - c. When they come to this fountain, opened from Christ crucified, they not only receive forgiveness but are also purged from their idolatry...
    - God cuts off their idols from them as it says in 13:2: **“It shall be in that day,” says the LORD of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land.”**
      - How could they go back to idols when the Spirit of grace and supplication has been poured out on them?
      - How could they again tell lies about God when they have come to the Son of God crucified for their sins... to what idol could one turn?

TRANS> But remember... for Zechariah, this was all yet to come in five and half centuries!

- C. And so in verse 7-9 the LORD Himself calls for the great event that will set all of this in motion.
  1. He says, (vs. 7): **“Awake, O sword, (the sword refers to execution) against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,” says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones.”**
    - This is the cross of Christ, the Son of God!



- Jesus quoted this verse with reference to Himself when He went to the cross and His disciples were scattered... See Mark 14:21.
  - But look at the words here... God not only calls Him *My Shepherd*, but also *the man who is My companion*...
    - The word *companion* speaks of His kinsman—this Shepherd is a man, but He is also God’s kinsman... His companion...
  - This is the cross and it sets everything in motion... the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the pouring out of the Spirit of grace and supplication, and the opening of the fountain for sin and uncleanness.
    - That is why God calls for it... for the striking of His Shepherd and the man who is His companion.
2. Look at how the outcomes of the cross are described here... we get some additional details.
- Verse 8 says that two-thirds will be destroyed... as we saw, by the Roman armies that God will raise up to destroy Jerusalem for rejecting Christ.
  - But understand that even though the temple will be destroyed, rebuilding it was not in vain... it served its purpose until Messiah was cut off.
    - It was here that the promises were maintained until He came.
    - And now the temple made without hands would continue in its place.
    - The true church would go on as the temple of Christ.
  - Verse 9 speaks of a third that would not be destroyed: **“I will bring the *one-third* through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’ ”**
    - What a wonderful outcome?
    - They become God’s true people—those who have the Spirit of grace and supplication poured out on them so that they mourn over Him whom they pierced... and so that they come to Him as a fountain that cleanses from sin and releases them from idolatry!

TRANS> And this will result in the blessing of the whole world!

### III. In chapter 14, we are told of the conquest of Jesus Christ.

- Having seen the Greek conquest and Roman conquest, now there is the conquest of Jesus Christ.
- A. Chapter 14 has some parts that are difficult to fully understand.
- Not all of it has been fulfilled and we don’t do a good job figuring out the details of prophecy before it is fulfilled.
    - There are too many things we do not know, but when it is fulfilled, it becomes very clear that it is what the LORD has spoken.
    - I am very careful about dogmatism about the different schemes about the end times that men concoct.
      - But the overall themes are very clear and that is what we need to know.
- B. So what are the overall themes?

1. First, that Jerusalem will indeed be attacked.
    - Both the earthly Jerusalem and the heavenly Jerusalem.
      - Essentially we are told of the destruction of the one and the establishment of the other.
    - Verse 3 says that God will fight against the nations that fight against Jerusalem, and verse 12 and 13 speak of how they will be brought to utter ruin.
  2. Second, we are told that many from the nations will join with the inhabitants of the new heavenly Jerusalem in Christ to worship the LORD.
    - a. There is that image in verse 4 of the LORD coming to the Mount of Olives, coming with His saints (v. 5), and of Him causing living waters to flow to the nations from His temple (v. 8) with the result that He becomes King over the whole earth (v. 9).
      - That certainly speaks of the spread of the gospel to the nations...
        - but is part of this referring the second coming and eternal state, or it all of this referring to the spread of the gospel after Christ established the heavenly temple and poured out His Spirit to water the nations?
    - b. Whatever that means, the outcome is very clear: the nations will be worshipping the true God with the remnant of His people from Israel.
      - Zech 14:16-17 makes it very clear when it says: **And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. <sup>17</sup> And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.**
      - Some would see this as the triumph of the gospel before the return of Christ, and some would see it as a description of the eternal state.
        - But the thing that matters is that the nations come to the LORD and rejoice in His salvation.
          - The feast of tabernacles is, of course, figurative of the joyful feast Israel had when they were delivered from Egypt.
          - Now we have a joyful feast as those who were delivered by Jesus Christ from sin and Satan to serve God forever.
            - If we don't join in, everything is wrong—no rain for us!
3. And the third thing we see is that in the end, everything is dedicated to the LORD, both people and things.
  - **Zech 14:20-21: In that day “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD’S house shall be like the bowls before the altar. <sup>21</sup> Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.**
  - What a glorious thing it will be that at last everything in heaven and earth will be the LORD's... I mean that it will be acknowledged by all people that everything is the LORD and for His glory.

- How happy we will be when all take their proper place before Him.
  - It will be unspeakably glorious.

**Conclusion:** So you see that God will bring about His glorious purposes.

- That is our encouragement. Our labour in the LORD is not in vain.
  - Just as the people building that humble temple were an integral part of the coming glory of Christ and His kingdom, so are we in our own little way in this generation.
- We are gloriously joined to God's Shepherd, His kinsman, who was struck for us that we might be cleansed by His sacrifice, both forgiven and purged from our idols that we might have God as our God...
  - And that we might come to that glorious day when there is no more Canaanite in the land and when everything about us and all that we have is for the LORD.
    - That is the sure word that God has spoken.
  - Everything that He has prophesied along the way has been fulfilled.
    - It is certain that this promise of future glory will also be fulfilled in God's time.
- Take heart, little Christian, if you are serving the LORD in this generation, you have a part in bringing forth the kingdom of glory that the LORD has promised.