

## ZECHARIAH

Text: Zechariah 9:1-10

INTRO: David Levy, of the Friends of Israel says that the book of Zechariah covers four major periods of world history. First, the Persian period. This was the second world power. Babylon was the first. Babylon ruled from 626-539 BC. So Zechariah wrote his book just after the Medes and Persians defeated Babylon. The Medes and Persians defeated Babylon, and they ruled from 539-330 BC, and Zechariah speaks to this time in chapters 1-8. The second period Zechariah covers is the Grecian period. Greece ruled from 330-63 BC. Zechariah prophecies of this time in chapters 9-10. Third, he speaks to the Roman period in chapter 11. Here he basically deals with some aspects of the time of Christ, which took place in the Roman period. Fourth, Zechariah speaks to the tribulation and the millennial reign of Christ, in the future, and he does this mainly in chapters 12-14.

We have now covered the first period of time covered by Zechariah, and will now begin the second, the time of the Greeks. You will all have heard of Alexander the Great. He was the first of the Greek world rulers. Zechariah will now look some 200 years into the future, and tell Israel what will yet take place. And during this prophecy, he will reveal some of what will take place when the Messiah is born during the time of Roman rule.

(On slide rule show what Zechariah covers, leaving out the Church age.)

### B. Burdens (9:1-14:21)

#### 1. The first burden (9:1-11:17)

So, we come to the final section of Zechariah, the two burdens. This morning we will look at the first burden and it is covered in 9:1-11:17. We can divide this burden into 4 parts. First, Zechariah will prophecy about Alexander the Great. Remember, in Zechariah here we are in about 518 BC. Alexander the Great became the ruler of the Grecian empire in 336 BC. So this prophecy is given almost 200 years before it happened. What is helpful to remember here is that God, through Daniel, had prophesied of four great world powers. The first was Babylon.

Babylon came and took Judah and Jerusalem captive in 586 BC. In the book of Zechariah we are now at about 518 BC. About 20 years earlier the Medes and the Persians had defeated the Babylonians and they were now the world rulers. It was during this time that many of the Jews returned to Jerusalem and it was during this time that Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews to rebuild the temple.

But Zechariah will now prophecy of the times they are going to face after this. And in 9:1-10 we have a prophecy of the conquests of Alexander the Great, who was a ruler of the Greeks. The Greeks would conquer the Medes and Persians in 330 BC. This, you can tell, is during the time we call the 400 silent years.

a. Conquests of Alexander the Great (9:1-10)

And so, when we come to Zechariah 9:1-10, we have a description of the conquests of Alexander the Great and how he ultimately came to Jerusalem. In verses 1-2a Alexander the Great takes Hadrach and Hamath, cities of Syria (read). These areas are all close to Israel. Today, Israel is watching the unrest in Syria through binoculars from the Golan Heights. In verses 2b-4 he takes Tyrus and Sidon, cities of Phoenicia (read). In verses 5-7 he takes Ashkelon, Gaza and Ekron, cities of the Philistines.

But notice now the prophecy of verse 8 (read). Alexander the Great has conquered all around Jerusalem and now he comes before Jerusalem. Now I want to quote from a message I did on Palm Sunday some years ago on this passage, and I quote, "So, Alexander, when he had defeated Gaza headed for Jerusalem for he was angry with the High Priest's disobedience to him regarding tribute money. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived and wrote in the time of Jesus writes of this account. He tells us that when the High Priest heard Alexander was coming he was very afraid. He called on the people to pray and they offered sacrifices to God for protection against Alexander. And in a dream God spoke to

the High Priest and told him to take courage and adorn the city and open the gates and that he and the priests should go to meet Alexander in their priestly garments and the rest should dress in white and thus go out and meet this army, and that they should be unafraid. Well, as Alexander neared the city the Chaldeans and Phoenicians who were with him could hardly wait to lay hands on these Jews and their plunder, for they know Alexander was very angry with the high priest.

"Now I want to give you a lengthy but very interesting bit of history from Josephus. Here is what Josephus says happened as Alexander the Great neared Jerusalem, '...the very reverse happened; for Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, in white garments, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head, having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest. The Jews did altogether, with one voice, salute Alexander, and encompass him about; whereupon the kings of Syria and the rest were surprised at what Alexander had done, and supposed him disordered in his mind. However, Parmenio alone went up to him, and asked him how it came to pass that, when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, 'I did not adore him, but that God who had honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonian, who, when I was considering myself how I might obtain dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians; whence it is, that having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the divine conduct, and shall therewith conquer

Darius and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my own mind.' And when he had said this to Parmenio, and had given the high priest his right hand, the priests ran along by him, and he came into the city; and when he went up into the temple, he offered sacrifices to God, according to the high priest's direction, and magnificently treated both the high priest and the priests. And when the book of Daniel was shewed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was that person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present..." end quote (Josephus 244).

The prophecy of Zechariah 9:8 was fulfilled precisely as given. And it is interesting that right at this point Zechariah would give a contrasting picture to Alexander the Great's visit to Jerusalem and Jesus' visit to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. We have this in verse 9 (read). That happened in the NT on Palm Sunday.

So, consider this. The prophecy of verses 1-8 is given in 518 BC. The fulfillment of this prophecy happened in 333 BC, 175 years later. But the prophecy of verse 9 is fulfilled in about 30 AD! At least 360 years separate the fulfillment of verses 1-8 and verse 9.

Why is verse 9 given here? The fulfillment of this verse is at least 360 years away. Why is it given here? Because of the contrast of this earthly ruler, Alexander the Great coming to Jerusalem, and how the King of Kings comes to Jerusalem, Jesus Christ. Alexander the Great came either on a white charger, or on his beautiful Black stallion he had named Beacefalous. Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem on a lowly donkey! What a contrast!

So, 360 years separate the events of verses 1-8 and verse 9; but 2000+ years separate verses 9 and 10 (read 10). But on our slide rule we learn that to the Jewish Seer, it was but a

very short time, since he did not see the Church age. So, without the Church age, from there it would have only been another 180 years. In verse 10 we enter the millennium and what the king who comes lowly and riding on a donkey will do. He will rule the entire world forever! Alexander the Great only ruled for his life-time which was short. He died at age 33.

b. Victories of the Maccabes (9:11-17)

In chapter 9:11-17, according to the Wycliffe Bible commentary, Zechariah moves to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, another ruler of the Greek empire but later than Alexander the Great. This seems in line with 9:13, which speaks of Greece, of which Alexander the Great was the leader, and later, Antiochus Epiphanes, who seems to be in view in these verses. The specific time in view in these verses is the time of the Maccabes. You can find the account of this in the OT Apocraphal books called 1 and 2 Maccabees. These are not divinely inspired Bible books though some Bibles have them. Antiochus Epiphanes became the ruler of the Greeks in 175 BC. He was a supreme hater of the Jews and desecrated the temple by offering a pig on the altar. I cannot paint a picture of a greater crime to be committed against the Jews than this.

At that time a Jew, by name of Judas Maccabee rose to prominence and led a Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes. His father, Matthias, had killed a Jew who had succumbed to the Greeks and who stepped forward to offer a sacrifice to an idol in his place. Mattathias and his five sons, one of whom was Judas Maccabee, fled Jerusalem and eventually raised up an army. The name 'Maccabee' means 'the hammer'. Well, all this led to many battles but eventually the Jews were victorious. After the victory of the Maccabees, they entered Jerusalem and the very first thing they did was cleanse the temple and put in place a high priest and reestablish Jewish worship.

It was at this time that the feast of Hanukkah was born. According to Jewish tradition, when they had retaken the temple they could only find one small container of the special oil required for the lamp-stand in the temple that remained uncontaminated. The container they found on had enough oil to last for one day. However, according to tradition, it lasted for eight days and in this time they were able to replenish the supply of the required oil. Thus we have the Hanukah candlestick with eight branches, and the Jews celebrate this day as the feast of Hanukah. This day falls in December close to our Christmas day. This happened 165 years before the time of Christ.

So, look at verses 11-17 (read). This seems to speak of Israel as victorious over Antiochus Epiphanes. And here again, I see a far fulfillment in view as well, which would speak of Israel becoming victorious at the end of the tribulation over the antichrist, of whom Antiochus is a picture. The Lord will save Israel and they will be like jewels on a crown.

c. Blessings of the Messiah's reign (10:1-12)

In chapters 10-11 we have much talk about the Messiah. In 10:1 the Jews are encouraged to pray for the latter rain. This is a reference to the Messianic kingdom. Later, in chapter 11, it speaks of the Messiah's rejection. Some of these prophecies must have given the Jews much difficulty. It is like that for many today in seeing the difference between the rapture and the second coming of Christ to earth.

So, in 10:2-8 the Lord expresses His anger against Israel's shepherds, that is leaders of the people. He says He will punish the leaders and He will make something out of the house of Judah Himself (read). In verse 8 God says He will whistle for them and gather them and redeem them. This will happen after they have been scattered among the nations as we see in verses 9-12 (read).

Here is the order of events for Israel. First they will be scattered among the nations. That has happened. Then, at the right time, God will whistle for them. That is a call to Israel to come home. Though this may speak of the return of the Jews after the Babylonian captivity, it pictures what will happen before the millennium. That regathering of Jews has been going on for some 100 years and is still happening today. When they have been regathered, then God will redeem them. That has not happened as yet. Then they will be increased, and that too, is yet to happen and will happen in its fullness in the millennium.

Now let me ask you this: Who can prophecy what will be 200 years away? Who can prophecy what will happen if we add 180 years to that? Nobody. But the One who knows everything, He can do that. That is the God of the Bible. And God told Zechariah of things that would happen, and 200 years later they happened exactly as penned. Then another 175 years later, more of what was prophesied by Zechariah happened just as accurately. We have just seen that. So we can rest assured that the rest of what he prophesied will happen just as surely. Here is one of the greatest proofs that the Bible is the Word of God!

#### d. Rejection of the Messiah

In chapter 11 we have a prophecy of the rejection of the Messiah. David Levy says, "The prophecies of chapter 11 cover three themes: the destruction of Israel, along with its national shepherds; Israel's rejection of its Messiah, the true Shepherd, at His First Advent; and Israel's acceptance of the worthless shepherd during the great tribulation." The first two prophecies have been fulfilled and the third will take place during the tribulation which lies just shortly before us.

So, we begin with 11:1-3 (read). In the introduction we saw that Levy views this as

speaking of Rome. J. Vernon McGee believes as well that this is a reference to the Romans, who defeated the Greeks, and were the fourth world power, and that they would come from the north, through Lebanon and defeat Israel. McGee says that above Beirut, which is just north of Israel, is the Dog River and he says, and I quote, "There, right at the entrance by the sea, on the face of the mountain are inscriptions which have been labeled, 'The Calling Cards of the Nations of the world.' Every great general of every great nation who went through there carved his name in the rock." He believes this describes Rome coming down into Israel and Rome was in power when Christ was born and lived in Israel.

Then, it seems, Zechariah is instructed to feed the flock for the slaughter, since God would no longer deliver them from their enemies (read 4-6). Verse 7 speaks of two staffs (read). A shepherd carried two staffs. The one had the shepherd's crook and the shepherd used it to hook a sheep's leg and pull it out of danger. The other was used like a club to ward off wild beasts.

So he fed the flock and he took the two staffs. the one called 'Beauty' or 'Grace' or 'favor', and the other was called 'Bonds' or 'bands' or 'Unity'. To quote McGee again, he says, "The English word 'bands' is probably a good translation because it has to do with the making of a covenant."

Verses 8-9 are difficult. Wycliffe suggests the possibility that it refers to three classes of leaders in Israel; the prophet, the priest and the civil magistrate. Levy agrees with this interpretation. Whatever the meaning, the shepherds gave up on shepherding (read). And so in verse 10-11 he takes the staff called Beauty or grace and breaks it (read).

Now look at verse 13 (read). So the shepherd who had been hired to look after these sheep said, "If it is agreeable to you, give me my

wages; and if not, refrain." And so, they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver." Wycliffe says that this was the shameful price of a gored slave (Ex. 21:32). Well, you recognize that this is the price that Judas was paid for betraying the Lord Jesus. So this passage is prophetic of the Chief Shepherd, the Messiah. Turn now to Matthew 27 (read 1-10). So, look at verse 13 (read).

Then, in verse 14, the shepherd takes his other staff and cuts it in two (read). Wycliffe says, "Now the internal bond of the nation was loosed, and the nation was riven by many contending factions. Secular historians amply confirm this prophecy as having been fulfilled at the Judeo-Roman war, which culminated in AD 70."

Zechariah 11:15-17 then speaks of a foolish shepherd as contrasted to the earlier Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ (read). This foolish shepherd, it appears, is the antichrist who is yet to appear. Jesus said it like this in John 5:43, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." This other one will be the antichrist, and amazingly, the Jews will receive him!

Well, today Israel is getting closer and closer to being ready to rebuild that temple that the antichrist will set himself up in as God. I just read an article by David Cloud who said he recently paid a visit to Israel and one of the most amazing artifact he saw was the seven branch candlestick that has been prepared for the new temple whenever they can build it. When my wife and I and our daughter and son-in-law were there a few years ago we saw it too. Let me show you a picture (show). I have read that it could take as few as seven months to rebuild the temple. We are nearing the rapture, and the coming of the antichrist!

CONCL: So, this morning we have seen the prophecies that Zechariah gave in 518 BC. He prophesied of Alexander the

Great, which was some 200 years away when he wrote, but it happened precisely as he prophesied. Then he prophesied of Antiochus Epiphanes, which was 375 years away, and it happened precisely as he prophesied as well. Then he prophesied about Jesus Christ's entry into Jerusalem and what it would be like and that was some 530 years away and it happened precisely as stated. And then he prophesied about the antichrist, this has not happened as yet, but we can rest assured it will happen precisely as stated. Soon, and very soon, we shall see the king!