

The Saga of Two Conquerors, Part 2

Scripture: Zechariah 9:9–17

Code: 2165

INTRODUCTION

A. The Results of the King's Return

People often ask, "What's wrong with the world? Why are there such things as injustice, turmoil, conflict, disease, pain, tragedy, and chaos?" The answer is simple: the King is absent. As the Messiah of Israel, He came once and promised to right the world. Although He was rejected as the King of Israel (John 19:14-15), He will return again as the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) and the "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 19:16). He is going to take back this world from Satan, the usurper, who has had it for a long time (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9). When the King comes back, war, injustice, and anarchy will end; pain and disease will be brought to a bare minimum in his Kingdom. He will seize the reins of the world's governments and rule with firmness, though with compassion.

B. The Reasons for the King's Return

We find two elements to Christ's return: one is positive-- salvation--and one is negative--the judgment associated with His return.

1. Symbolized

In Revelation 10:8-10 John says, "The voice which I heard from heaven spoke unto me again, and said, Go and take the little scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little scroll. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little scroll out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey, and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter." This followed John's vision of Christ's returning with the title deed to the earth. John experienced it as being sweet because of the wrongs that are righted, the salvation that comes about for Israel and an innumerable amount of Gentiles, and the honor given to Christ as He establishes His Kingdom. But John then experienced the bitterness of judgment as people are eternally damned and nations are destroyed for their rejection of Jesus Christ. Like John we may have that mixed reaction. We rejoice in His salvation but are disheartened by the judgment that awaits the world.

2. Specified

In the last five chapters of Zechariah, we find those same two elements emphasized: the salvation of Israel and the restoration of the earth and the fearful judgments that fall. In contrast to His first coming, when evil men succeeded in killing Him, He will destroy His enemies at His Second Coming. Only after judgment will He begin healing a sick world and allowing the wonders of His salvation to come to pass.

a) Judgment God's judgment is not easy to comprehend. Isaiah 28:21 calls it "his strange work" because it seems contrary to His love. However God's judgment is inextricably linked with His love-- He loves so much He protects us from evil forever. The only way He can do that is to destroy evil and those who have rejected His grace. The Bible is filled with oracles of judgment, especially in the major and minor prophets. For example Joel 3:12-16 says, "Let the nations be awakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat [the valley created when Christ returns to the Mount of Olives]; for there will I sit to judge all the nations round about. Put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe; come, get

down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." There you see the two sides: the great judgment, but also the hope of salvation for God's people.b) SalvationWhen Jesus returns it won't all be all judgment; there also will be salvation for His people.(1) Luke 21:27-28--Jesus told His disciples that when men see "the Son of man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory.... then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near."(2) Romans 11:26-27--"All Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." Christ is that Deliverer. He will remove sin and grant salvation.(3) Jeremiah 31:3-4--Jeremiah talks about what's going to happen when the children of Israel are delivered in the last days: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel; thou shalt again be adorned with thy timbrels, and shalt go forth in the dances of those who make merry."

REVIEW

I. THE HUMAN CONQUEROR (vv. 1-8)

A. The Purging by God (vv. 1-7)

B. The Protection by God (v. 8)

After prophesying about Alexander the Great's campaign through the Middle East, Zechariah spans the centuries in verse 8 to the time of Christ's appearance. Christ is the Divine Conqueror who alone can protect Jerusalem from being overrun by her enemies. That divine protection He will accomplish when He returns to earth.

LESSON

II. THE DIVINE CONQUEROR (vv. 9-17)

A. His Character (v. 9)

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

The prophet says the coming of Israel's King is reason for the Jews to be happy. That's because He will bring judgment to their enemies and salvation for them. But this conqueror is different from Alexander; he is introduced as riding on a donkey, unlike Alexander, who is known to have ridden a white charger. Against the background of the invincible army of Alexander comes one who doesn't inspire fear, but praise and peace, as we shall see. This is not a foreign tyrant, but Israel's own king. He is not cruel and oppressive, but just and merciful. Rather than an appearance of power, He seen as poor and meek. Zechariah says His coming is something to get ecstatic about. Let's examine the four elements to His character that we see here.

1. He is King

This monarch is Israel's King and Redeemer, the promised seed of David, known as the Messiah. Isaiah spoke of Him when he said, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isa. 9:6). His kingship was announced after His birth by the wise men (Matt. 2:2) and at His death by the sign placed on His cross, which read, "Jesus, of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19). When Jesus returns He will take control of the world that Satan has usurped.

2. He is just

The divine King is righteous in character and He deals justly. No more will anyone say you can't get justice. Won't it be great to have a world where all decisions are made by One who is absolutely righteous and just!

3. He is Savior

The divine King comes to save men from their sins. When Jesus was born an angel said of Him, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). We remember His saving work in the Lord's Table, which acknowledges our need for a Savior.

Alexander was not a savior--let alone a righteous man. He was an insignificant monarch compared to Christ.

4. He is meek

a) The general fulfillment of Christ's lowliness Christ's lowly, humble nature is quite different from that of Alexander. The Hebrew word translated "lowly" refers to those who are afflicted with suffering. It was also used in an economic sense to speak of someone with no money. When He was crucified, the soldiers cast lots for His robe, which was one of His few possessions (John 19:23-24). Our Lord told would-be disciples, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). His home was the Mount of Olives, where He often went to commune with His Father. He may have stayed in the homes of disciples like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. b) The specific fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy Zechariah 9:9's portrait of the Messiah's "riding upon an ass" illustrates His meekness. Early in Israel's history, it was respectable to ride a donkey, but by Solomon's time (c. 1000 B.C.) it wasn't. Jeremiah (c. 625 B.C.)

acknowledges that kings and princes rode on horses (not donkeys): "Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses" (17:25). For the mighty Messiah to arrive on a donkey's colt would seem incongruous by the time of Christ. Nevertheless that's what Jesus did, thus fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 (Matt. 21:1-5). (1) The request of the Prince Matthew 21 says, "When they drew near unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the Mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village opposite you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say anything unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them" (vv. 1-3). Jesus, the Son of God, knew where He could find a donkey that He would be allowed to ride. (2) The reaffirmation of the prophecy Matthew points out that "all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass" (vv. 4-5). Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled exactly as it had been given. (3) The reception of the people As Jesus approached Jerusalem by donkey the week prior to His crucifixion, "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and spread them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (vv. 8-9). Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the messianic King humbly riding on a donkey.

B. His Conquest (vv. 10-15)

At verse 10 we span the centuries again as we move from the first coming of Christ to His second coming. You might wonder why the Old Testament prophets jumped from one century to another in a single context. That's because they didn't see the church age. It was a mystery--something hidden in the Old Testament but revealed in the New (cf., Eph. 3:3-6). They assumed the King would come and establish His Kingdom at the same time. The church is an historical parenthesis until God begins dealing with Israel again during the Tribulation. So it is not unusual to see two- thousand year gaps between verses.

1. The reign of peace (v. 10)

"I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations; and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and

from the river even to the ends of the earth."

Zechariah moves from the deep humiliation and affliction of the Messiah at His first coming, to the glory and exaltation of His second coming. The chariot mentioned here is a battle chariot and the horse is an instrument of war. God is saying His Messiah will bring an end to war. He will remove the chariots, horses, and weapons from Israel because they won't have to fight anymore. Zechariah says the Messiah "shall speak peace unto the nations," which is the gist of Psalm 72, a messianic psalm. "From sea even to sea" means His rule will extend throughout the world. The river referred to here is the Euphrates, which was the eastern border of the land given originally to Abraham. This is a picture of God's wonderful redemption of Israel, when His Messiah will usher in a world- wide reign of peace.

2. The ratification of the promise (v. 11a)

"As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners."

"I have sent forth" is in the perfect tense in the Hebrew text, conveying the idea that what is spoken of is as good as done. "The blood of thy covenant" refers to the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 15:1-6. He had promised to make a great nation of him and to bless that nation. He confirmed that promise with the sacrifice of a goat, ram, heifer, pigeon, and turtledove (v. 9). After Abraham cut the larger animals in half and placed the halves in two rows, God put him to sleep and ratified the covenant Himself as "a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces" (v. 17). In the culture of Abraham's day, covenants or contracts were made by two the parties walking between the halves of an animal. God used the same practice but left Abraham out of the covenant-making process by making a unilateral covenant with Himself. Symbolized by fire and smoke, God passed alone through the animals Abraham had sacrificed and vowed to bless the patriarch's nation. That act made His promise unconditional because God could never break a promise He made with Himself.

"The blood of thy covenant" may also refer to the bloodshed in the Mosaic covenant and certainly it refers to the covenant that is ultimately fulfilled in the blood of Jesus Christ. Because of the covenants that God had already sealed and would be sealing with blood, God was promising through Zechariah that He would never violate His promise.

Amillennialists (those who believe the church has permanently replaced Israel) say that Israel isn't worthy to be redeemed because they forfeited their right to be the channel of God's blessing by their unfaithfulness. But God didn't say, "Israel, I'm going to bring you back because you're so wonderful," or "Because I feel sorry for you." Rather He said, "I'm going to bring you back because I made a promise with Myself and I sealed that promise in blood."

3. The release of the prisoners (v. 11b)

"I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit in which is no water."

A pit was a common place to put people you wanted to get rid of. Joseph's fate at the hands of his brothers is an example of how an individual might be left in a pit to die (Gen. 37:24). The pits often were empty cisterns that had been dug to store water. So a pit in without water is a dry well. God is saying that Israel had been in the dry well of captivity, suffering, and despair long enough. And because of His vow to Israel, they were as good as out. Zechariah's message would have been a great encouragement to the Jewish people, knowing that when the King came, Israel would be freed from the pit of trouble to experience the reign of the Prince of Peace.

4. The resource of the prisoners (v. 12)

"Turn to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

God is saying, "Turn to Me in trust. All I have promised is going to come to pass. And when you get out, everything that's ever been withheld from you will be given back in double measure. After all, you've experience double anxiety and suffering." Isaiah 61:7 offers a similar promise: "For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion, they shall rejoice in their portion; therefore, in their land they shall possess a double portion." God promises to deliver Israel from war and conflict and

give them peace and abundant blessing.

5. The rebellion of the people (v. 13)

"When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee like the sword of a mighty man."

Here's another historical pledge so Israel wouldn't lose its perspective of God's ultimate plan. The Lord says, "Just to let you know I'm on your side and that you need not doubt Me, even after Alexander, I'll give you another victory to show that I will protect Israel." Judah and Israel (Ephraim) are pictured as a bow and arrow that God promises to use as weapons against Greece. There was only one time in history when God has ever used Israel to defeat Greece. It was during the intertestamental period, the approximately four-hundred-year period between the Old and New Testaments. That was when Israel experienced the domination of Greece. Only once did Israel ever break that domination--under the leadership of the Maccabees, a prominent Jewish family. Judas Maccabaeus and his sons started a rebellion against the yoke of Greece because of Antiochus Epiphanes, the despotic ruler who had desecrated the Temple. They led their people to fight against Greece and prevailed.

6. The rebellion as a preview (v. 14)

"The Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth like the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and go with whirlwinds of the south."

In the Middle East, violent storms come off the desert in the south without warning. They illustrate the quick and devastating manner in which God would use Israel against Greece. The Maccabean rebellion lasted from 175 to 163 B.C. To them it was a holy war in which God was their captain, calling them to battle with the blow of His trumpet. But that war was only a preview of the final victory, when Christ returns to deliver Israel during the Tribulation.

Commentator David Baron said, "Zion and Greece, as has been well observed by another writer, are in this prophecy of Zechariah opposed to one another as the city of God and the city of the world and the defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors at the hands of comparative handfuls of despised Jews, to which this passage may primarily refer, foreshadows the final conflict with world-power and the judgments to be inflicted on the confederated armies who shall be gathered against Jerusalem, not only directly by the hand of God, but also by the hand of Israel, who shall then be made strong in Jehovah, so that 'the feeble among them shall in that day be as David, and the house of David shall be as God, as the Angel of Jehovah before them'" (The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972], p. 327). What we see here in Zechariah is another historical picture of God's ultimate victory over the nations with Israel as His instrument.

7. The resource of protection (v. 15a)

"The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue the sling-stones."

That which is translated "the Lord of hosts" is literally "the Lord of armies" in the Hebrew text. The Lord will defend Israel and enable them to devour their enemy like a lion devours its prey. Devouring speaks of consuming something and acquiring its strengths. When you eat, your body assimilates the nutritional value of the food and transforms it into energy. Similarly, to conquer a certain country is to take all its resources and strengths and make them your own. This prophecy predicted Israel taking the strength of its enemies and increasing its own strength.

"Sling-stones" were stones shot at enemies and their fortifications with slingshots and catapults. Zechariah prophesied that such weapons would not deter Israel's advance against the enemy. The stones would fall to the ground and be trodden over by Israel.

8. The rejoicing of the people (v. 15b)

"They shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and like the corners of the altar."

The first part refers to the boisterous shouting that is typical of people who drank too much. However Israel's excitement will be the rejoicing of their victory celebration.

The bowls referred to here are those used to catch the blood of animal sacrifices offered upon the altar. The priests would take the blood that had been collected and sprinkle it on the corners and sides of the altar. That is symbolic of the bloodshed of Israel's godless enemies. The ultimate battle in view here is Armageddon, where the armies of the world amass themselves against Israel during the Tribulation. It is a terrible picture of bloodshed so profuse that Israel will feel like the bowls upon the altar. Revelation 14:20 says that the blood will be up to the level of horses' bridles for 200 miles.

C. His Care (vv. 16-17)

1. The redemption of the remnant (v. 16)

"The Lord, their God, shall save them in that day as the flock of his people; for they shall be like the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land."

In this verse the Messiah is seen a Shepherd who is saving His flock. Zechariah 13:1 pictures that as a time of spiritual cleansing: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." It may be that because the Messiah is a Shepherd to His people, the theme song of the Kingdom He establishes will be Psalm 23, which begins, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

The redeemed are referred to as jewels in the Messiah's crown lifted up for all to see. Of similar godly remnant Malachi 3:17 says, "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." This picture foretells a glorious future for Israel.

2. The response of the redeemed (v. 17)

"For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Grain shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine, the maids."

The only reasonable response is one of praise. The grain and the wine are symbols of the abundance of the Kingdom. There will be prosperity and joy unlike the world has ever conceived.

CONCLUSION

The King is coming. He is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, who came once in humility, riding upon the foal of a donkey, but will return in honor as the mighty Judge of the nations and Savior of His people. He came in poverty and shame, but will return triumphant. Zechariah comforts Israel, telling them that some day their troubles will be over and salvation will come to them as they reign with their King. And in case they doubted that, he gave them the examples of how God used Alexander the Great and the Maccabees to preserve Israel as proof that He will fulfill the promises of His Kingdom.

Peter said that Christ's future return ought to have a practical impact on our lives: "Seeing, then, that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness?" (2 Pet. 3:11). We ought to examine our hearts to determine the nature of our relationship to Christ. We also ought to go to those around us and call them to be a part of the Kingdom. The Apostle Paul said we should be "giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:12-14). The only reason you and I will ever enter that Kingdom is that we love Jesus Christ. Although Zechariah is focusing on the restoration of Israel at this point, we become the spiritual seed of Abraham when we believe in Christ (Gal. 3:7-9). We need to thank Him for that privilege.

Focusing on the Facts

1. What is one reason there is injustice, conflict and chaos in the world? When will those problems be resolved?

2. Identify the positive and negative elements of Christ's return. How were they symbolically experienced in a vision by the apostle John?

3. Why is God's judgment difficult to comprehend?
4. According to Jeremiah 31:3-4, why does God say He will restore Israel?
5. In Zechariah 9:9, how does the divine conqueror come to His people?
6. Identify the divine conqueror of Zechariah 9, and describe His character (v. 9).
7. How was the Messiah's meekness expressed in general and specific terms (v. 9)?
8. Why do some Old Testament prophecies jump from one century to another in a single context?
9. How is the Messiah's reign over His earthly Kingdom described in verse 10?
10. What did God point to as verification that He would fulfill His promise to His people?
11. How were covenants, or contracts, often made in the ancient Middle East? How and why did God alter that tradition in His covenant with Abraham?
12. What encouragement does God offer His people in verses 11-12?
13. What historical insight does God use to encourage Israel in verse 13?
14. Of what was the Maccabean rebellion a preview?
15. Who will protect Israel and enable them to subdue their enemies?
16. Why is Israel likened to the sacrificial bowls and altar (v. 15)?
17. What is Zechariah's response in verse 17 to the salvation promised in verse 16?
18. Although He first came in poverty and shame, how will Christ return?

Pondering the Principles

1. It's not difficult to recognize that there are many problems in the world. Unbelievers cite the evidence of injustice, conflict, pain, and tragedy as proof that there is no God. Rather than blaming God for sin like Adam did (Gen. 3:12), we need to acknowledge that man himself is the problem (vv. 17-19). When you next have the opportunity to answer a "What is this world coming to?" question, be sure to explain that the King of kings and Lord of lords is coming to set things right. Express to them your confident hope in a future where Christ actively reigns. Memorize 1 Peter 1:3-4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (NASB). Pray for an opportunity to tell others about our "living hope."
2. Are you letting the promise of Christ's return effect your life in the present? If we know that God's plan is to eliminate evil and bring His children into a perfect Kingdom, we should make sure our lives are reflecting that holy purpose. Why would we pursue sin if it is the object of His hatred? That is the issue Peter asked his readers to think through in 2 Peter 3:10-14. Meditate upon that passage and determine if your life-style is coinciding with God's plan.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2026 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<https://www.gty.org/about#copyright>).