

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## A look at Zechariah: Zechariah 9:1-17 & 11:1-17 "Behold! Thy King cometh unto thee"

Today we come to the last talk in our present series, 'A look at Zechariah'. In the three previous talks, we have looked at: "The man and his message" in Zechariah 1 and 2; "Visions in the night" in Zechariah 3 to 6; and "Thus saith the LORD of Hosts" in Zechariah 7 and 8. Our title for today's talk is, "Behold! Thy King cometh unto thee" and we will consider Zechariah 9 and 11.

We have learned that Zechariah was a prophet of the 'restoration' of the Jewish remnant who returned to Jerusalem and Judea from captivity in Babylon. He was a contemporary of Haggai and prophesied in 520 BC, in the eighth month of the second year of Darius Hystaspes. So the Babylonian Empire is finished and the Medes and Persians are in power as Zechariah writes. The dates are given for us, and comparing Zechariah 1 and Zechariah 7 we see that his prophecy lasted at least two years. Together with Malachi, Zechariah and Haggai are sometimes referred to as "the Prophets of the Restoration." Zechariah's prophecy is full of figurative language and symbolism and therefore not easy to understand, but a careful study will repay anyone who is prepared to make the effort.

Right at the beginning we need to say that this prophecy and the chapters we will look at today are written to Israel, God's earthly people. We always have to keep a clear distinction between the people of God today (the Church), and His ancient people Israel. Although there is much to learn, and all Scripture is for us, all Scripture is not about us, and we should bear this in mind when considering these Old Testament prophecies. The Church of God sits outside of prophecy, a 'mystery' not known in Old Testament days but revealed to us by Christ and the Apostles (in the New Testament) following the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah by an apostate Israel. It is therefore essential that we understand something of dispensational teaching if we are to make sense of these Old Testament prophecies. These often had some fulfilment during the lifetime of the prophet, but really looked forward to the coming of Christ and God's dealings with Israel at that time and also in a time yet to come.

Many years ago I heard this illustration of God's separate dealings with Israel and the Church. In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel is the train on the main line but as a consequence of the rejection of their Messiah they have been put off the main line, into the siding. Today another train is on the main line, and that is the Church. Once the Church is 'raptured' to heaven to be with Christ, God will again bring Israel out of the siding and on to the main line. Why? Because God will fulfil to the letter every promise and prophecy made concerning His earthly people, Israel. When God does bless Israel in the future, He will do so through a repentant remnant and not with the whole nation. As we refer to Israel's future in this talk, we need to bear in mind that it is the godly remnant that we have in view.

Today there is only one way to be blessed of God and that is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God's offer of salvation is to "whosoever" (both Jew and Gentile), forgiveness of sins is through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's cross, and the Church is composed of all who believe and confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This is the dispensation of the Grace of God and comes between the first and second advent of Christ. However, before Christ comes "*in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*" (Matthew 24:30), to deliver His earthly people - Israel, He will first fulfil His personal promise to His own of this dispensation - the Church, "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also*", John 14:3. To complete the picture, we need to see that after the Church and the Holy Spirit are taken out of the way there will be a period of tribulation which will come upon the earth. This will be the fulfilment of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (see Daniel 9:24-27). Sixty-nine weeks of years (i.e. 483 years) being accounted for, Messiah was "cut off" but the "*Times of the Gentiles*" (see Luke 21:24) will be fulfilled and the final week of years (i.e. 7 years) will come after the rapture of the Church and before Christ's second advent - when His feet will touch the Mount of Olives (see Zechariah 14:4). This seven year period will be a dreadful time, especially the second 3½ years when God will pour out His righteous wrath upon the earth. Much of the book of the Revelation is given over to what will take place during this period, which precedes the earthly kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ being established in this world.

So as we look again at Zechariah's prophecy we need to have an understanding of the context in which it was written and remember that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we have the privilege to be able to compare Scripture with Scripture, as now with our Bible, we have in our hands the whole canon of Holy Writ. Let me give you an illustration before we get into the detail of chapters 9 and 11 of Zechariah's prophecy.

From my window I can see the outline of the rolling Cheviot Hills. I can see no valleys between the peaks, but I know that they are there. It was just that from my window I could see no perspective! Prophecy is like that - sometimes there is years between what appears to be being presented even in a single verse. Take for example the well-known verse in Isaiah 9:6, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder."* Isaiah couldn't see it but now we know there is over 2,000 years between the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ at Bethlehem and the time, still future, when He shall reign as King in this world. In Luke 24:13-35, we read of two disciples on the way home to Emmaus after the crucifixion. They were downcast and despondent because they didn't see this perspective (Luke 24:13-17). They thought that Jesus was going to redeem Israel at that time (Luke 24:18-24), but Jesus graciously taught them saying, *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"* (Luke 24:26)

Our title today is 'Behold! Thy King cometh unto thee', and it is taken from Zechariah 9:9, *"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."*

Now compare this verse with the events recorded in the Gospels and you will see how wonderfully the prophecy was fulfilled. There we find the Son of David offering Himself as king exactly as their prophet had said and a 'very great multitude' responding, *"Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest"* (Matthew 21:9). Also compare Psalm 118 and you will see that although the psalmist's language is used in the Gospel narrative, and rightly so, there is a day coming when Israel will exclaim, *"This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psalm 118:24). When you read this account, and it is recorded by all the Gospel writers, it is staggering to think that within a week the cry changed from Hosanna to *"Away with him, away with him, crucify him!"* (see John 19:15). Pilate said to the Jews, *"Behold your King!"* (John 19:14) but the reply was, *"We have no king but Caesar"* (John 19:15). How could God's chosen people claim a Roman Emperor as their King?! This was nothing short of apostasy and God will hold them to account for the way they treated His beloved Son.

Read the parable in Matthew 21:33-46 of the householder, the vineyard and the husbandmen and see what they did to the son who was sent to them, and what the outcome was. The chief priests and the Pharisees had no doubt that the parable was spoken against them but rather than repenting, they sought to lay hands on Him, thus fulfilling the parable. It is interesting that again Psalm 118:22-23 is quoted here (Matthew 21:42) - how wonderfully Scripture dovetails together! The same blessed One who sat on the donkey's back and who hung on that central cross, will be the same One who will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem *"in that day"* which is yet to come. But that will not be before *"the house of David"* experience mourning and bitterness as prophesied in Zechariah 12:10, when they shall look upon Him *"whom they have pierced."*

Zechariah 9:1-8 seem to foretell the rise of Alexander the Great and the armies of Greece as they swept aside the Medo-Persian Empire. The swiftness of his military campaigns would justify the symbolism of the leopard which Daniel used (see Daniel 7:6). However, it is interesting that in Zechariah 9:4, in relation to the destruction of Tyre, it is the Lord who casts her out. Although great men may be in view, we need to see that God always remains in control behind the scenes. The hymn writer puts it like this,

*"He everywhere hath sway,  
and all things serve His might."*

*Paul Gerhardt (1607-1676)*

The message Zechariah delivered was a 'burden' to the LORD. Judgement is God's strange (or unusual) work (see Isaiah 28:21), but He will judge the nations as well as Israel with righteous judgement. However, as we find in Zechariah 9:8, on this occasion He protects Jerusalem from the oppressor, and history records that Alexander not only spared Jerusalem but did homage to the High Priest, giving the Jews special tax concessions. You can read the detail in the writings of Josephus the historian, (see chapter 8 of Book 11 on the Antiquities of the Jews). So if the inhabitants of Zion, the great city of David, Jerusalem, saw a partial fulfilment of this prophecy during the time of Alexander the Great, Zechariah 9:10 takes our thoughts to One who is far greater than Alexander! One who will *"speak peace unto the heathen (or nations); and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."* Here the prophet quotes the words of David in Psalm 72:8, a psalm for his son, Solomon, but a greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42, Luke 11:31) is here in view! I would encourage you to read the whole Psalm as we only have time to quote from the last few verses: *"His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen"* (Psalm 72:17-20).

Solomon inherited a kingdom which had been won by the sword of David who had led the armies of Israel against their enemies and unified the people of God behind him as king. David was a man of battle and was therefore

forbidden by God to build the temple, but he did everything required for the building which would take place under Solomon. The peace and prosperity enjoyed by the nation of Israel under Solomon, at the beginning of his reign, was secured by the victories of David. So we can see in both David and Solomon, pictures, or types, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who fought the battle and who will reign in peace. The establishment of Christ's earthly kingdom and His millennial reign in this world could only be on the basis of the victory He won at Calvary's cross:

*"He Satan's power laid low:  
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew,  
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,  
And death by dying slew."*

*Samuel Whitelock Gandy (1780-1851)*

As you look around at the world today with all the turmoil, wars, famines, disease and death you may wonder how it will be possible for Christ to reign in righteousness for 1,000 years? The answer is found at the cross! At the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ not only took the punishment for the sins of all those who would put their trust in Him for salvation, but He bore the wrath of God against sin. On this righteous basis, God will reverse the effect sin has had in the world during Christ's reign. Again to quote from Psalm 72, "*There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains*", (Psalm 72:16) and Isaiah tells us that "*The desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose*", (see Isaiah 35:1).

Now we must say something about Zechariah 11. Naturally we are immediately drawn to Zechariah 11:12-13 where we see the accuracy of the prophecy concerning the betrayal of the Lord by Judas Iscariot. You have to wonder what was in the minds of the chief priests as they made their bargain with Judas who would betray the Lord for thirty pieces of silver just as Zechariah had foretold! They would have known the Scripture and they would have heard Jesus saying, "*I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth*" (see John 10:11-12). Such was their determination to get rid of the Lord they chose to ignore these clear indications of who Jesus was.

Zechariah 11 begins with a general description of the nation of Israel in Zechariah's day. The language is very figurative but it depicts a nation and a land in a state of ruin and spoil. In Zechariah 11:3, 5 and 8 we read of the failed shepherds of Israel, which could well be a reference to those the Lord Jesus calls thieves, robbers and hirelings in John 10:7-21. In Zechariah 11:4, God takes pity on the devastated flock and in the following verses down to Zechariah 11:14 we see both in Zechariah's words and actions that which would speak of the faithful shepherd. The closing verses of the chapter, Zechariah 11:15-17, speak of the foolish, idol (or worthless) shepherd and is doubtless a prophecy concerning the Anti-Christ. So we could summarise the chapter by looking at

- The failed shepherds (Zechariah 11:1-8);
- The faithful Shepherd (Zechariah 11:9-14); and
- The foolish shepherd (Zechariah 11:15-17).

Again we can see that Zechariah 11 has relevance for the nation in three separate periods of their history: Zechariah's day, the Messiah's first advent, and the day, still future, when the Anti-Christ will be in fierce opposition to the faithful remnant of Israel.

During the Lord's ministry it is recorded on more than one occasion that He saw the multitudes as scattered sheep, having no shepherd (see Matthew 9:36) and His compassion was toward them. In Zechariah 11:4, the LORD takes up the case of the devastated flock. This was true in the days of our Lord Jesus Christ. When you think of the miracles He did and the blessing He dispensed to all He came into contact with (especially the poor of the flock), what a wonderful display we see of the Good Shepherd. What contrast there is too between the faithful Shepherd and the failed shepherds. Zechariah 11:8 tells of three shepherds who were cut off in one month, who were loathed by the Messiah and who also abhorred Him. There have been different suggestions as to who is meant by the three shepherds, but I would think this is a reference to the leaders of the nation of Israel, the three parts of the Sanhedrim: the chief priests, the scribes and the elders. There was no king in Israel in Zechariah's day nor in the intervening years before Christ came, presenting Himself to them just as the Scriptures had foretold. The Magi asked, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*", Matthew 2:2.

"*The faithful Shepherd took two staves, one He called Beauty and other He called Bands*" (Zechariah 11:7). Other translations, including the New International Version, the English Standard Version and the Holman Christian Standard Bible say "*Favour and Union*." It would be commonplace for an Eastern shepherd to carry a rod and staff (see Psalm 23:4). Two sticks, one used for the protection and defence of the flock against attacks and the other to keep the flock together, gently guiding any errant sheep back into the way. We see these features displayed in the life of the Lord, the One in whom came Grace and Truth (see John 1:17). If only the nation had received Him (see

John 1:11), He would have fulfilled in a literal way Psalm 23 to them, "*The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want*" (Psalm 23:1).

In the millennium when Christ will reign in righteousness and, as we saw in Zechariah 9:10, "*his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth*", the godly remnant of Israel will again enjoy the comfort of the Good Shepherd's "rod and staff" - Favour and Union.

We have already remarked on the accuracy of Zechariah 11:12-13 in relation to the actions of Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15, Matthew 27:1-9). The Messiah being rejected, the staves Beauty and Bands have been broken. Here we need to see the perspective of the intervening Church period. We await the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, first for the Church, which could take place at any time.

What we have in Zechariah 11:16-17, bring before us the foolish (or worthless) shepherd, the Anti-Christ, who will come to the fore during the tribulation period. Zechariah 11:16 lets us see what kind of person he will be, "*For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still.*" What a contrast to the Good Shepherd (John 10:7-21)! Then just as the elect are about to be consumed, Christ will come (this time with the Church) as King, to deliver them and to put all His enemies under His feet before setting up His kingdom. In that day, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

May God bless you all.

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