

Zechariah 9-11 • Victory, Defeat, and Salvation

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Let's go ahead and open our Bibles to the book of Zechariah, the 11th of 12 minor prophets. And we are in the second to the last book of the Old Testament as we continue our study through the scripture here on Wednesday night. I'm kind of, I'm just guessing since we have 6 chapters left here in Zechariah that were probably in our second to the last study here.

I'm going to do my best to get through 3 chapters tonight, and then we'll pick up hopefully the last 3 next time. And then we'll get into the book of Malachi.

So, with just some really great stuff in the word here. So, let's open our hearts to the Lord.

Father God as we take time tonight to dig into the scriptures, we just want to take a moment to confess our dependence upon you through your Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts, to be able to lay hold of the things that are written here. And Lord, this is, these are some challenging prophecies to kind of understand and we ask in Jesus' name that you'd help us.

We pray for your Holy Spirit. We ask Lord, that you would illuminate our hearts and that you would put things into perspective. We thank you, Father, for giving us this time, and we ask you to be with us in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen. Amen.

I wanted to take chapters 9 through 14, not all in one shot, but in one section because these last 6 chapters of the book of Zechariah constitute what many people call part 2 of the book of Zechariah.

This prophet was thought to be quite young in his early prophecies. It is believed that he is now older, and this is kind of the second part of what he is now sharing with the people of Israel. And in these chapters, we are going to see several different prophetic topics that are going to come out during the course of this.

And I'm going to put these up on the screen for you so we can see them together here, this is what we're going to be looking at through these last 6 chapters so I'll put this slide up next week as well.

(slide)

Zechariah chapters 9-14

- Victory circuit of Alexander the Great
- The defeat of Jerusalem by Rome
- Judas' betrayal
- The rise of the antichrist
- Battle of Armageddon
- Return of Christ
- Salvation of the Jews
- Reign of Jesus on the earth

We're going to read about and hear about many things that are past history to us, but was prophetic future to Zechariah, such as the victory circuit of Alexander the Great. You'll remember that it was Alexander the Great, the leader of Greece who came and conquered the Persian kingdom the Medo-Persian kingdom, which had conquered the Babylonian kingdom previously. And we're going to see the kind of the, I guess circuit is the best word I can think of.

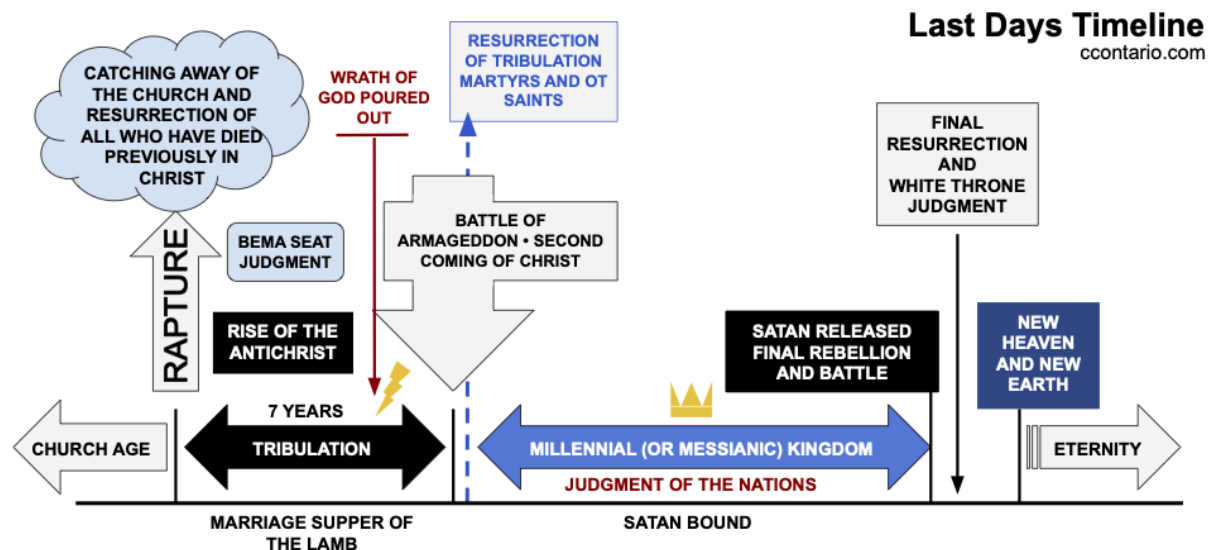
Kind of the victory march of Alexander the Great in this first chapter that we're going to be looking at tonight, we're going to also be looking at the defeat of Jerusalem by Rome. And of course, Rome is the country who came and conquered Greece and we are going to read prophetically about Judas's betrayal.

We are going to see in these chapters, concerning the rise of the anti-Christ. Yeah, he is going to make mention of the Battle of Armageddon, which several Old Testament prophets do. He will mention the return of Christ, the second coming of Christ. He will speak of the salvation of the Jews as we get toward the end of these chapters.

And finally, he will speak of the reign, the final reign of Jesus on the Earth.

And once in a while, I like to put up this graphic that I created a few years ago of the last day's timeline. And I know there's a lot of information on this slide and it might be difficult to see. Well, I guess if you're looking at the big screens, it's a little easier.

(slide)



3 JUDGMENTS: 1) BEMA SEAT OR BELIEVERS JUDGMENT 2) JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS AND 3) WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

And by the way, you can get a copy of this (the last days timeline) in [PDF form on our website](#). Go to our website, CCOntario.com, and then go to our [through the Bible page](#) and you'll find a list of links which are Bible resources. And then you can download this, print it, and frame it, and send it to your kids for Christmas or something like that.

It makes great Christmas gifts, I'm just kidding. But it might be something that you might just kind of want to look at and look through because it does give a timeline of the various events that are to take place up until the coming of the Lord and the things that happen after that.

You can see on the far left side, we are in the Church Age right now and this is kind of an indeterminate length of time in the scripture. It doesn't give an exact timeframe, but we've been in the church age ever since, essentially the second chapter of Acts when the body of Christ and the church was inaugurated at that time when the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples. And so, we began that period of time called the Church Age.

Now you'll notice that the very next event on that timeline is the catching away of the church and the reason that it's the very next thing is because it is the next element or the next event that is to occur on God's prophetic timeline. There's nothing else that needs to happen before the catching away of the church, that is the next thing. We call it the rapture and even though the word, specifically the English word rapture is not in the Bible, Paul uses in his letter to Thessalonians the term that the church will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air and in the Latin that is, rapturo, and that is where we get our word rapture.

And so, in a sense it is in the Bible in that way if you happen to read a Latin version of the Bible. But the point is, the idea that the doctrine, the teaching of the church being caught up to meet the Lord in the air is very much in the scriptures and that is the next biblical event that is going to be happening. And at that time, you can see that, that the events that will be taking place that will plunge this world into that 7 year period of time that the Bible refers to as the great tribulation. And the great tribulation is essentially a period of time when a false Messiah who we know is the anti-Christ comes to power and convinces particularly the nation of Israel, that he is going to be able to bring great peace to that country.

I believe it is through the anti-Christ, that the temple will be quickly rebuilt, that some kind of a peace process is going to take place in the Middle East that will allow that building to happen. And everything is going to look to be going splendidly until of 3 and a half years into the great tribulation when the anti-Christ will renege on his agreement with the Jewish people. And he will then clear out the temple from anything that related to the worship of Yahweh. He will establish his own image in the temple and he will demand worship.

He will demand to be worshiped as God and this will begin a very terrible time for the nation of Israel and for the world. And there will be a great outpouring of the wrath of God during this time to the point where people we are told will beg to die. And yet many, in many cases, they will not be able to, although many people will lose their lives.

The great tribulation will culminate with the nations of the world coming against Israel. This is given to us in many of the Old Testament prophecies. The nations of the world under the leadership of anti-Christ will gather against Israel. And we're going to read here, not tonight unfortunately, but next week in our study of Zechariah, how they will be, they, the nations of the world will look very much to be succeeding in their defeat of Israel and particularly of Jerusalem. It's going to look very bad, but at the very, at the climax of this invasion, the Lord Jesus is going to return and Zechariah is the prophet who

tells us where exactly he's going to return in Israel. I mean, the exact point geographically.

And it's exciting and very fascinating, but Zechariah outlines those things for us. We're told in the Bible that the Messiah will then fight on behalf of Israel against these gathered gentile nations that come to destroy her in a battle that is referred to as Armageddon. And you can see that on the timeline where the Battle of Armageddon takes place.

Immediately after the Battle of Armageddon, there's the resurrection of the tribulation martyrs, and also the Old Testament saints and we then enter into a period of time known as the millennial age or the Messianic Kingdom. And during that time, there's the judgment of the nations, Satan is bound during the millennial kingdom, lives on earth will be greatly extended during that time. And then, as you can see at the end of that 1,000 year period of unprecedented, peace and prosperity on the earth because Jesus will be reigning upon the earth at that time, Satan were told in the scriptures will be released from his captivity for one final attempt to deceive the nations.

He will gather an army to come against the Lord, but he will be quickly destroyed and then cast finally into the lake of fire. Then we have the final resurrection in the white throne judgment and then the Bible tells us at the end of the book of Revelation that there will be a new heaven and a new earth that God will create after the old heaven and the old earth pass away. And we enter into that time period referred to as eternity.

So, this is essentially the timeline that we are given in the scripture as we've kind of pieced things together. And just a reminder again, that is available [on our website](#).

So, chapter 9, Zechariah, chapter 9, let's get into this. As we get into this first chapter that we're looking at here tonight, I need to tell you that these first eight verses are what we read to find this prophetic roadmap. Again, this is what most conservative bible scholars believe, this roadmap of the conquests of Alexander the Great and even though Alexander is not mentioned specifically in this passage, Greece is mentioned. And we'll see that as we get into these verses. But the cities that are mentioned here in these first eight verses of chapter 9 are mentioned in the exact order that Alexander conquered them in his route of victory.

And what we're going to be reading about is kind of a judgment march by the Lord through these cities, but it corresponds to the victory march that Alexander had as he went through the land on his way up to Jerusalem.

So, we'll begin here in verse 1, which says:

¹ *“The oracle of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place. ...” (ESV)*

And we're talking now here about Syria and Damascus is still a city of Samaria.

¹ *“...For the LORD has an eye on mankind and on all the tribes of Israel,”*

² *and on Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, (two coastal cities located north of Israel in the land of Lebanon) though they are very wise.” (ESV)*

I want to stop there for just a moment, and I want you to just think about this moment or this statement rather than that the Lord makes through Zechariah, which says, *“the Lord has his eye on mankind”*. Can I just encourage you with that tonight. We turn on the news and we read, or we hear about such incredible upheavals and things that are going on in wars and rumors of wars and all the things that are happening in the world.

And it can be very discouraging when we hear about all these things and it can sound very much like the world is just out of control. But, I want you to be reminded of what the Lord says because this is His perspective. He says that His eye is on mankind, He is watching all over these things. He is working all of these things according to the purpose of His will. He has a redemptive plan and He will carry it out.

So, you'll notice that in these first couple of verses, the Lord begins to speak of Syria and also speaking of Tyre and Sidon, and he says in verse three:

³ *“Tyre has built herself a rampart and heaped up silver like dust, and fine gold like the mud of the streets.” (ESV)*

And the reason for that is that Tyre was, well, and Tyre is still there today. Not in the exact location that it was before, but it's a coastal city. It was a merchant city and because it was a merchant city it amassed incredible wealth and of course that was a point of great pride for the people of Tyre.

But I want you to notice what the Lord says about Tyre. In verse 4, He says:

⁴ *“But behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions and strike down her power on the sea, and she shall be devoured by fire.”* (ESV)

Now remember at the time when Zechariah gave this prophecy, nobody had conquered Tyre yet. The Assyrians tried, they set up a siege against Tyre that lasted 5 years and they failed to breach the city. Then the Babylonians came and they set up a siege against Tyre that lasted 13 years and Tyre withstood the siege of the Babylonians. And so, here's Zechariah saying that Tyre is going to fall and I can imagine people hearing this and thinking I don't think so, this place is like impregnable. I don't think anybody's going to get through to Tyre.

Well, what's interesting is that Alexander came along, he laid siege to the city and he took it in 5 months, which is relatively short when you think about all of the other nations that tried to take this city. Because Tyre at that time, the city was an island just off the coast, and there was an ancient, or even a more ancient city that had been destroyed.

And what Alexander did, is he used the rubble from that old ancient city and he and his men cast that into the waterway creating this causeway that allowed them to walk over to the city and they were able to take it. And it was really an incredible feat of engineering. But he did it in 5 short months and it was, that's one of the reasons that Alexander the Great is known as Alexander the Great.

And this is history for you and me. You guys can look up history and you can read about what Alexander the Great did. This was future to Zechariah, but it's the prophetic past, if you will, for us. Then he begins to speak of how the Philistines are going to see the fall of Tyre. It says:

⁵ *“Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;*

⁶ *a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia.”* (ESV)

Why are they going to writhe in agony in anguish? Because they saw Tyre as an impregnable city and when Alexander the Great takes it, they're going to say, we're doomed. And in the order that the Lord speaks of these Philistine cities, that is the order that Alexander took them, so it's really very fascinating.

Notice in verse 7, He says:

⁷ *“I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.”* (ESV)

That is yet a future prophecy related to those cities. Verse 8.

⁸ *“Then I will encamp...”*

Okay, this is now, God's talking about Jerusalem now, all right. So, we've dealt with this area Syria, we've dealt with Tyre and Sidon, which are modern Lebanon. We've dealt with the area of the Philistines, which is essentially what is today the Gaza Strip. All right, now he's going to come to Jerusalem, what does God say about Jerusalem?

Verse 8.

⁸ *“Then I will encamp at my house (meaning the temple) as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.”*

Now this is fascinating and again, this is past history for you and me, but what the Lord is telling us here, or telling the people at the time of Zechariah, is that after all this judgment of the Lord, which we know took place through the hand of Alexander the Great, after all this judgment, the city of Jerusalem will not be conquered by Alexander. But the reason that Jerusalem remains safe is only mentioned here in verse 8 in the sense that the Lord says, *“I will encamp at my house”*. In other words, I'm going to inhabit, my presence will be there. And so, they're not going to be able to get in. They're not going to, they're not going to come and conquer this place.

Well, we know from history what took place, and partly we know from the Jewish historian Josephus who wrote about these events. And it's really fascinating because he gives us a more lengthy account of these matters, saying that the high priest at the time in Jerusalem heard about Alexander going through the land conquering Tyre and Sidon and Felicia, and they knew they were next, essentially on the way to Israel to Jerusalem, and they, there was great fear, among the high priests concerning their fate.

But according to Josephus, the Lord gave, in a dream, gave a message to the high priest of Jerusalem saying, do not fear and he told him what to do. He told him to take all of the people in Jerusalem and to dress them in white robes. He told him to take all the priests and that they were to wear their priestly garments, he himself, was to wear his high priestly garments, and when Alexander began to approach the city, they were to march out of the city and greet him.

Strange huh? But the Lord told the high priest, and this is according to Josephus, okay. Told him not to fear, don't be afraid. So according, once again, to Josephus, when Alexander was riding up toward the city of Jerusalem, the people came marching out of the city, and they're not marching to war. They have no armaments, they're just dressed in white garments (the people), the priests in their priestly garments, the high priest in his.

And Josephus says that Alexander dismounted his horse and walked over to the high priest and got down on his knees and worshiped. Now, one of his commanders came to him afterward and asked him, why did you get down and worship that priest of the Jews? And Alexander responded by saying, I did not adore him, but the God who has honored him with that high priesthood.

And Alexander went on to reveal that before he began his campaign of taking the Persian kingdom and going and taking Syria and Tyre and Sidon and Felicia, that the Lord gave him a message saying that when he approached Jerusalem, he would see people in white robes coming out of the city, and he was to respond with grace.

And so, it's interesting, the Bible or Josephus goes on to say how the Jews invited Alexander into the city, he stayed the night. The next day he began to talk to the high priest about kind of making a deal with them and the high priest was able to convince Alexander to say, please let us continue to live under the laws of Jehovah God and Alexander agreed, and the high priest said, please let us forego any taxation every seventh year and Alexander agreed and he departed the city in peace. And now this is how this historian, this Jewish historian, retells the events and it was really amazing. It was truly, amazing.

But it connects to what Zechariah is saying here, or I should say, what the Lord is saying through Zechariah related to the fact that after all these nations are conquered Jerusalem is allowed just simply to remain.

Now, I want you to notice as we read on in verse 9, we come to a passage that we read usually once every year, and it goes like this.

⁹ “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (ESV)

Now that's a fascinating passage. We all know it as a prophetic statement related to the coming of Jesus fulfilled in his triumphal entry when He comes into the city riding on the foal of a donkey, and the people are waving palm branches and laying their garments down on the ground and literally hailing Him publicly as the Messiah.

Interestingly, the very first time Jesus allowed Himself to be publicly declared as Messiah. But isn't it interesting that verse 9 comes right after we read of the historical account of Alexander the Great coming into Jerusalem peacefully. Because you see, this is yet another example of what we call this law of double reference, where in the Old Testament there's a prophecy given that is, has a short term fulfillment and then a greater long term fulfillment.

So, in this sense, Alexander partially fulfilled this, by riding peacefully into the city. He certainly didn't have salvation in the sense of any spiritual salvation. But remember the word salvation doesn't always relate to spiritual salvation, it can simply mean deliverance.

And so, in that sense, Alexander came riding into the city with deliverance for the people of Jerusalem. But Jesus, of course, is the final and ultimate fulfillment of this passage. It is quoted in the book of Matthew chapter 21, and of course, Matthew says, and this fulfilled the prophecy and then he goes on to quote it. (Matthew 21:4) So, we find the final and ultimate fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9 in the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, as we get into verse 10, and this is something the Old Testament prophets will do, they would jump. We just read here in verse 9 about the first coming of Jesus, now we're going to jump to his second coming, all right. And this is one of the reasons the Jews mixed up his first and second coming.

Verse 10.

¹⁰ *“I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”*
(ESV)

Now, once again, this is why the Jews mistakenly believed that Messiah when he came the first time was going to conquer their enemies and ultimately bring Jerusalem to a place of peace with their enemies. What they didn't realize and what they missed was that whole sense of understanding the Messiah's mission to die on the cross for the sins of mankind, which of course, Isaiah outlines very clearly in his chapter about the suffering servant.

But they kind of skipped over that, in fact, they interpreted Isaiah chapter 53 as themselves. They believed that the nation of Israel was the fulfillment of Isaiah 53, when in fact, the fulfillment is Jesus himself. So, they connected these 2 comings of Jesus but, this is talking about his second coming after the battle of Armageddon and when Jesus brings peace to the ends of the earth. Why? Because He is the Prince of Peace and when He rules on the throne over the whole earth, the earth will be at peace.

Verse 11 goes on and says:

¹¹ *“As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.*

¹² *Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.*

¹³ *For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.”* (ESV)

And this goes into the more distant future, even for you and me related to Zechariah's perspective and our perspective. He, and this idea of Greece being overthrown and their rule, it really took place in between the Old and the New Testaments. Perhaps you've heard of the Maccabean Period or the Maccabean Revolt when they threw off the domination of one of the individuals who took over after Alexander the Great passed away. You'll remember his kingdom was divided into 4 kingdoms.

Anyway, these final verses of the chapter beginning in 14 and following are going to relate to the second coming of Jesus and also the battle of Armageddon. So, read with me here.

14 “Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

15 The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones, and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar.” (ESV)

Very descriptive language, but what you're reading here is the power of the Lord that is going to be given to Israel at the time of the Lord's second coming. He says they're going to roar like people who are drunk with wine, but they're not going to be drunk with wine. They're going to be a little bit drunk with power because they're going to receive power from the Lord to overcome their enemies as the Lord goes and fights with them.

Verse 16 says:

16 “On that day the LORD their God will save them (look at that), as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.

17 For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the young women.” (ESV)

So, we get this picture here of entering into the millennial kingdom after the battle of Armageddon where he talks about this great abundance and prosperity that comes upon the land, this this grain that flourishes and the wine and so forth.

So, chapter 10. Now we kind of change our view here a little bit. It begins by saying:

1 “Ask rain from the LORD in the season of the spring rain, from the LORD who makes the storm clouds, and he will give them showers of rain, to everyone the vegetation in the field.” (ESV)

I'll explain what this is about here in just a moment. Ancient Israel was very similar to some degree to where I grew up in the Midwest because I grew up in rural Minnesota and we, there weren't, wasn't any irrigation systems in rural Minnesota when I was growing up.

I've actually seen some going back and traveling back there now to visit family, but they didn't have any, when I was a kid. I never saw an irrigation system until I moved out west because they depend completely on the Lord and what he provides through mother nature and it was the same thing with the people of Israel. And that's why the Lord speaks here to them saying, ask rain from the Lord. But He goes on to say:

² *“For the household gods utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; they tell false dreams and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd.”* (ESV)

He says, ask the Lord for these things, not these stupid pagan idols. Now remember, this is really speaking of the past of Israel because once Israel came back from their exile in the Babylonian/Persian kingdom, you'll remember that idolatry was never an issue for them after that point. But he's kind of going back and remembering how they were once captive to pagan idols and they used to cry out to these idols for things like rain and so forth so their crops would come up and the Lord is now saying, ask me for these things now. You used to turn to the idols of this world, but ask me for these things.

God says:

³ *“My anger is hot against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the house of Judah, and will make them like his majestic steed in battle.”* (ESV)

And I pretty much think that this is referring to the past leaders of Israel who led Israel astray for all those many years. And He's saying here that there is, there's ultimately going to become punishment for those.

Verse 4:

⁴ *“From him (and this is from the hand of the Lord) shall come the cornerstone, (and you know who the cornerstone is) from him the tent peg, (who secures the boundaries or the borders of Israel) from him the battle bow, (who is able to protect and conquer the enemies) from him every ruler—all of them together. (a reference here to Messiah)”* (ESV)

And He goes on to say:

⁵ *“They shall be like mighty men in battle, trampling the foe in the mud of the streets; they shall fight because the LORD is with them, and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.*

⁶ *“I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back because I have compassion on them, and they shall be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.”*

⁷ *Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, and their hearts shall be glad as with wine. Their children shall see it and be glad; their hearts shall rejoice in the LORD.”*

⁸ *“I will whistle for them and gather them in, for I have redeemed them, and they shall be as many as they were before.*

⁹ *Though I scattered them among the nations, yet in far countries they shall remember me, and with their children they shall live and return.*

¹⁰ *I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria, and I will bring them to the land of Gilead and to Lebanon, till there is no room for them.*

¹¹ *He shall pass through the sea of troubles and strike down the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up. The pride of Assyria shall be laid low, and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.*

¹² *I will make them strong in the LORD, and they shall walk in his name,” declares the LORD.” (ESV)*

These are passages that relate to Israel, these don't speak of the church. The church is the Bride of Christ, I've said many times, the church is not, does not appear in the Old Testament. These are references to Israel and Israel we see here in the last days during the millennial kingdom will be made strong and these are promises that are given to the people of Israel.

Chapter 11. Now as we get into chapter 11, we're going to deal with the rise of the Roman Empire and although Rome will not be mentioned specifically by name, it will speak of the dominion that Rome had over Israel and the ultimate destruction that Rome brought to Jerusalem and to specifically the temple.

And you remember why? You remember this happened? First of all, this is past history for us, it was A.D. 70 when Rome came and finally broke through the walls of Jerusalem, destroying the temple.

And it was because Jerusalem or the people of Israel had rejected their Messiah, and this is why Jesus literally wept over the city. We're told that from a mountain looking, overlooking the city, he wept and he said, how I long to gather you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wing, but you would not, you would have none of it. And so, he decreed destruction ultimately for the nation of Israel, for the city of Jerusalem, and specifically the temple, as we will see here in just a bit.

But it begins by saying

¹ *“Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!”*

² *Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, for the glorious trees are ruined! Wail, oaks of Bashan, for the thick forest has been felled!*

³ *The sound of the wail of the shepherds, for their glory is ruined!...*” (ESV)

And obviously it's because their beautiful pasture lands have been destroyed. He goes on to say at the end of verse 3:

³ *“... The sound of the roar of the lions, for the thicket of the Jordan is ruined!”*

⁴ *Thus said the LORD my God: “Become shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter.”* (ESV)

Now I want you to stop here for a moment, because in this chapter, like many other prophets, God is going to ask Zechariah to kind of play a role, to play a part. And this happens in other prophetic books like Ezekiel and others, where God calls upon the prophet to literally act out a message or a role.

And in this sense, he is telling Zechariah to become, as it were, the shepherd of Israel, but he refers to them as the flock doomed to slaughter. And he's making this reference in relationship to the nation of Rome coming in A.D. 70. Well, of course, but way before A.D. 70 Rome had conquered Israel, they were under Roman occupation while Jesus was there.

The Romans were in charge, but they conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the city in A.D. 70. But so, this is what is being referred to here. So, He tells him to become the shepherd and He will speak to him as if he is the shepherd and so forth. Now you'll see how this goes on.

Verse 5:

⁵ *“Those who buy them slaughter them and go unpunished, and those who sell them say, ‘Blessed be the LORD, I have become rich,’ and their own shepherds have no pity on them.*

⁶ *For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares the LORD. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbor, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand.”* (ESV)

So, the Lord prophesize this destruction of the city at the hand of the Romans. So, He says in verse 7:

⁷ *“So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staves, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep.”* (ESV)

So, you can see that Zechariah is playing this role of the shepherd, and He says: *“I took two staves”* and they're representative of 2 elements related to Israel. The first one is a picture of the blessing of God's favor and the second one it speaks of the unity between Judah as a nation of people. And you'll notice what it goes on to say in verse 8:

⁸ *“In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. (or hated me)”* (ESV)

Now he's speaking of these shepherds that have failed the people of Israel. He doesn't name them, He doesn't tell us who they are specifically, He just says *“the three shepherds”*.

Well, if we're going to look at the nation of Israel, and the people that were in charge, it's really not that hard to figure out who these 3 shepherds are because God raised up essentially 3 people to lead the nation and they were the prophets, the priests and the kings, and they all failed the people miserably.

And as Zechariah is acting out this role as the shepherd of Israel, He says that I destroyed the three shepherds because he was so angry with them for failing the people and He said, “*and they detested me*”, so I literally got rid of them and so forth.

So, He goes on in verse 9 to say:

⁹ So I said, “I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And let those who are left devour the flesh of one another.” (ESV)

Now, as the shepherd of Israel, Zechariah is speaking for the Lord because the Lord is their ultimate shepherd, He is the shepherd of Israel. But Zechariah is being told to play this role and so, as he plays out this role, prophetically, he speaks for the Lord and what he says related to the sin of Israel at this time is fine for those who are going to die, let them die. For those who are to be destroyed, let it be destroyed.

In other words, the Lord is saying, I'm not going to hold this thing back, I'm going to let this happen. And so now he depicts letting this happen with these 2 staffs.

Notice in verse 10, he says:

¹⁰ “And I took my staff (which he had named:) Favor, and I broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples.” (ESV)

Now you might, this could potentially be a troubling verse because it sounds on the surface like God is saying, I'm annulling my covenant with Israel, but that's not what he's saying. If you look at the end of verse 10, he says, I am “*annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples*”, that phrase, all the peoples is often used to speak of the nations, not Israel.

And so, the covenant is apparently one which God used to protect Israel so that the nations would not prey upon Israel. And so, he says he's going to revoke this covenant, or annul this covenant of protection and the result is that Israel is going to be vulnerable to attack. And all of this, again, is because of Israel's rejection of their Messiah when he comes the first time.

And you'll remember that I alluded to the fact that Jesus spoke of that destruction. Let me show you this on the screen from Matthew chapter 24, it says that:

(slide)

Matthew 24:1-2 (ESV)

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

Now, this must have just seemed crazy to the disciples who heard Jesus say this, but he is prophesying here the destruction of the temple, which took place probably about 38, 35 to 38 years after this was in fact spoken, depending on where we mark the actual birth of Christ.

So, the vulnerability of the nation of Israel takes place because Zechariah in this part that he plays as the shepherd of Israel, takes the staff "Favor" and annuls the agreement that he had with the nations to protect Israel and now Israel is vulnerable, and that's what he's speaking about here.

But it is also, no doubt, the reason for the spiritual blindness that has come upon Israel as well. And we read about this and Paul actually writes about this in his letter to the Romans. Let me show you on the screen from Romans chapter 11, Paul writes

(slide)

Romans 11:25 (ESV)

I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: (saying) a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Right. The times of the Gentiles began essentially when the first Gentile nation came and conquered Israel. And so, the times of the Gentiles have gone on till the present day, and Jesus tells us that this, or excuse me, Paul is saying through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that this hardening of the nation of Israel, this spiritual hardening will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles has in fact come in.

And we know that is really going to be until the end of the tribulation period. When Jesus returns, that's when the blindness will be lifted from Jerusalem, from the people of Israel, and they will recognize their Messiah. And we will read next week how Zechariah tells us how the Nation of Israel will respond when they see their Messiah and recognize who he is and who he was, and it's a powerful description of how they respond to that.

So, verse 11:

¹¹ So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep traders, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD.

¹² Then I said to them, "If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them." And they weighed out as my wages thirty pieces of silver.

¹³ Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver (and I want you to notice this phase) and threw them into the house of the LORD, (ok) to the potter." (ESV)

Now I keep it in mind, Zechariah still acting out this prophetic picture, if you will, of being the shepherd of Israel. And here he comes to his employer in this acting out thing, and he says I'm quitting, in a sense, I'm done, so pay me my wages. And he begins to speak of this price that was paid to him.

And you'll notice he calls it the Lordly price at which I was priced by them, which seems to be some kind of sarcasm because it really wasn't very lordly. In fact, it was the common price that was paid for a slave. But in any case, this passage, as is also quoted in the gospel of Matthew as being ultimately fulfilled by Judas Iscariot when he betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ for 30 pieces of silver.

But you'll remember after he was paid the money, he was overcome with guilt. And what did he do with the money? He threw it into the temple. Well, the priest looked at it and they said, well, we can't use this, this is blood money.

And so, it says that they bought a potters field and turned it into a graveyard for people who had no family, who weren't Jews, who came into the land, strangers, if you will, in order that they might receive a proper burial, but it was used again to buy the potters field.

So, you can see how there's some fascinating elements of this prophecy concerning these 30 pieces of silver the price that was paid to Judas and how he threw it into the house of the Lord and ultimately to the potter.

Verse 14:

¹⁴ "Then I broke my second staff (which of course he had named:) Union, annulling the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." (ESV)

This is one of the reasons that we know that this chapter is talking about the Roman invasion of Jerusalem. Because it talks here about this annulling of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel, and one of the things that we know historically about the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as this, it was largely brought about through the lack of unity, the lack of harmony between the leaders of the nation of Israel.

They were a divided people at that time and because of that, it made them vulnerable to attack. And the Romans did ultimately come and attack the city. And of course, Jesus warned, he warned them, any kingdom divided against itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25): a city, a household, a kingdom. When it's divided, it cannot stand. And that came to pass for the nation of Israel in A.D. 70. I dare say it is being wrought upon this very nation in which we live, right. We are divided, we've been a divided nation for a long time, but it is having, terrible implications.

Verse 15 goes on to say:

¹⁵ "Then the LORD said to me, "Take once more the equipment of a foolish shepherd." (ESV)

And that is a shepherd who doesn't properly care for the sheep.

¹⁶ For behold, I am raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for those being destroyed, or seek the young or heal the maimed or nourish the healthy, but devours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs." (ESV)

Now, this prophecy in verse 16 is ultimately, it has been fulfilled over the years by various corrupt leaders in Israel, but it will ultimately be fulfilled by Israel's acceptance of the anti-Christ during the great tribulation. And when they make a covenant with him, a 7 year covenant, launching them into that period of time.

And he says in verse 17:

17 “Woe to my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the sword strike his arm and his right eye! Let his arm be wholly withered, his right eye utterly blinded!” (ESV)

Now you remember, these terms for the, in the body, the arm and the eye. These are not just randomly picked. They have very specific and descriptive symbolic meaning in the scripture. The arm is always a picture or a symbol of strength, that's why the Lord even says, is the arm of the Lord too short that it cannot save. That means is the strength of the Lord such that it cannot save. So, the arm is a picture of strength, but the right eye is a description of intelligence in the Bible. And we're told here that this worthless shepherd is going to have his strength and his intelligence attacked or judged, if you will, by the Lord.

And, there are many who see in this final verse of the chapter a prophetic statement regarding the judgment of the anti-Christ being struck by God's judgment and some in fact, see what we are, what we read about in the book of Revelation chapter 13, where it tells us that the anti-Christ will suffer a mortal wound, but will recover much to the amazement of the people of the world. (Revelation 13:3). And that is, I would have to say a possibility but it's very difficult to be dogmatic about that particular statement.

So, we are going to take chapters 12, 13, and 14 Lord willing next time, and we are going to see some just truly amazing passages. Please don't miss that study as Zechariah gives us pinpoint information of where Jesus returns when he comes back a second time and how the nation of Israel responds to his return.

So, let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the time that you have allowed us tonight to get into these chapters in Zechariah and unpack these challenging chapters and verses.

Lord, these are highly prophetic, very symbolic, and I thank you Father that much of what we read here is past prophetic history.

We can literally see how these things were fulfilled in the past. But a great deal of it, Lord, is yet to be fulfilled and we know Lord, with certainty, that these things will in fact come to pass because you are God who is always true to your word. No matter what you say, you will not let one statement, prophetic statement, or good promise fall to the ground because you are faithful above all.

And we thank you and praise you for your faithfulness. Lord, we're so thankful that you sent your Son to give His life on the cross for us that our sins might be wiped out. And we're so thankful also, Lord, that you have a redemptive program that will continue on for the nation of Israel, for other nations at that time when they too recognize the Messiah and what he has accomplished on the cross.

And we praise you, Lord, for the perfection of your plan, and we thank you Lord for revealing it to your prophets. Thank you for this time, bless us as we go from this place. In Jesus precious name we pray. Amen.