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Zechariah 9 - 10



Zechariah - Steve Gregg

Scholars have debated the authorship and division of the book of Zechariah, with chapters 8 and 9 marking a significant change. Despite confusion around the historical context of the text, the prophecies made in the book offer insight into the life of Christ. The book includes several mentions of a "burden of the word of the Lord" that the prophet Zechariah shares with a heavy heart. The book foretells the destruction of various cities and nations, causing fear and anxiety for those unknowingly subject to the predicted chaos.

Transcript

Now we come to the most significant division of the book of Zechariah, because all scholars would place the major division in this book between chapters 8 and 9. The first 8 chapters and the last 6 chapters make up sections so different from each other that at least liberal scholars, and maybe a few conservative ones, have not been able to resist the temptation to suggest separate authors, separate times of writing, and so forth. The differences that exist, as I mentioned in our introduction, are, among other things, that the earlier chapters are all dated. Zechariah tells us when these other prophecies were given, and none of these prophecies and the remainder are dated prophecies.

That's not a major concern of any kind, but it just is a difference in style, or a difference in method of recording prophecies. Another difference is that in the first 8 chapters, Zechariah was named repeatedly as the author, the one who saw the visions, or whatever, the one speaking. Here, from chapters 9 through 14, Zechariah is never mentioned by name, so he does not identify himself here as he did in the earlier prophecies.

Also, of course, the setting is different here. The early prophecies were largely in the early period of the rebuilding of the temple, and they are focused on that project, with the exception of chapters 7 and 8, which are slightly after that, but still have to do with issues surrounding the temple. Whereas these chapters are looking at something totally different, something apparently in the future, beyond the time of the temple reconstruction in Zechariah's own time.

So these differences have sometimes made people wonder whether we have a different author of these chapters. There's no reason to think that way. When you do style and vocabulary analysis, you find that the style and the vocabulary of these chapters is really the same as in the earlier chapters.

It's just different material, and being significantly different material may justify the other differences. He's doing something entirely different. The first 8 chapters, for example, were written to his own contemporaries, his own countrymen, about things they were involved in, decisions they had to make, projects they were on.

Everything in the early 8 chapters was contemporary in application and in content. These, obviously, are not directly relevant to his own generation in the same way, because he is, in fact, looking ahead. We know this because, well, we might have deduced it anyway, since nothing in these chapters really refers to anything that was going on in Zechariah's day, and we might assume, therefore, he's looking at something future, but we have the New Testament to tell us exactly, in many cases, what some of these chapters are about, and they do look forward, at least some of them do, to the time of the Messiah, of Christ, which means, of course, it's looking quite far into the distant future from Zechariah's own day.

Zechariah lived 500 and some odd years before Christ, and now some of these chapters are going to be talking about the life of Christ. Acts chapter 9, for example, has the triumphal entry of Christ, and is quoted in the New Testament as being about that, so it's not like we have to guess about this. So, we are looking far ahead of the time that the previous prophecies in the book were concerned with.

How much further ahead is not always agreed upon, because there are parts of this section that are popularly, especially by the dispensational teachers, who are the popular teachers on Bible prophecy in our time, they're applied to the end of the world, to the second coming of Christ, to Armageddon, to the millennium. At least the later chapters, 12 through 14, are often applied popularly to that. So, that would be one view.

It's a view I don't hold, but it's nonetheless a popular view, but clearly, everyone would have to agree, myself included, that Zechariah is looking centuries ahead of his own time. But to what? As you read these verses, they are in poetry, as most prophecy is, and poetry is not always the clearest prose, it's not prose at all, it's often, you know, very, has very elaborate imagery or sensational ways of describing things, because it's poetic, it's for impressionistic purposes. And therefore, knowing what it's about has been a challenge for some.

I will be one of those that it was a challenge for, especially in the early days when I was starting to teach and read Zechariah, I found it very difficult. Not so much now, and that's partly because, although there were always some parts that were easy to identify, because of the New Testament quotations of them, the parts in between those that

patched it together were sometimes hard to identify what they were about. But that difficulty was partly due to my relative ignorance at the time of intertestamental history, things that happened between the time of the Old Testament and the New Testament, a period of 400 years, which I'm persuaded is referred to in these prophecies, and without knowing anything about that history, we have a somewhat greater challenge in making sense out of the prophecies.

Let me read some of the verses at the beginning here. Before I do, I want to remind you, I said this in our introduction, but I'll remind you because it's been a while since our introduction was given. This section of six chapters divides into two equally long oracles, and both of them open with the same phrase.

In our New King James that I'm reading, it says, The burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach. Now, the burden of the word of the Lord is a bulky phrase. Sometimes there's, in elsewhere in Scripture, there's the burden of the Lord, and sometimes there's the word of the Lord.

But this is the burden of the word of the Lord. Now, if you have a modern translation, I'm thinking probably the word burden will be translated, maybe oracle, the oracle of the word of the Lord, maybe, or something like that. The burden is actually a very good and frequently used word in the prophets.

The prophets received the burden of the Lord, which is kind of an interesting way of speaking about their oracles, because it suggests that God was burdened by certain things that he foresaw coming, that God had an emotional involvement in it. It was heavy on his heart, and he shared that heaviness with the prophets. The prophets sort of entered into God's emotions about such things.

Sometimes they even had to enter into actions that resembled his. In some cases, they had to actually act out prophecies, sometimes at great expense themselves. Jeremiah was told, for example, don't get married.

That was part of his prophecy, that those who are married and have children, we really have something to grieve about. So like when Jesus said, woe to those who have children in those days, and who give suck, and who are pregnant. When things are really bad, you don't want to have too many family members to be worried about.

And so Jeremiah, as part of his message, that there's going to be a disaster, was told not to get married. Ezekiel's wife died, and he was told not to mourn for her. Hosea was told to marry a woman who would be unfaithful to him.

Isaiah was told to walk around naked for three years, to resemble the Egyptians going off into captivity into Assyria, and so forth. Sometimes the prophets had to not only feel it, they had to do something. That was very costly.

It's not cheap to be a prophet. There's a price tag. And in many times, the price is that God shares his burden with them.

And they receive it, and they share it with the people as their to-do. And so chapter 9, verse 1 begins with the burden of the word of the Lord. And if you'll turn over to chapter 12, verse 1, it also begins with the expression, the burden of the word of the Lord.

However, this time against Israel. Chapter 9, verse 1 is the burden of the word of the Lord against Hadrach. And chapter 12, verse 1, the burden of the word of the Lord against Israel.

And if you turn a couple of pages over to Malachi, chapter 1, verse 1, it says the burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. Those are the only three times that the Bible uses this expression, the burden of the word of the Lord. They're very rare, and obviously deliberate.

Malachi was probably a little later than Zechariah, but not too terribly much later. And obviously, this expression is found only in these late post-exilic prophets. I don't know why this expression is used, but one function it serves, in Zechariah at least, is to punctuate the section we're in.

There are two separate prophecies, each begin with the word, the burden of the word of the Lord. Each is three chapters long in our present chapter divisions. And so, each needs to be considered separately, because in a sense, they have their own separate time frame that they deal with.

So, we begin at chapter 9, verse 1, the burden of the word of the Lord against the land of Hadrach, and Damascus, its resting place, for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the Lord. Also against Hamath, which borders on it, and against Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. For Tyre built herself a tower, heaped up silver like the dust, and gold like the mire of the streets.

Behold, the Lord will cast her out. He will destroy her power in the sea, and she will be devoured by fire. Ashkelon shall see it and fear.

Gaza also shall be very sorrowful. And Ekron, for he dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. I will take away the blood from his mouth, and the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, and he shall be like a leader in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.

I will camp around my house because of the army, because of him who passes by, and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them. For now I have seen

with my eyes.

Now, the reference to seeing with his eyes at the end of verse 8, and to people, the eyes of men in verse 1, being on the Lord, is thought to perhaps tie this prophecy together as a unit. It begins with eyes and ends with eyes. The eyes of men in verse 1, the eyes of the Lord in verse 8. And what's in between? Well, I dare say you probably found that material rather difficult.

There were references to a number of places that may not have been familiar to you, cities and such, that are ancient cities, and it's not all that clear what it's saying about them, perhaps. However, it's clear that these cities that are named are coming under judgment, because it says this is against the land of Hadrik, verse 1. It's also against Hamath. This is a negative prophecy.

It's also, in verse 2, against Tyre and Sidon. And it says that Tyre and Sidon will be cast out and destroyed in verse 4. Then you've got these cities, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod. These are Philistine cities.

There were five Philistine cities. Four of them are mentioned here. Gath, the only one that is not mentioned.

And they also seem to be under judgment, because it says that they're afraid and sorrowful and so forth. There's obviously a negative oracle against these places. And yet in verse 8, God says, I will camp around my house, which is most normally a reference to the temple.

So this is the first reference to the temple in this section. This would be the same temple that Zerubbabel had built under Zechariah's encouragement and Haggai's encouragement. And it says God's going to camp around his house because of the army, suggesting he's going to protect it.

What time frame could possibly fit these things? Well, Hadrach is an area of northern Syria encompassing Damascus and Hamath. And Damascus was its capital, so it's resting place. This is Syria to the north of Israel that's being referred to.

And then you've got Tyre and Sidon, which are also to the north. They're on the coast to the north of Israel. And we know about them from other places in the Bible, of course.

And then there's the five Philistine cities that are along the western shore of Canaan or Palestine. And so these are listed in a north to south order. And it happens that this is the order in which Alexander the Great conquered the region.

And that this is a reference to Alexander's conquest is rather hard to deny for a number of reasons. One is we're told that Tyre and Sidon, although they're very wise, are going to be destroyed and cast down. Now, Tyre especially was the most important seaport

city on the eastern Mediterranean coast and well fortified.

In fact, not only was the mainland city fortified, but they had an island, a solid rock that rose out of the sea about a half mile off the shore. And they'd also fortified that. That was sort of a fortress as well.

In those days, there weren't any great navies that could conquer that rock if the people went into it and hold up there and wouldn't let anyone in. And what happened often when Tyre was attacked was that the people, if they couldn't withstand the attack on the mainland, they would retreat to the island and defend that. And there was never an army that could conquer that island because there just wasn't a navy suited for that kind of a campaign.

Nebuchadnezzar, in fact, had tried. He'd waged war against Tyre for 12 years. And he was able to demolish the city on the mainland, but he was not able to conquer the island.

So he gave up and he went on down and attacked other regions to the south. Nebuchadnezzar did not conquer them, but Alexander the Great did. And the way he did so was not by having a great navy.

He didn't have any superior navy to others who had been before him. But once the people went to the island from Tyre, he was determined to not let them remain unconquered. So he totally demolished the city on the mainland and commanded his troops to take the rubble, the stones and the wood and so forth, and throw them into the water between the mainland and the island.

And they built up from the bottom of the sea, solidly up a walkway. I believe it was like 100 feet wide, if not more. I was surprised when I read how wide it was.

But he built this causeway from the sea bottom up so that his troops could just walk across to the island and conquer it. And they did. And that's when Tyre fell.

Now we have other references in the scripture to this. None of them name Alexander the Great as the one who accomplished it, but history does. And in Ezekiel, there are several chapters in a row about the doom of Tyre.

And Ezekiel was about 70 years or so before Zechariah. So his vision of the fall of Tyre is even more remarkable because of the further distance and time from it. Though Zechariah was not near it.

This happened in the late 4th century. And Zechariah lived in the late 6th century. So about 200 years after Zechariah's time is when Alexander waged these campaigns and did conquer Tyre.

But in Ezekiel 26, verse 2 says, This actually was uttered before Nebuchadnezzar came. And Nebuchadnezzar was one of those nations, one of those waves that came up against them. And did serious damage to the mainland city but couldn't ultimately conquer the island.

But he was not the last. There'd be many nations. There'd be other attacks, other waves following that wave of attack.

And he says in verse 4, Now this is because Alexander required all the stones and the rubble and the dirt to be thrown into the water. So the mainland ruins were scraped clean. And this causeway was built.

Now if you look in the same chapter, in verse 12, he says, Now how many countries has that ever happened to? First of all, they're conquered by the enemies. And then the enemies go to the trouble of throwing all the rubble in the water. Why? It seems like a real waste of energy once you've conquered a land.

Ezekiel may not well have understood how this would happen or why. But history tells us. Alexander destroyed the city on the mainland and then threw the stones and the timber and so much into the water, scraped the top of the place clean to build this causeway and go across and conquer it.

So the conquest of Tyre was accomplished, as Ezekiel had predicted, by Alexander the Great. And still 200 years prior to this. Zechariah says the same thing.

He says, with reference to Tyre, verse Zechariah 9, 3. For Tyre built herself a tower, heaped up silver like the dust and gold like the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out. He will destroy her power in the sea.

See, not just the mainland, her island power. He'll destroy her power in the sea and she will be devoured by fire. Now, since it was Alexander the Great that did that to Tyre, we know something of the time frame of the fulfillment.

These cities that are coming under judgment came in judgment in the same order that they're listed here. By Alexander the Great. And a further confirmation that this is what we're looking at is verse 8, where he says, I will camp around my house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns.

No more shall an oppressor pass through them. For now I have seen with my eyes. Now, God said, while Alexander is coming, approaching from the north, closer and closer to Jerusalem, God said he will defend his temple.

Now, under normal circumstances, probably, in conquering the Jews, Alexander would have destroyed the temple. But that actually didn't end up happening and it's really remarkable how. Josephus actually tells us in a passage in his book, The Antiquities of

the Jews, talking about this.

Let me read to you what Josephus wrote. He says, Now, Alexander, when he had taken Gaza, made haste to go up to Jerusalem. And Jadda, the high priest, when he heard that, was in agony and under terror, as not knowing how he should meet the Macedonians.

That's Alexander's Greek truth. Since the king was displeased as he was at his foregoing disobedience. So Alexander was not pleasantly disposed toward the priest and the temple and so forth.

So it was frightening to know that he was coming. He says, He therefore ordained that the people should make supplications and should join with him in the offering sacrifices to God, whom he besought to protect that nation and to deliver them from the perils that were coming upon them. Whereupon God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, adorn the city and open the gates and the rest appear in white garments, but that he and the priest should meet the king, that is Alexander, in habits proper to their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent.

Upon which, when he rose from his sleep, he greatly rejoiced and declared to all the warnings he had received from God. According to the dream, he acted entirely and so waited for the coming of the king. Reading on in Josephus, he says, And when he understood that he was not far from the city, he went out in procession with the priests and the multitude of the citizens.

The procession was venerable and the manner of it different from that of other nations. It reached to a place called Satha, which name translates in Greek, signifies a prospect, for you have from there a prospect both of Jerusalem and of the temple. And when the Phoenicians and the Chaldeans that followed him thought that they should have liberty to plunder the city and torment the high priest to death, which the king's displeasure fairly promised them, it says, the very reverse of it happened.

For Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance in white garments, while the priest stood clothed with fine linen and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing with his miter on his head, having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved. He approached by himself as Alexander dismounted and came alone to meet the priest and adored that name and first saluted the high priest. Says the Jews also did all together 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 to be disordered in his mind.

However, Parmenio, Alexander's second in command, 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, quote, I did not adore him, but that God who has

honored him with that high priesthood. For I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit when I was at Dias in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the domain 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 dominion over the Persians.

Whence it is that I have seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering my vision and the exhortation which I had had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under 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, unquote. That's what Alexander said. And when he had said that 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 sacrifice 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 showed to him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, that would be Daniel chapter 8, he supposed that himself was the person intended, and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him, whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year, the Sabbath year. He granted all that they desired, and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired. And when he said to the multitude that if any of them would enlist themselves in his army on this condition, that they should continue under the laws of their forefathers and live according to them, he was willing to take them with him.

Many were ready to accompany him in this war. So this is Josephus' history of this, and you can see that as Alexander approached Jerusalem, God did camp around the city. God did stop his unstoppable march to destroy even Jerusalem and even gave him a dream.

He gave Alexander a dream. He gave the high priest a dream. He gave instructions.

It reminds us a little bit of the story of Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20 where they were surrounded by undefeatable armies, and God said, well, you just approach them this way. Take out your priests and sing and worship God, and then God will take care of business. And God did.

He defended the city and actually caused the enemies to kill each other. But the point here is that God, once again, because the people prayed and offered sacrifices, knowing that Alexander was coming, God intervened to give the priest a dream, instructing him to do it this way, to dress this way, and so forth. And he gave Alexander a dream earlier, seeing the priest dressed this way.

And so Alexander said, and then they showed him Daniel. They showed Alexander Daniel the prophet, where Alexander's conquest of Persia was predicted hundreds of years earlier, 300 years before this time. So obviously, Alexander was impressed by a dream, by Daniel the prophet, and so forth, and so the Jews were spared.

So as Zechariah tells us, God encamped around his house and defended it against what would have been certain destruction. So this house that Zechariah and his generation had built would be preserved at least at this point. Now, before the end of the prophecies of Zechariah, he's going to tell about it being destroyed again.

That'd be in 70 AD. But that God was going to preserve it at least for hundreds of years, even against Alexander's advances. Now, it's interesting that this point, verse 9, Zechariah 9, 9 says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you.

He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of the donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem. The battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations.

His dominion shall be from the sea to the sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. As for you, because of the covenant of your, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope.

Even today I will declare that I will restore double to you. Now, the reason I read that many verses is to show you that the one verse in this section, which is extremely familiar, is followed by verses that are much less familiar. The verse that we are familiar with is verse 9, and we're familiar with it because it is, of course, quoted in the New Testament, Matthew 21, verses 4 and 5, quoted.

John chapter 12, verses 14 through 16, do. And, of course, it is applied to the triumphal entry of Christ riding on a donkey. And so it has just described in the previous verse God delivering Jerusalem from an oppressor, a would-be oppressor.

Alexander the Great actually turned him into a friend and a protector. But here, God's people were in great danger. They had called out to God.

They offered sacrifices. He favored them and brought salvation to them. Now, as I've tried to observe before whenever I've taught the prophets, and I make this point, it's very much the habit of the prophets.

Whenever they are talking about any earthly deliverance that God brings to Israel, they cannot resist the temptation to talk about the ultimate deliverance that the Messiah will bring. This happens all the time in the prophets. They'll be talking about the exiles returning from Babylon, and then they'll start talking about the Messiah and His

salvation of the people.

Why? Because God delivering His people from Babylon is, in a sense, a type and a shadow of salvation in the Messiah. The Exodus also was a type and a shadow of the deliverance through Christ. And so these earthly deliverances are part and parcel with the larger deliverance that God ultimately will bring.

It's like they're small deliverances that are just tokens of the ultimate purpose God has to deliver His people. And so, just in talking about how God saved Jerusalem on this occasion from the advances of Alexander, it gives the prophet occasion to say, and, you know, there's even a greater salvation when your king comes, when the Messiah comes. I see him coming, you know, on a donkey.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Daughter of Zion just means people of Jerusalem. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Behold, your king is coming. He's just, having salvation, lowly riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. Now, of course, Jesus fulfilled this.

And perhaps someone would say, well, that's not that impressive. Jesus knew this prophecy. He could have engineered it even if He wasn't the Messiah.

He could have said, I want people to think I'm the Messiah, so I'm going to go get a donkey and ride into Jerusalem. However, not everyone, just on a whim, could ride a donkey in Jerusalem and have all the people say, Hosanna, blessed is the kingdom of David, our father, that comes in the name of the Lord, and declare him king. There was more to it.

I mean, there was the people, and their declarations also were a part of this whole thing. And although a man in Jesus' position could have probably, on his own, arranged to get a donkey and ride into Jerusalem and say, see, I fulfilled the prophecy, this would only be expected to be done if He was trying to prove He was the Messiah, something Jesus never really did. Jesus concealed the fact that He was the Messiah as much as He could.

When they said, how long will you keep us in suspense if you're the Messiah? Tell us plainly. He said, I've told you all I'm going to tell you. You didn't believe anyway, so I'm not going to tell you anymore.

He never announced publicly that He was the Messiah, in His ministry that's on record anyway. He privately told the woman at the well that He was the Messiah, and He told the disciples privately at Caesarea Philippi. But those are the only times Jesus actually said, I'm the Messiah.

And it's not like He was a man going around trying to convince people He was the Messiah. Many false messiahs had come and said, I'm the Messiah, but they weren't.

Jesus was the Messiah, and He didn't broadcast that.

He wasn't riding a donkey to convince anyone of anything. He rode the donkey in because that's what the Messiah was supposed to do, and He was the Messiah, but not because He was trying to make an impression. He came into Jerusalem as the King, and many people hailed Him as King, though of course He was crucified a week later.

But these verses 10 through 12, I believe, are related to that King, Jesus, coming, and the kingdom that He established. The language of them, like so much of the Old Testament prophets about the Messiah, is the language of Old Testament images and warfare. Although, for the most part, when these things are applied in the New Testament, they're applied to a spiritual warfare.

And so we're reading what to an Old Testament reader would sound like warfare scenes, or rather the banishing of warfare. It is really talking about spiritual things. We know that, of course, because Jesus didn't drive out the Romans, Jesus didn't muster an army, Jesus didn't bring political peace, but He did do something of that kind spiritually.

He gave victory to His disciples over their real enemies, the demons and sin in their life, and so forth. This is a spiritual thing. But how it's worded here, after it talks about Jesus riding on a colt, it says, I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem.

Now, chariots and horses are what armies employ. They're military equipment. And this is talking about foreign armies.

Israel had been invaded a great deal in their history by foreign armies. By Babylonians, by, on other occasions, Edomites, Moabites, and those kinds of people, because in the book of Judges they were invaded all the time. Invasion by foreign horses and armies and chariots was sort of a commonplace of Israel's history.

I guess I'm going to end that. I'm going to cut that off. I'm going to cut off all those invaders.

I'm going to cut off all those armies. In other words, I'm going to give you peace. I'm going to bring peace to you.

And He says, I'm going to cut off the battle bow, which is, of course, a bow and arrow. And says, He shall speak peace to the nations. His dominion shall be from the sea to the sea, from the river to the ends of the earth.

Now, this is talking about the worldwide dominion of Jesus, I believe. And this is something that's still being realized. Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God.

He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And His kingship is expanding through the

preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations. And He is bringing His peace to the nations.

Now remember, Jesus said, don't think that I came to bring peace. I came to bring a sword. But what He meant by that is, I didn't only come to bring peace.

I came to also bring a sword. When He came, He brought a piece of a sword, a kind of peace, but not only peace. There was another kind of turmoil that was brought.

In John 16, 33 says, these things I've spoken unto you that in me, you will have peace in the world. You'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I've overcome the world.

Jesus came to bring a piece of a sword, but not only peace, a sword as well. In me, you have peace. In the world, not so much.

Christians have known tribulation ever since Jesus was here, but they've also known peace. My peace I give unto you, He said, not like the world gives. And Paul says in Philippians, a peace that surpasses understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

It's a spiritual inward peace. It's a fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, and other things.

Jesus did bring peace. He is the Prince of Peace. He speaks peace to the nations, but it's a peace to their soul.

Jesus said, Come unto me, all you who labor and have related, and I'll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and meek, and you will find peace, a rest to your soul, a peace, a restful soul. And so, those who take Christ's yoke, who accept His kingship in others, His Lordship, and become His disciples, they are His Kingdom, and He speaks peace to them, and they are from many nations.

He speaks peace to the nations, and His Kingdom expands from sea to sea and river to the end of the earth. The truth is, that language could simply refer to the land of Palestine, because the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee could be seen as the two seas on either side, and from the river Euphrates to the end of the land. I mean, it is possible for that language simply to refer to the land of Israel, but the land of Israel is type and shadow of the world, because the Messiah will inherit the world.

God says to the Messiah in Psalm 2.8, Ask of me, and I'll give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. So, this is talking about the international rule of Christ, because He speaks peace to the nations. This is not just the land of Palestine, but it is actually a global dominion, which is also spoken of in other parts of the Scripture.

In fact, in Isaiah 2.4, probably a much more familiar Scripture than this particular one, Isaiah 2.4, it says, Many people apply this to a future millennium, because they say, well, there is certainly plenty of war now. No one has taken all their weapons and beaten them into farming instruments today. That must be the millennium He is talking about.

But, they misunderstand, I believe, because He is not talking about all people on the planet. He is talking about the Gentiles, who flow into Mount Zion and learn God's ways, which has been going on for 2,000 years. Gentiles coming to the King, Jesus, being disciples, taking His yoke and learning from Him.

They lay down their arms, instead of fighting each other and killing each other. They cultivate the kingdom. The kingdom is not spread by the sword.

It is spread by a sower sowing seeds, Jesus said. It is more like a peaceable farming enterprise, rather than a fierce, aggressive warfare. You see, in verses 2-3, especially in verse 3, many people will come and say, the previous verse talks about all nations flowing into the kingdom of God, that is the church.

Many will come and say, come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. This is spiritual Jerusalem it is talking about. He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.

These are Gentiles coming into the church to be taught the ways of God. That is what the church is supposed to be, an educational place. Jesus said, make disciples teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.

That is what the church has been doing for 2,000 years. Gentiles have been coming to Mount Zion. This passage is probably alluded to in Hebrews, where it says, we have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn that are registered in heaven.

The writer of Hebrews, in chapter 12, verse 22, or 24, makes this comment. We have this information that those who come into Mount Zion, and they listen to and learn from Christ, as we do, as we are disciples and become His followers, we take our weapons, that is our instruments of hostility, and transform them into instruments of peace and cultivation. We cultivate relationships now.

We do not kill our enemies. We love our enemies. We are not spreading a kingdom by the sword.

Jesus said to Pilate, in John 18, 36, He said, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom was of this world, My servants would have fought. So I would not be taken captive by the Jews.

But My kingdom is not from here. He did not say His kingdom is not here. It is just not

from here.

It is from heaven. It is here, okay. And I have servants, and I am a king.

And they do not fight to defend Me. Why? I would not let them, because that is not how this kingdom works. This kingdom is not defended or advanced with the sword.

We take our swords, and we will trade those in for farming implements. Because this kingdom is spread by sowers, sowing seeds, the word, and it hits different kinds of soils, and it grows and produces the fruit of the kingdom. This is all, of course, metaphorical stuff.

Very rife through the whole prophetic scriptures, and the teaching of Jesus too. So we have this similar kind of language here. In Zechariah 9, 10, I will cut off the chariot, and the horse, and the war boat.

Well, that is like turning your swords into plowshares, and your spears into pruning hooks. Get rid of the weapons and the invaders. And the Messiah who comes in on the donkey is obviously a peaceable kind of guy.

He is not on a war horse, he is on a donkey. And so He is going to speak peace, not just to Israel, but to the nations. That is the Gentiles.

His dominion is going to extend beyond Israel, to the Gentiles. And then He says, no doubt, to His faithful remnant, in verse 11, and this would be to the disciples of Jesus. As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Now, Jesus said, in Luke chapter 4, that He had come to fulfill Isaiah 61, verses 1 and 2, where it says, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives. The opening of the doors to those who are bound, open of prison. Well, what is this talking about? I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

This is what Jesus announced. He said, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. He didn't quote this scripture, He quoted Isaiah 61, but it says the same thing.

Same theme. The Messiah is the one who sets people free. And it is because of the blood of our covenant.

Jesus, in the upper room, said to His disciples, this cup is the blood of the new covenant. I am entering into a covenant in my blood. He said, this is the new covenant in my blood.

And now He says to His disciples here, because the blood of the covenant, of your covenant I've made with you, I'm going to set your prisoners free. This is all language of physical cessation of war, physical liberation, and things like that. But the New

Testament assumes all these things to be fulfilled in a spiritual sense.

That was what was not really understood by the rabbis and the Jews. They were looking for a militaristic Messiah who would do these things literally, but Jesus opened His disciples understanding that they might understand these scriptures. And they never saw these as about that.

They saw these as about what Jesus had accomplished in bringing spiritual liberation, spiritual peace, and so forth. And so in verse 12, He says, So this is a reference to calling people out of the prison of sin and come into the stronghold of the kingdom and to be part of His government and His campaign. He's going to bless doubly.

But then it says in verse 13, I have bent Judah, my bow, fitted the bow with a rope, and raised up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and made you like a sword of a mighty man. Now this, I believe, is coming at the end of a parenthesis. We read in verse 8 about God delivering Jerusalem from the advance of Alexander the Great.

This led to a parenthetical look forward to the time of the Messiah and the deliverance and the peace and the victory and so forth, and the deliverance and liberation that the Messiah would bring, which is spiritual. The parenthesis, I believe, ends and not all would agree with this, but I'm convinced that the parenthesis ends after verse 12 and we return to our story. What is our story? Well, the intertestamental period.

Alexander's conquest happened in the intertestamental period, about 200 years after Zechariah's time, but there would still be another 200 years after that before Jesus came. And those 200 years were partly occupied with another war of liberation where the Jews were liberated from another oppressor, one of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes. He was descended from a man named Seleucus, who had been one of Alexander's generals.

And this was many generations after the death of Alexander the Great, the Jews were threatened again by a Greek power, the Greek power that ruled Syria to the north, and that ruler was Antiochus Epiphanes and he almost wiped out the temple as well. He defiled it. The Jews couldn't use it for three years because it was defiled by a sacrifice to Zeus that was offered there by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC.

So we've jumped a hundred years or more, 150 years or more after the time of Alexander, but still not quite to the time of Christ. And in this leap we've come to the next time that the temple's well-being was in danger. Now remember, Zechariah's generation was very interested in the temple.

They just built it. And so God's looking forward through the centuries and saying, there are times when this temple will be threatened, but where God is going to see to it that it doesn't get destroyed. So the first time is when Alexander comes and God doesn't let

him destroy the temple.

The second time is the Maccabean period. Now it's called the Maccabean period because when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple, he didn't destroy it, didn't physically damage it so much as he made it unclean by bringing a pig in and sacrificing it to Zeus. And the Jews figured the temple was desecrated.

It's like sacrilege. And they couldn't use the temple until such a time as they could go through a recleansing ritual. But they couldn't do that while Antiochus was still around.

And so a guerrilla war was waged against the Syrian troops under Antiochus Epiphanes headed up at one point by a man named Judas Maccabeus. It was actually his own father and brothers that had started the revolt, and they were killed in the process, but Judas Maccabeus took charge of it. It was a popular revolt conducted along the lines of guerrilla warfare where they raided Syrian encampments and so forth until they finally, after three years of this, drove the Syrians out and liberated Israel from the Syrian dominance and rededicated the temple and made it useful again, which is what is celebrated every year by Jews at what they call Hanukkah, the feast of rededication or the feast of dedication.

John chapter 10 refers to this feast as the feast of dedication. Jews call it Hanukkah today, and they celebrate it because it was a major turning point in their fortunes. Again, they had been under pagan threat and through God's seemingly miraculous intervention, an unarmed or minimally armed group of Jewish rebels drove out a well-armed and well-outfitted army of invaders.

So it's again, it's almost like the book of Judges. It's a great deliverance that kept the temple from being, passing from being used. The temple that Zerubbabel had built was then again preserved.

Now, I believe that the remainder of chapter 9 is talking about the back to being revolt, and the reason that this has to be the time frame is because verse 13 talks about how God would bend Judah like a bow and fit Ephraim, that's Israel, like an arrow. It's all very poetic, of course, and they're not really a bow and arrow, but they're God's weapon in his hand, and raise them up, the sons of Zion, that's Jerusalem, against the sons of Greece. There is no war in the history of the Jews where they fought against the Grecians, except for the Maccabean War.

The Jews didn't really fight wars against the Greeks, except that time. So, he specifically mentions the conflict between the people of Jerusalem and the Grecians, which would be when the Maccabeans revolted against Antiochus Epiphanes and his Greek, Graco-Syrian, really, because he was in Syria, but he was a Greek extraction, against them. So, I think it's that war that is described in the remaining verses.

If you don't know anything about that war, you'd be at a loss to make any sense out of these verses, but it says in verse 14, See, they had to use makeshift weapons. That is, they'll have a victory and roar to celebrate, as if they were drunk. They'd be so happy.

This is just talking about having a great party, eating and drinking, because they win. Because what? God wins. He is seen over them, as it were, not literally, but their victory is seen to be so supernatural, it's evident that God is covering them.

And his arrow is going forth, not just the sling stones of the Maccabeans, but God's arrows, as it were, strike down the enemy. There's several references here to God being the one who delivers them, and so forth. And the Jews certainly recognize this to this day, that their survival and victory of the Maccabean revolt was miraculous, just because they were so outclassed.

You might as well expect Gideon with 300 men to drive out 30,000 Midianites. Well, lo and behold, it did happen, but no one ever doubted that was a miracle. And so, the Maccabean victory is similar.

In fact, there's going to be a comparison later on with the victory of Gideon, comparing it with this. We're just about out of time, but I want to take chapter 10 very quickly, because this chapter is essentially, I believe, continuing to talk about the Maccabean victories. And I don't need to make too many comments.

You'll see how the poetic language works in it. It says, This is symbolic, no doubt, of when they're praying for God's blessing of, you know, victory. That can only come from heaven, just like rain.

No one can give you rain except God. So, no one could have given them the victory except God. So, praying for rain and God delivering it would probably be a reference to his revelation.

In delivering them against overwhelming enemies. That is, before they were delivered like this. The Maccabeans didn't have horses.

But they did have horses. And they were like mighty men who tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle and shall fight because the Lord is with them. And the riders on horses shall be put to shame.

The Maccabeans didn't have horses. The Syrians did. But they defeated those who did have horses.

Now, this reference here to them having no shepherd must be before the revolt took place. The priest Mattathias was the one who started the revolt and Judas Maccabeus was one of his several sons. He had four or five sons that were involved in the battle too.

And they definitely provided good leadership for the sheep. But before that, the people of Israel, the priests especially, which were the main leaders of the community, they were compromised. They were trying to get along with Antiochus Epiphanes and stuff.

But God raised up better shepherds than that. He was angry at the shepherds that were there. And he says he raised up the house of Judah.

Most of the Jews were Judah. I mean, this was after the Babylonian exile. So that almost all the Jews, almost all the Israelites were of the tribe of Judah.

He's raised them up and says makes them like his royal horse in the battle. It's interesting this imagery of God going to war and his people are his steed, his horse. I've often wondered whether this verse might shed some light on that vision in Revelation 19 where Jesus is seen coming on a white horse, a battle horse.

And he's got a sword coming out of his mouth. He's striking the nations with the sword out of his mouth, clearly his word. We often think of this as a picture of the second coming of Christ.

And that is one possibility. Probably the most popular view today is that John is seeing the second coming of Christ, Jesus coming on a horse. While that's not impossible, it's not necessarily obvious.

The angels who spoke to the disciples at the time of the ascension said Jesus will return in the same way that they saw him go. And he didn't go on a horse. And there's not anything in the Bible that tells us he will return on a horse.

Unless, of course, that's how we interpret the vision of Revelation 19. It mentions a horse. But is it talking about the second coming or something else? Or is it talking about his conquest of the nations with his word, the preaching of the gospel? And his vehicle is his people.

The church carrying the gospel, carrying Christ, as it were, to the nations. And he defeats his enemies with the sword out of his mouth. You and I were enemies of his once.

And we've been defeated by the gospel. He conquered us. We're submitted now.

And so our nations conquered in this way throughout the world. And so it's very possible, it's only one possibility, but it's a real one, that Revelation 19, seeing Jesus riding the horse, is not even a reference to the second coming. And there have been a great number of interpreters throughout history who didn't think so.

They thought it's a picture of Christ riding triumphantly on the church, his horse, his vehicle. And carrying his word and him striking the nations as conquering Gentiles with the preaching of his word. It's all very figurative, of course, but it's a figure that has a

precedent here in Zechariah 10.3, that in the Maccabean wars, it's as if God was riding upon the horse of Judah as the warriors of Judah were fighting and God was essentially fighting on their behalf.

Now when it says in verse 4, from him comes the cornerstone, from him the tent peg, from him the battle bow, from him every ruler together. It's difficult to know what some of these things refer to. From who? Apparently from Judah.

Well, every king after David's time came from Judah and therefore every ruler, even the Messiah, comes from there. The cornerstone could certainly be a reference to Jesus because this was not the first time the Messiah would be referred to that way. In Psalm 118, it says that Jesus is the chief cornerstone.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner, the chief cornerstone. Psalm 118 says, the New Testament says that's Jesus. So, Zechariah might well have already thought of the Messiah as a cornerstone from that earlier passage.

From Judah comes the cornerstone. From him, the tent peg, the battle bow. I'm not sure what all that refers to.

It might simply refer to the warfare. Soldiers often would live in tents rather than at home in their houses. They'd have weapons and so forth.

It may simply be saying that the victory in this battle is given by God through Judah. Eventually, the Messiah himself and his victory comes through Judah as well. It talks about them treading down their enemies in the streets and so forth in verse 5. Then verse 6 says, I will strengthen the house of Judah and will save the house of Joseph and I will bring them back because I have mercy on them.

They shall be as though I had not cast them aside for I am the Lord their God and I will hear them. Those of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man and their hearts shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall see it and be glad.

Their hearts shall rejoice in the Lord. You can see some of the same images from the previous chapter and I think it's still looking at that same era. I will whistle for them and gather them for I will redeem them and they shall increase as they once increased.

I will sow them among the peoples. Now this, I have a suspicion, is now looking again at the Messianic age because the prophets do this. He's been talking, when he was talking about delivering the temple from Alexander, he lapsed into a prophecy about the Messianic deliverance.

Now he's been talking about him delivering them from the Syrians, Greeks and about their victories there and now I believe and this is a subjective call on my part but I believe it's so. He's now looking at again the Messianic deliverance of the present age

with Christ when he says I will sow them among the peoples and they shall remember me in far countries. They shall live together with their children and they shall return.

Now the return is often a theme, the return of the exiles from Diaspora is a theme taken up in the New Testament as being fulfilled in a spiritual sense, people returning to the Messiah not to the land. Likewise, being sown among the nations. He sent his disciples among the nations like seed bearers or like seed and he'll be remembered all over the world.

This would be a reference I believe to the gospel being preached and God being honored and worshipped by people in other countries outside Israel. He says in verse 10 I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon until no more room is found for them.

Now back from Egypt is of course a reference to the Exodus which did not necessarily actually happen but the Exodus did and the Bible talks about our salvation as the true Exodus. Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration according to Luke 9 said that they were talking to Jesus about his Exodus that he was going to accomplish. And so the Exodus of the Old Testament again is a type of Messianic salvation just as the return from Babylon is a type of that.

And I believe that these are the images that are used for it. Gathering his people from Assyria, from Egypt. These are the places where Israel had been gathered to.

But this is spiritual gathering I believe of spiritual Israel because it involves nations. And it says and he shall pass through the sea Oh I want to comment on the last line of verse 10 they'll be gathered in until no more room can be found for them. We kind of encountered that concept back in chapter 2 when the man with the measuring line went out to measure Jerusalem and he was informed no Jerusalem is going to be a city without walls.

God's going to be the wall of fire around it. The place will be too small. If you measure Jerusalem as you're accustomed to think of it you're going to measure much too small because the Gentiles are going to be coming in.

This is what Zechariah had said back in chapter 2. It says in chapter 2 verse 11 many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day and they shall become my people. Gentiles becoming God's people is in the church and I will dwell in your midst then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you and the Lord will take possession of Judah and his inheritance and so forth. I think it's a little earlier in that chapter if I'm not mistaken that says something about there being not enough room.

I know that I, which one? Verse 4? Is it verse 4? Yeah. Who said to him run speak to this young man saying Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls because of the

multitude of men and livestock in the midst of it. And so there's going to be a big multitude of people which includes the Gentiles coming in.

This is not the physical Jerusalem. This is the spiritual Jerusalem. This is not the Jerusalem with walls, which by the way natural Jerusalem still has walls.

Old city Jerusalem does. But this is the spiritual Jerusalem where God is the wall and the defender. So I'm of the opinion that this is talking about that still in chapter 10.

We've now looked at the transition in the prophet's mind from the deliverance at the Maccabean period to the deliverance the Messiah brings. And he says in verse 11 Now this is alluding again apparently to the Exodus. They're passing through the sea.

The very expression of passing through the sea is an Exodus thing. Bringing down the scepter of Egypt. That happened in the Exodus.

This would simply mean God defeating the enemies of Israel of which Egypt was a good example and Assyria also had afflicted Israel before. God is going to bring down and deliver his people, but this would be spiritual Israel and from their spiritual enemies represented by these historic enemies of the nation Israel. Verse 12.

So I will strengthen them in the Lord and they shall walk up and down in his name says the Lord. I will strengthen them in the Lord a number of times we read in the New Testament be strong in the Lord. Paul exhorts in some of his epistles.

He exhorts Timothy and others to be strong in the Lord. And so this is referring to a time when his people will be strengthened in the Lord. And I believe this is a spiritual strength given to people who are his spiritual people and that this is not too unnatural for that to be mentioned at this point because it's the pattern of the prophets.

He's just been talking again about God delivering them. So these chapters have really focused on the time in between Zechariah's time. To the time when Jesus will come because when we come to chapter 11, we have Jesus and the reference is betrayal for 30 pieces of silver comes up in chapter 11 and we'll see that the time of Christ is described here.

But in the time in between there would be two significant times when Jerusalem is threatened and the temple that they've built threatened once its physical existence is threatened by Alexander the Great. The other time its sanctity is destroyed and it's it's it passes out of use until it can be rescued from the oppressors. Both cases these are assaults on the on the temple that is a rubble and Joshua had built and both cases God is rescuing them.

However, in my opinion, verses one through three of chapter 11 are going to talk about the destruction of the temple in 70 AD and I believe that the parable of the shepherd and

the two staffs which occupies most of chapter 11 is about that very thing. I'm tempted to take it right now, but I have a feeling it would take a little longer than we should. So I'm going to go ahead and stop.

I'd like to finish these this three chapter section. We're going to just have to hold that in abeyance until next time and then we'll get into it. Mm.