

# **Zechariah 09 - Israel's Postponement of Deliverance Due to Her Rejection of the Messiah; God's Protection of Israel During Inter-testamental Period**

## **IV. Two Burdens (Zech 9:1—14:21)**

### **(1) Israel's postponed deliverance due to her rejection of her Messiah (Zech 9:1—11:17)**

#### **(A) Divine warrior hymn (Zech 9:1-17)**

##### **(a) Judgment on the oppressing nations, through Alexander the Great (9:1-8)**

(1) Hadrach (9:1a)

(2) Damascus (9:1b)

(3) Hamath (9:2a)

(4) Tyre & Sidon (9:2b-4)

(5) Philistines (9:5-7)

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(viii) Ekron (9:7b)

(6) Jerusalem (9:8)

##### **(b) The Messiah (9:9-10)**

(i) First advent (9:9)

(ii) Second advent (9:10)

##### **(c) God's protection of Israel during the Intertestamental period (from Antiochus IV Epiphanes) (9:11-17)**

(i) Blood covenant (9:11a)

(ii) Prisoners liberated (9:11b-12)

(iii) Victories (9:13-17)

The remaining six chapters of Zechariah are divided into two pronouncements ("burdens") from God: Zech 9-11 and Zech 12-14. The first pronouncement describes everything that God wanted to do for Israel at Jesus' first advent, had they accepted Him as their King in the 1st century.

Israel enjoyed a string of victories during the inter-testamental period, leading up to Jesus' arrival. These string of victories for the nation would've continued on, resulting in the inauguration of the millennial kingdom had Israel accepted Jesus as their Messiah.

However, Jesus arrived on a donkey (v9), to bring spiritual restoration to the nation first, not political restoration. Israel, however, was looking for the Messiah to bring in political restoration.

## **Zechariah 9**

### **IV. Two Burdens (Zech 9:1—14:21)**

(1) Israel's postponed deliverance due to her rejection of her Messiah (Zech 9:1—11:17)

(A) Divine warrior hymn (Zech 9:1-17)

(a) Judgment on the oppressing nations, through Alexander the Great (9:1-8)

(1) Hadrach (9:1a)

(2) Damascus (9:1b)

**1 The pronouncement of the word of the LORD** is against the land of **Hadrach**, with **Damascus as its resting place** (for the eyes of mankind, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the LORD),

**1** The burden of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the LORD),

**1** A declaration: this message from the LORD in the land of Hadrach, with Damascus its confederate, because the eyes of humanity will look to the LORD, along with those of all the tribes of Israel.

**1** The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

- "The pronouncement of the word of the LORD" - a linguistic clue showing the breakdown of the final six chapters into two "pronouncements" (Cf. 12:1)

— This pronouncement is upon judgment of the nations who oppressed Israel; the judgment described was implemented by Alexander the Great

— There were a number of nations who came against Israel in the time after Zechariah prophesied these things. During this time, God kept a record, and every single one of these nations was dealt with by God. He used Alexander the Great to mete out His judgment (333-331 BC).

— Based on God's promise to Abraham in Gen 12:3, God will curse those who curse Israel. Alexander the Great was God's instrument to fulfill that promise against Israel's enemies. And all of this was prophesied by Zechariah 200 years before it was fulfilled.

- "...Hadrach" - only here in OT; now identified with Hatarika mentioned in the annals of Assyrian kings as an Aramaean country near Damascus and Hamath against which Assyria campaigned in 772, 755, and 733 BC

— The reference to Hadrach on the 8th century BC stele of King Zakar of Hamath attests to its influence as a name for the entire hinterland region of Phoenicia, beyond the Antilebanon mountains from Damascus and South Syria to North Syria in the region of Arpad.

- "...Damascus as its resting place" - Damascus was a resting place for those in Hadrach, which was located further to the north

(3) Hamath (9:2a)

(4) Tyre & Sidon (9:2b-4)

2 And **Hamath** also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

2 And Hamath also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

2 Also Hamath, which borders on it— along with Tyre and Sidon— indeed they are very wise.

2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.

- "...Hamath" - the principal city of Upper Syria, on the Orontes. It was Antiochus Epiphanes who named it Epiphania. It shares a border with Damascus.

— At the Battle of Issus in SE Asia Minor (October, 333 BC) Alexander the Great inflicted a defeat upon Darius and the Persians which threw open Syria and Israel to his lightning-like conquests, and exposed Egypt to his victorious armies.

- The prophet has in view the defeat of the historic enemies of Israel: Damascus, Hamath, and cities of the Syrian interior, and then the cities along the Mediterranean coast that stood in the conqueror's way in his victorious sweep into Egypt.

- Alexander—the prophet emphasizes—was visible as the instrument of the Lord.

3 For Tyre built herself a **fortress**, And piled up silver like dust, And gold like the mud of the streets.

3 For Tyre built herself a fortress And piled up silver like dust, And gold like the mire of the streets.

3 "Tyre built itself a fortification, hoarding silver like dust and pure gold like mud in a street.

3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.

- "...fortress" - Tyre was a prosperous island city which had previously survived several long sieges. It was finally destroyed by Alexander the Great after only a five-month siege, because of God's involvement.

4 Behold, the Lord will dispossess her And throw her wealth into the sea; And she will be consumed with fire.

4 Behold, the Lord will dispossess her And cast her wealth into the sea; And she will be consumed with fire.

4 Look! The Lord will evict her, striking at her power in the sea, and she will be consumed by fire.

4 Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.

- Alexander *overthrew Tyre in only seven months!* He built a causeway, directed new siege engines against it, and exploited a navy amassed from nearby city states

(5) Philistines (9:5-7)

(i) Ashkelon (9:5a)

(ii) Gaza (9:5b)

(iii) Ekron (9:5c)

(iv) Gaza (9:5d)

(v) Ashkelon (9:5e)

**5 Ashkelon will see *it* and be afraid. Gaza too will writhe in great pain; Also Ekron, because her hope has been ruined. Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.**

5 Ashkelon will see *it* and be afraid. Gaza too will writhe in great pain; Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded. Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.

5 Ashkelon will see it happen and will be terrified; Gaza will tremble greatly. Ekron will be ashamed of her expectations, Gaza's king will perish, and Ashkelon will become uninhabited.

5 Ashkelon shall see *it*, and fear; Gaza also [shall see it], and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

- Verses 5-7 deal with various groups within Philistia

- "Ashkelon will see *it* and be afraid" - Ashkelon was causing fear in God's people, so God's judgment of them will be terror about what Alexander the Great was about to do to them

- "...Gaza too will writhe in great pain" - Gaza inflicted pain upon God's people, so Gaza will writhe in "great pain," speaking of what Alexander the Great would do to Gaza

- "...Ekron, because her hope has been ruined" - whatever Ekron was anticipating and hoping for, God says it will not happen (we don't know what their expectation was)
- "...the king will perish from Gaza" - the prophecy circles back to Gaza now, this time talking about the king instead of the people
- The king of Gaza will be killed at the hands of Alexander the Great
- "...Ashkelon will not be inhabited" - Ashkelon, a populous city, will not be inhabited after Alexander the Great is done with it

(vi) Ashdod (9:6a)

(vii) Philistines (9:6b-7a)

6 And *a people of mixed origins* will live in Ashdod, And I will eliminate the pride of the Philistines.

6 And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

6 A strange people will inhabit Ashdod, and I will eliminate the arrogance of Philistia.

6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

- God will destroy the cities and the citizens, and replace them with a mixed race group of people

(viii) Ekron (9:7b)

7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth And their detestable things from between their teeth. Then **they also will be a remnant for our God**, And be like a clan in Judah, And Ekron *will be* like a **Jebusite**.

7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth And their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, And be like a clan in Judah, And Ekron like a Jebusite.

7 I will remove the blood from its mouth, along with its abominations from between its teeth. Its survivors will be dedicated to our God; It will be like a clan of Judah, and Ekron will be as a Jebusite.

7 And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, *shall be* for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.

- "...they also will be a remnant for our God" - there will be a small subset of believers in God among the Philistines

— There are always those, even in the most evil of cultures, who choose to honor God

- "...Jebusite" - the Jebusites were incorporated into Israel; David purchased the temple mount from Araunah the Jebusite (2 Sam 24:16-24; 1 Chr 21:18)

— We should understand this to mean that there will be those from Ekron incorporated into Israel one day

(6) Jerusalem (9:8)

8 But I will camp around My house because of an army, Because of him who passes by and returns; And **no oppressor will pass over them anymore**, For now I have seen with My eyes.

8 But I will camp around My house because of an army, Because of him who passes by and returns; And no oppressor will pass over them anymore, For now I have seen with My eyes.

8 I will set a garrison around my Temple, to hinder those who might come and go, and to guard against oppressors who intend to invade; for I have taken note of this with my eyes."

8 And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

- Alexander the Great will come rolling into Israel in the midst of a string of massive military victories, but God will now allow him to touch Jerusalem

Alexander's request for tribute was refused by Jaddua, the high priest, who refused to break his oath of loyalty to Darius. Alexander, in a rage, threatened severe punishment upon Jerusalem as soon as Tyre had fallen and he had reduced the Philistine strongholds. Jaddua ordered the population to make sacrifices to God and pray for deliverance. In a dream, Jaddua was told to go and meet Alexander.

When Alexander was not far from the city, the high priest led a venerable procession to meet him. When Alexander saw the vestments, etc., he saluted the high priest, adored the name of YHWH, and said he had seen this in a dream at Dios in Macedonia. Presented with the prophecies of his own career in Daniel 7-8, he treated the Jews kindly and spared the city. [Josephus, *Antiquities*, XI, 8:3-6.]

## Merrill F. Unger

Unger, Merrill F. *Zechariah*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963. p. 160.

“For their preservation at the time of Alexander and for their future deliverance from every oppressor, Israel is indebted to the providence of God which watched over them for good.”



## Kenneth L. Barker

Barker, Kenneth L. "Zechariah." In Daniel-Minor Prophets. Vol. 7 of The Expositor's Bible Commentary. 12 vols. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein and Richard P. Polcyn. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985. p. 657.

“As history shows, the agent of the Lord's judgment was Alexander the Great. After defeating the Persians (333 B.C.), Alexander moved swiftly toward Egypt. On his march he toppled the cities in the Aramean (Syrian) interior, as well as those on the Mediterranean coast. Yet, on coming to Jerusalem, he refused to destroy it.”

At this point in history, things are going swimmingly for Israel...God is using Alexander the Great to exact penalty and retribution upon Israel's enemies and those who had hassled them in the past. God is even sparing and protecting the city of Jerusalem.

Wouldn't it be great if this winning streak kept going? All Israel had to do was recognize and enthrone their Messiah, Jesus Christ. It all came down to Israel accepting their

Messiah, and their winning streak would continue right into the millennial kingdom. However, Israel was looking for a conquering king, someone like Alexander the Great. They were not looking for a "humble" king riding a donkey. They looked for a Messiah who fit into their "box" and Jesus was outside of their box (Rom 9:32). However, because Israel did not recognize and enthrone their Messiah on His terms (His terms are outlined in the Sermon on the Mount), and instead killed Him, the blessings that would've come to them in the 1st century have been postponed.

(b) The Messiah (9:9-10)

(i) First advent (9:9)

9 Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is righteous and endowed with salvation, Humble, and **mounted on a donkey**, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

9 "Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; cry out, daughter of Jerusalem! Look! Your king is coming to you. He is righteous, and he is able to save. He is humble, and is riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

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

- "...mounted on a donkey" - fulfilled in Matt 21:1-5 at the Triumphal Entry

— "donkey" - from extra-biblical literature we know that when ancient rulers rode a donkey, they wanted peace

### **Irrefutably Documented**

To fully appreciate the remarkable significance of the following, it is essential to realize that the book of Daniel, as part of the OT, was translated into Greek prior to 270 BC, *almost three centuries before* Christ was born. This is a well-known established fact of secular history.

After his conquest of the Babylonian Empire, Alexander the Great promoted the Greek language throughout the known world, and thus almost everyone spoke Greek. Even among the Jews, Hebrew fell into disuse, being reserved primarily for ceremonial purposes.

### **The Septuagint**

In order to make the Jewish scriptures (what we call the OT) available to the average Jewish believer, a project was undertaken to translate the Hebrew scriptures into Greek.



Seventy scholars were commissioned to complete this work and the result is known as the "Septuagint" ("70") translation of the OT (this is often abbreviated "LXX").

It is critical to our interest to establish that the book of Daniel was in documented form almost three centuries before Christ was born. The Book of Daniel is actually one of the most authenticated books of the OT, historically and archaeologically, but this approach is a convenient short-cut for our purposes here.

## Warren Wiersbe

Wiersbe, Warren W. "Zechariah." In *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*, pp. 447-76. Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries; and Eastbourne, England: Kingsway Communications Ltd., 2002. p. 467.

"The entire age of the church fits between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10, just as it does between Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and after the comma in Isaiah 61:2."



### (ii) Second advent (9:10)

10 And I will eliminate the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be eliminated. And **He will speak peace to the nations;** And **His dominion will be from sea to sea,** And from the *Euphrates* River to the ends of the earth.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.

10 I will banish chariots from Ephraim and horses from Jerusalem. War weapons will be banished, and your king will speak peace to the nations. His dominion will extend from sea to sea, and from the River to the farthest portion of the earth.

10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth.

- "...He will speak peace to the nations" - this is when lasting world peace will materialize (Cf. Is 2:4)
- "...His dominion will be from sea to sea" - many scholars today like to deny an earthly millennial kingdom by saying that after the second coming is the "eschaton"
- However, Rev 21:1 tells us that there will be no "sea" in heaven (the "eschaton")

As woven throughout Zechariah's message, the promise, based on God's covenantal obligations, of final restoration of the Jewish people to their land from wherever they have been dispersed is reiterated (Zech 9:11-13). When the Lord establishes His kingdom through the Messiah, Israel will be richly blessed with both fertility and prosperity. The Jewish people themselves will participate in the judgment of the Lord over their national enemies, being led into holy war by their supernaturally enabled Messianic King (Zech 9:13-17).

(c) God's protection of Israel during the Inter-testamental period (from Antiochus IV Epiphanes) (9:11-17)

(i) Blood covenant (9:11a)

(ii) Prisoners liberated (9:11b-12)

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

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

11 Now concerning you and my blood covenant with you, I have liberated your prisoners from a waterless pit.

11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein *is* no water.

- "...the blood of *My* covenant" - the Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant of "blood" because it was ratified with the blood of severed animals (Gen 15:9-10)

— The Exodus, the most important redemptive event in history other than the Cross, happened because God remembered His covenant with Israel (Ex 2:24; Cf. Ezek 36:22)

- "...with you" - Israel didn't make a covenant with God, God made a covenant with them

- While Zechariah was giving these prophecies, the 2nd and 3rd returns from Babylon were yet to take place (1st return: 538-515 BC; 2nd: 458-457 BC; 3rd: 444-432 BC)

- God promises restoration and blessing for those Jewish exiles who are still in Babylon...because of His covenant with them

- "...prisoners" - the exiled Jews who had yet to return to Israel

12 Return to the stronghold, you prisoners who have the hope; This very day I am declaring that **I will restore double to you.**

12 Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope; This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you.

12 Return to your fortress, you prisoners who have hope. Even today I am telling you: In return I will repay you double.

12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto thee;

- "...I will restore double to you" - when you're in the "pit" one must remember that it's only temporary; Job was hit hard with suffering, but had faith that better days are ahead (Job 42:10; Cf. Joel 2:25)

These verses (v13-17) predict the defeat of Greece (particularly Antiochus IV Epiphanes) by the Jewish people during the Maccabean era (2nd century BC), and other victories that God brought to his people during the inter-testamental period. Zechariah received this prophecy in 518 BC, and the events he describes here occurred around 167 BC. Daniel also described these events (Dan 8:21-25; 11:29-35).

### (iii) Victories (9:13-17)

13 For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, Zion, against your sons, **Greece**; And I will make you like a warrior's sword.

13 For I will bend Judah as My bow, I will fill the bow with Ephraim. And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece; And I will make you like a warrior's sword.

13 For I have bent Judah as if it were my bow, loading it with Ephraim. I raised up your sons, Zion, against your sons, Greece, wielding you like a mighty warrior's sword."

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

- "...Greece" - Zechariah references Greece by name, 200 years before it became a legitimate empire

— Liberals point to this to argue that Zechariah 9-14 (the prophetic part of the book) must have been written much later, after these events took place in history. However, Daniel also mentions Greece (Dan 8:21; 10:20), and he wrote even earlier than Zechariah (during the Babylonian empire).

— However, the reference to Greece as a future dominant power is no problem to those who accept the validity of predictive prophecy

14 Then the LORD will appear over them, And **His arrow will go forth like lightning**; And the Lord GOD will **blow the trumpet**, And march in the storm winds of the south.

14 Then the LORD will appear over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning; And the Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, And will march in the storm winds of the south.

14 The LORD will appear over them— his arrow will shoot like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, and go out with the southern windstorm.

14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.

- "...His arrow will go forth like lightning" - God's protection of Israel and judgment of their enemies went forth like lightning during the period when the Maccabees fought against the Syrians

— Lightning also describes God's protection of Israel and judgment of their enemies during the time of the Second Coming (Cf. Matt 24:27)

- "...blow the trumpet" - a trumpet is also associated with the Second Coming (Cf. Matt 24:31)

**15 The LORD of armies will protect them.** And they will **devour and trample on the slingstones**; And they will drink *and* be boisterous as *with* wine; And **they will be filled like a *sacrificial* basin**, *Drenched* like the corners of the altar.

15 The LORD of hosts will defend them. And they will devour and trample on the sling stones; And they will drink *and* be boisterous as with wine; And they will be filled like a *sacrificial* basin, *Drenched* like the corners of the altar.

15 The LORD of the Heavenly Armies will defend them; they will devour and conquer those who sling stones. They will drink and be boisterous like those who are drunk. They will be filled to the brim with blood, like the corners of the altar.

15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, *and* make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, *and* as the corners of the altar.

- "The LORD of armies will protect them" - He who watches over Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers (Ps 121:4)

- "...devour and trample on the slingstones" - the Lord will deliver such great victories for Israel that they will trample on their weapons of war

- "...they will be filled like a *sacrificial* basin" - the death of Israel's enemies will be like a sacrifice to the Lord on His altar

16 And the LORD their God will **save them on that day As the flock of His people**; For *they are like* the *precious* stones of a crown, Sparkling on His land.

16 And the LORD their God will save them in that day As the flock of His people; For *they are as* the stones of a crown, Sparkling in His land.

16 The LORD their God will save them at that time as his very own flock of people, because they are his crown jewels, exalted throughout his land.

16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they *shall be* as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.

- "...save" - not salvation, but rather rescue; it's talking about how God will supernaturally be protected from the diabolical reign of Antiochus Epiphanes during the events surrounding Hanukkah

- "...on that day" - Hanukkah

- "...As the flock of His people" - God will protect His people during this time like a shepherd protects his flock

**17 For how great *will* their loveliness and beauty *be*! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine, the virgins.**

17 For what comeliness and beauty *will be* theirs! Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the virgins.

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

- "...For how great *will* their loveliness and beauty *be*!" - Israel will no longer be despised by the nations of the earth as she is today; during this time she will be attractive again

- "...Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine, the virgins" - describes agricultural prosperity during this time period as part of God's blessing and protection of His people

— This is a direct outworking of the blessings of the Mosaic Covenant (Deut 28:1-14)

Replacement theologians have to do interpretive gymnastics when dealing with passages that describe God's future restoration and blessing of Israel. As McComiskey does in the quote below, they have to allegorize and apply these verses to the church:

## Thomas McComiskey

McComiskey, Thomas Edward. "Zechariah." In *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expositional Commentary*, 3:1003-1244. 3 vols. Edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992, 1993, and 1998. Page 1174

“The citizens of Christ's kingdom as well as God's ancient people are a landed people. Hebrews 3 and 5 make this clear, affirming the believer's landedness in the gospel—'at- homeness in Christ.' Today, the fruit of the land that causes its citizens to flourish is the fruit of salvation.”