

GOD, THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD-KING
ZECHARIAH 9:11-17

I suppose most people in most nations complain about their political leaders. Ingrained in the fallenness of man is an inherent rebellion against authority. So, we don't like kings (or presidents, or dictators, or senators, or...). We don't want anyone ruling over us, dictating what we will do (or levying taxes against us). That's not just an American issue, that's a common man issue.

But Israel, in particular, seemed to have a problem with kings. Much of Israel's OT history is the story of a divided nation — the ten northern tribes, commonly called "Israel," and the two southern tribes, Judah. Like the north and the south in America in the 19th century, these nations (and their respective kings) hated each other and warred against each other, even though they were under the one promise of God.

Israel was not always divided; it became divided after Solomon died there was political infighting between Jeroboam (Israel) and Solomon's son Rehoboam (Judah). That was a dramatic change after 120 years of a unified monarchy under Saul, David, and Solomon. But even that unified monarchy was stained by rebellion. In the period of the judges, the Israelites decided they wanted a king like all the other nations. God had always been the King of Israel; but Israel wanted something else (**1 Sam. 8:7**). And thus began her long struggle with kings — not a single king over the northern tribes was good, and the southern kings were a mixture of good and bad kings. But the rule of all of them was rooted in rebellion against God.

Despite Israel's rebellion, God had made a promise to rule His people as an eternal King on David's throne (2 Sam. 7:8-16, esp. vv. 13, 15-16) — a conjoining of heavenly and earthly rule in the God-Man (Ps. 2:6; Is. 9:6-7). That promise is what is anticipated in Zechariah 9:9-10. And the promise of that returning King is expanded in Zechariah 9:11-17. Last week we saw the character and conquest of the King; this week —

GOD'S COMING KING WILL DEFEAT ISRAEL'S ENEMIES, AND SHEPHERD HIS PEOPLE.

The coming King is going to be victorious over the nations (vv. 1-8) and will return as the fulfillment of God's promise to David (vv. 9-10). And God's King (Christ Jesus) will also provide for His people Israel in **three particular ways**:

- 1. God Made a **PROMISE** to His People (vv. 11-12)**
 - ✓ God promised to liberate His people (v. 11)
 - ✓ God will restore all loss to His people (v. 12)
- 2. God Will Fight as **KING** for His People (v. 13-15)**
 - ✓ God will fight through His people (vv. 13-14)
 - ✓ God will provide the victory for His people (v. 15)
- 3. God Will **SHEPHERD** His People (vv. 16-17)**
 - ✓ There will be **PEACE** for His people (v. 16)
 - ✓ There will be **BLESSING** for His people (v. 17)

1. God Made a **PROMISE** to His People (vv. 11-12)

• God promised to liberate His people (v. 11)

- ✓ Verse 9 gives the promise of the coming Messiah (which was fulfilled in Christ's triumphal entry).
- ✓ Verse 10 gives the promise of the coming Messiah in His kingdom (which will still be fulfilled).
- ✓ On what basis does God make these promises? That's verse 11 —
 - **As for you** tells us He is talking about Israel. Since He will rule in peace (v. 10), how can He do that if His people are still in captivity or surrounded by opposition (as in Zech's day)? These verses tell of God's provision for conquering Israel's oppressors.
 - Specifically, He makes the promises of vv. 1-10 **because of the blood of My covenant with you**.
 - ... Which blood covenant does God mean? Many suggest that it is the covenant with Moses (Ex. 20-23) that the people affirmed and ratified with a blood sacrifice (Ex. 24:3-8).
 - ... But notice that God says, **My covenant with you...** This is *God's* covenant *He* made with blood He shed. There was another covenant that God made where He unilaterally and unconditionally made a promise with blood — the Abrahamic (Gen. 15:9-11, 17ff).
 - ... Though the covenant was made with Abraham, it had implications for the entire nation of Israel (and us, Gen. 12:3).
 - ... The phrase also indicates the reason that God acts for Israel — the shed blood demands it (the shedding of blood indicating the giving of life for the covenant).
 - ... God's faithfulness to His promise not only *enables* Him to liberate Israel, but His faithfulness also *mandates* that He liberate Israel. He *must* be faithful to every word He has spoken. He cannot be unfaithful to His character; so He *will liberate* Israel.
- ✓ Notice then what God's promise to Israel is — **I have set your prisoners free**.
 - Notice that the liberation comes from a **waterless pit** — a well that should have water but doesn't. It implies a deep hole that they cannot climb out of and the lack of water from which they will die of thirst. It is a doubly-bad condemnation (and allusion to Babylon as well as the worse "pit" at the end of the age).
 - And they have been **set free** — the certainty of their freedom is so sure that while it is in the future ("will set you free"), God says it is already accomplished (**have set you free**).
 - Whatever bondage they experience, it is no impediment to God.
- ✓ The promise of final liberation for Israel is not just given in Zechariah — it is also declared by Isaiah, prior to the promise of the Messiah as the suffering servant (Is. 52:7-12).
- ✓ Some have called the section in Isaiah a "Divine Warrior Hymn." It is a declaration of God to vanquish Israel's enemies and free her from all captivity.
- ✓ This promise (to Abraham and now Zech.) serves as an encouragement for the future. God *will* act.

• God will restore all loss to His people (v. 12)

- ✓ Because God has made this promise, He calls the people to **return to the stronghold**.
 - Notice that He speaks this to **prisoners...who have the hope**. We usually don't think about prisoners having hope; but the prisoners in the waterless pit (v. 11) *do* have hope.
 - He commands these prisoners to do something — **return**. The word is common in the OT and often translated "repent," which has been a repeated theme in this book (1:3-4; 8:3).
 - The word calls for them to change their action ("turn around") and reminds that they have been going in the wrong direction (away from God).
 - To what should they turn? They should go to **the stronghold** ("fortress"). He might mean Jerusalem (because that is where the Messiah will reign). But more probably He means to return to the fortress that is God Himself (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 9:9; 46:7, 11; 59:9, 16-17; 62:2, 6).
 - In a day of trouble, only God is a safe place to go. Only He is security.
 - There are risks every day in this world — temptation, trouble, and trial. And safety with God.
 - Israel could not make herself secure in Babylon (or Jerusalem); we cannot make ourselves secure in this world. But God is always a place of safety — He is enough.
 - Every day we turn to things that we believe are safe — places of comfort and refuge: food, work/ money, exercise, relationships, government, (or avoidance of any of these), or sin. Only God is safe and an ultimate Protector. This isn't just "read your Bible," but "live as if He *is* ultimate."
- ✓ What will God do for Israel when they repent? He will **restore** (return/repent) **double...**
 - This also is an important theme in this book (and Scripture): when God's people repent, God will be gracious to His people (cf. 1:16; 10:6, 9-10).
 - To say that He will restore double might mean literally double (e.g., Job 42:12) or that God would pour out liberally beyond any expectation (Mk. 10:30). God's grace is abundant; He is no miser to His people (Is. 61:7; Jn. 1:16).
- ✓ This verse is a reminder that neither Israel, nor any people, can live in opposition to God and expect ultimate and final blessings. He will hold accountable. But there is always an opportunity to repent. If you are not a believer, His patience with you does not mean He has forgotten/overlooked you. It means that He is patiently extending you an opportunity to repent (Rom. 2:4). Oh friend, repent...
- ✓ There is a second way that God provides for His covenant people, Israel...

2. God Will Fight as **KING** for His People (v. 13-15)

• God will fight through His people (vv. 13-14)

- ✓ How can God say He will restore all that the nation lost in v. 12? Because (**for**) He will **bend Judah...**
 - This is not an act against Judah (southern tribes), but He is using Judah as His implement of war.
 - He also **will fill the bow with Ephraim** (northern tribes); i.e., they will be the arrow.
 - And **Zion...will be like a warrior's sword** — the unified nation will be God's war instrument.

- The nation will be used by God **against your sons, O Greece** — God’s direct speech to Greece gives a sense of urgency to the warning — “beware...it’s coming with certainty...”
- At the time of Zechariah, **Greece** was not yet a superpower, though there were signs that Greece was on the rise, though it did not yet appear there would be conflict between Israel and Greece.
- The word **Greece** was sometimes used broadly to refer to distant nations (Gen. 20:2; Is. 66:19). My slight inclination is to think that is what is meant here...
- Greece would be defeated by the Maccabees in 169–165 B.C., giving a partial fulfillment of this promise, but the ultimate fulfillment will not be until the beginning of MK (cf. v. 16).
- ✓ Whether **Greece** or distant nations is meant, what is clear is that God is fighting — in v. 14 He appears as a theophany —
 - While Israel is fighting (v. 13), **the Lord will appear** — the transcendent God will appear **over them** — perhaps picturing God as in the Exodus on Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16, 19).
 - Just as God led them through the wilderness, He would lead them in the MK.
 - The transition **then** suggests a future time beyond the revolt in 165 B.C. — the end time.
 - Notice that for God to **blow the trumpet** was a call to war, and also a proclamation of victory (2 Sam. 6:15; Ps. 81:3; 150:3). *God* is declaring His victory and authority.
- ✓ Finally notice the direction from which He is coming —
 - Nations are almost always said to attack Israel from the **north** (6:6, 8) and the north was the place of exile (Jer. 3:12; Zech. 2:6).
 - Here God comes **from the south** as a **storm wind** to overwhelm the nations.
- ✓ The emphasis in these verses is on YHWH’s work for His people; they are not freed from the nations by their own might or power, but are wholly dependent on God (as we are for freedom from sin, work in the church, and all things).
- ✓ God will use Israel to accomplish His purposes, but it is all His work...



● **God will provide the victory for His people (v. 15)**

- ✓ **The Lord of Hosts**, the sovereign of the armies, acts for Israel and brings them to victory. He will “shield them” when they need Him most — as He always is (Is. 31:5; 37:35; 38:6; Zech. 12:8; 14:1-3).
- ✓ **They will devour and trample...** seems like graphic language —
 - It might be taken that they have so devastated the nations that they are figuratively “eating and drinking” the flesh and blood of their enemies. They are satiated with the devastation.
 - However, “devour” is simply the word for “eating” and celebrating (Eccl. 2:24...) and probably refers to the victory banquet after they have defeated the enemies.
- ✓ As the **sacrificial basin** is filled, so they will be satiated with food and drink in celebration.
- ✓ The verse points to the satisfaction that will come in victory.
- ✓ Cf. 1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 98:1-3. Today, every cultural loss seems ultimate or final and every “victory” for believers seems fleeting. Christ is victor. And He will reign in victory. (We need to remember!)

3. God Will **SHEPHERD** His People (vv. 16-17)

• There will be **PEACE** for His people (v. 16)

- ✓ Until this verse, this passage points to the King as warrior — **prisoners, stronghold, bow, sword...**
- ✓ Here the picture of the Kingship of the Messiah shifts — He **saves** them like a shepherd of His **flock**.
 - They are **His people** — hundreds of times(!!!) the OT affirms the reality that Israel is His people. Cf. Is. 11:11, 16; 25:8; 28:5; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 13:11; 49:13; 51:22; 52:9; Hos. 1:8-11; Joel 2:18-19; 3:16; Zech. 2:11; 8:8. So He will save them because they belong to Him (also 1 Pt. 2:9).
 - He also saves because He is the shepherd who cares for His flock and seeks the last one of His sheep to save it. They are defenseless and need His protection and He protects — and so does the Messiah (Ps. 23:1; Lk. 15:1-7; Jn. 10:11ff).
 - As the Shepherd of His people (Gen. 48:15; Ps. 23:1; 80:1; 95:7; Is. 40:11; Hos. 4:16; Mic. 7:14), God provides “the salvation and security of Judah. As a shepherd defends his sheep at all costs, so the Lord ensures Judah’s well-being, as he does for his people of every age.”
- ✓ Though not stated directly, the implication is that there is peace and safety for ones who cannot protect themselves. [Isn’t it interesting that the imagery of Israel changes from an instrument of war in v. 13 to a sheep in v. 16 — it means that they are ultimately dependent and needy.]
- ✓ They are also **stones of a crown, sparkling...** — they are not the crown (the crown is God’s own glory, Is. 28:5). But they are gems in that crown — they radiate and manifest God’s glory.
- ✓ These **stones** will **be in His land** — as safe as the sheep that are in the Lord’s sheepfold.
- ✓ This peace and protection will happen **in that day** — a reference to the final day of God, the MK and the culmination of His plan for Israel (2:11; 3:10; 12:3-4, 6). It did not come in Zechariah’s day, and it has not come yet, but it is coming soon. And Israel, and all grafted into the promise, will be safe.
- ✓ So, in that final day, when redeemed Israel is in her land, at peace, with God’s Messiah on His eternal throne, Israelites will be living emblems of what God has done for them (Is. 61:6).
- ✓ “The powerful forces opposing Christ’s kingdom may have periodic successes, but they will never vanquish that kingdom because it is the royal insignia of God’s sovereign rule in the world.” [McComiskey]
- ✓ God is the peace-making, peace-giving God. He ensures that His people will be safe. He is the great protector of all His people...
- ✓ Cf. **Lk. 2:14; 24:36; Jn. 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; 16:20...** He is the God of peace who gives peace.

• There will be **BLESSING** for His people (v. 17)

- ✓ Not only will there be safety for His people, but there will be blessing and delight.
- ✓ **What comeliness and beauty...** = They will be attractive and beautiful symbols of God’s grace (**Rev. 22:3-4, 5b**). Being possessed by the King, they will look like and radiate the King (2 Cor. 3:18).
- ✓ And there will also be blessing and provision for them — **grain will make the young men flourish...**

- ✓ There will be peace and prosperity to allow the crops to grow and the abundance of crops will keep the people well-fed and nourished — the earth will return to the prosperity that existed in the Garden of Eden and there will be plenty for all.
- ✓ This is a common picture of the physical blessing that will come in the MK (Is. 30:23; Amos 9:13).
- ✓ Everything that God's people will need to be blessed will be theirs.
- ✓ Whatever they lose on this earth will be restored (and more) in Christ's kingdom (v. 12).

CONCLUSION: What should we think/take away from this passage?

- **While we are God's instruments in this world**, He is the power behind every transformation. He is the power of salvation, sanctification, perseverance, and ministry/service. He will do what He wants, when He wants, and how He wants. He is never thwarted or perplexed (even if I am, in a given moment).
- **No one will lose anything on earth** that won't be replaced by something better and more in eternity. He gives good things to His people on earth. He gives ultimate and His best gifts in eternity.
- **Unrighteousness never prevails**. Sin, sinners, and Satan will always lose.
- **Christ the King always prevails** (and His people with Him).

One commentator pointed to the provision of God in this passage —

"From Him all things sweet derive their sweetness; all things fair, their beauty; all things bright, their splendor; all things that live, their life; all things sentient, their sense; all that move, their vigor; all intelligences, their knowledge; all things perfect, their perfection; all things in any wise good, their goodness." [Pusey]

That is Israel's — and our — faithful Shepherd-King!

BENEDICTION (Mike Dixon): Jude 24-25