



THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

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REJOICE, OUR KING COMES: ZECHARIAH 9

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Christians call the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, Holy Week, and the first day of this week is Palm Sunday. On this day, 2000 years ago, Jesus rode into Jerusalem humbly. He rode into the city not on a warhorse, but on a donkey. He rode into the city to the people announcing that Jesus is the long-awaited coming king to save God's people. Yet, Jesus' salvation was unexpected. Jesus enters the temple on Palm Sunday and weeps. These are not tears of joy, but tears of sadness because the people do not know the things that make for peace (Luke 19:42). The people expected that the coming king would lead them to defeat their physical captors (Rome) and set them free physically so that they can enjoy freedom in their land. God had other plans. Palm Sunday is not about releasing God's people from physical captivity, but about releasing them from spiritual captivity. The people do not understand. Therefore, Jesus weeps.

Today is Palm Sunday: the first day of Holy Week. On this day, we celebrate how Jesus came to his people. As I studied this passage this week, I was amazed that not only does Jesus fulfill the promise of Zechariah 9:9, he fulfills the main idea of the entire chapter. Zechariah 9 is all about how the future king will come to protect God's people.

That is the point of Palm Sunday and the point of Zechariah 9.

Let's investigate this idea now together.

God Comes to His People: Zechariah 9:1-17

Zechariah explains in Zechariah 9 how the king comes to his people. Let's learn several details about these points.

First, verses 1-8 describe God's journey to Jerusalem. God begins in Damascus toward the north (1). Damascus is the capital of their northern neighbor, Syria, and God begins his journey here. Then, Zechariah describes God's journey through western cities such as Tyre and Sidon (2-4). Next on God's figurative journey is the country to the west – Philistia (5-7). Finally, in verse 8, God is in Jerusalem. He has returned to his people! God is coming to us.

Second, God comes to his people because he sees us (1, 8). This idea frames verses 1-8 since it begins with this idea and ends with it. Verse 1 says, "For the Lord has an eye on mankind and all the tribes of Israel," and verse 8 says, "No oppressor shall again march over them, for now, I see with my own eyes." This world is filled with suffering, and this reality forces us to ask the question if God sees. Does God see all of the evil in the world? Does he see all the evil done against you? Does he see all the evil you've done? Suffering and sin abound, and we all wonder if God sees. The answer is clear: he does see.

This is good. God sees our pain, and he can sympathize with us. For the people Zechariah is ministering to, this means that he saw when their neighbors bribed the authorities to abuse them.

God saw when the Babylonians were cruel to them in battle. God saw the injustice. Just as God saw the Pharaoh abuse the Israelites, so God sees their current pain. (Exodus 3:7; 5:6, 10, 13, 14 (See Boda, 560).

This reality forces us to ask another question. What does God do about it? He sees our pain, then, what? According to Zechariah 9, God runs to us. Our God is the kind of God who sees us in our weakness and our sin, and he comes to us, and soon we will learn that this coming is for the sake of protection. God comes to protect us.

Third, nothing can stop God from coming to us (2-8). Notice the contrast between Judah and her neighbors. During Zechariah's day, his audience is insignificant politically, economically, socially, and religiously. The nations do not think well of God's people. They think of them as a joke. Meanwhile, their neighbors are important politically, socially, and economically. Tyre and Sidon, for example, are very intelligent and rich (2). The world looks at them and applauds them for their intelligence and possessions. Zechariah describes gold in Tyre as like mud: it is common (3).

Now, these nations are often the historical enemies of God's people (1-8). Damascus (1), Tyre (2), Sidon (2), and the Philistine cities of verses 5-7. Historically, they have hurt God's people; they've oppressed them and abused them. They are rich, influential, and powerful; God's people are insignificant in the eyes of the world and weak. Yet, these people's riches and social standing will not stop God from coming to his people. He is coming to protect them.

Fourth, why is God coming to us? He is coming to protect them (8). At the end of God's journey from Damascus to Jerusalem, Zechariah announces that God will camp in Jerusalem as a guard (8). Zechariah's audience was in danger. At this point, their walls – their defense system – were piles of rocks. Their neighbors had resources and God's people did not. Despite this danger, God is coming. He is coming to protect his people. He stands as our guard (8). Did you just hear that? That is so counter-culturally. You see, the kings of this world need guards to protect them. Right now, Putin has countless guards protecting him, as do most other rulers in this age. Not so with our God. He doesn't need protection, we do. Thus, in verse 8, the king of the universe stands outside your front door as your guard (8). The promise here is that no one will be able to march against God's people because he stands ready to protect them.

Fifth, our God comes to us humbly (9). He comes to us in the context of war (1-8) mounted on a donkey. Now donkeys are slower than horses. Therefore, warriors at this time rode horses, not donkeys. Nonetheless, our king comes to us on a donkey. His warfare is unexpected.

Sixth, God is coming to save a people from all nations (7). As God journeys to God's people, he judges his people's enemies. He strikes down their wealth (4) and terrifies them (5). Yet, God doesn't intend only judgment for these nations. Notice verse 7. Verse 7 talks about how God will make the people of these nations his very own people. Ekron will be like a clan of God's people (7).

Seventh, God's coming produces within us great joy (9). This produces joy because he has salvation for us (9). God's people throughout Scripture are less than righteous, and this is very dangerous. In the ancient world, when a king kept his eye on you, detected sin, and then came to you, it was bad news, but not in this case. Our king comes to us with salvation. He comes righteous and ready to give us his righteousness as a gift. The king is coming to lavish his grace on sinners. Therefore, we rejoice and we shout (9). This is exactly what the people did when they greeted Jesus 2000 years ago, and this is exactly what we are called to do today. We rejoice and shout because our king comes to protect us: he gives us his righteousness as a gift.

God's coming produces joy within us because he has universal authority (10). God announces that this coming king will reign from sea to sea (10). It is nice to know that God sees us, but that brings up another question. Can anyone stop God from caring for us and sympathizing with us? The answer to this question is "no." No one can stop God from seeing us in our pain and coming to us in our pain because this coming king will reign over everyone. No one is outside of his sovereign control.

Finally, this reality produces within us joy because of Jesus' character (10-12). This reality is a great comfort because of who Jesus is. Imagine for a moment if Putin had universal authority. That would be a terrifying reality because of his character. Jesus, however, speaks peace to the nations (10). Moreover, he releases his people from prison (10). Now, let's be clear. God's people deserve this suffering. Their ancestors sinned constantly against the Lord so that the suffering they are experiencing is largely deserved.

Despite that reality, God promises to set their prisoners free.

Furthermore, God promises to restore double to see people (12). God says that he will return to his people “double”, and he explains this double portion poetically by describing God’s people as a bow and arrow and as a sword (13 [see Boda’s analysis here, 582]). Now, isn’t it interesting that verses 10-13 describe God as initially cutting off weapons from his people and then stirring up an enemy to come to fight them (13)? Again, this could be a terrifying reality. An enemy is coming to get us and we have no weapons! Yet, the point is amazing. Verses 14-15 indicate that we do not need the weapons of this world because our God is our protector (15). He fights our battles. Notice the language of verses 14-15. God is the one who appears and goes into battle (14). He is the one who sounds the trumpet for battle (15). He marches before us into the battle (15). He protects us from our enemies; we don’t need to protect ourselves.

Eighth, God comes to us to transform us (16). It says in verse 18 that God’s people will be like “the jewels of a crown” (16). God saves them so that they might shine brightly. Historically, their light has been dimmed by their sin. For centuries God’s people have failed to shine like jewels, but God’s gracious salvation transforms his people. When a sinner is transformed by God’s grace, they can do what they’ve never been able to do before: shine brightly.

Ninth, God comes to us because of who he is: he is great in goodness and beauty (17). God’s goodness is a moral quality that describes God as desirable. Everyone who rightly sees God approves of what he does and is in awe of what he does (See Grudem’s definition of God’s goodness here, 197-198).

God's beauty communicates that we are attracted to him. Everyone who sees God properly is attracted to him like a magnet because he is beautiful. If a person is not attracted to God, something is wrong with their heart. It's like a person content to play in a pothole with water when they've been offered a vacation in Hawaii (an illustration made by C.S. Lewis). Something is wrong with that person's heart since a vacation in Hawaii is superior in beauty. God is great in goodness and beauty and that leads to our salvation. Only a small heart sees the glory of our God expressed in saving us and says "no thank you." God comes to us because of his great goodness and beauty (17).

Application

In Zechariah 9, we see humanity divided into two categories. Those who belong to the world and those who belong to God. Which category are you in? How does God see you? When you consider that God knows every intention of your heart, does that produce joy or fear in you?

Church family, today I want you to see again how our king comes to us. He sees us in our pain and brokenness and he comes to protect us.

Non-Christian, have you seen today a picture of our God who loves to lavish his kindness on sinners like us? If so, would you come to Jesus today? You come to him by confessing him as your Lord – he is your master, not you. You come to him by believing that the Father raised him from the dead. Believe that he did what he needed to do to save you (Romans 10:9). This is how you come to him.

Would you come to him today? If so, please reach out to us so that we can disciple and care for you as you begin life in Christ.

Prayer

God, thank you for sending Jesus, our king, to come to us in our need. Thank you for your grace and your kindness. Now at this moment, would you bring believers to you once again in joy, and non-Christians to you for the first time with the incredible joy that their sins can be forgiven in Jesus. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

