



THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

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PRAY, OUR KING COMES: ZECHARIAH 10

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Zechariah describes God's coming kingdom from three perspectives. The first perspective is the eight-night visions in Zechariah 1-6. In these visions, we saw a glorious picture of how God comes to his people and makes our sins go away (see Webb, 106). Next, there was a Q&A about the reality of past sin. The people wondered if their past sins would continue to define their future, and the answer, again, was glorious. The word of the Lord in Zechariah 7-8 was that our future will not be defined by our past sin, but it will be defined by God's grace. Zechariah 9-14 represents the third section of Zechariah. Here we do not learn about visions or listen to a Q&A. Rather, Zechariah speaks two oracles about future events. The first speech is found in Zechariah 9-11 and the second is in Zechariah 12-14.

Our text for today is Zechariah 10, the second chapter of the first speech. The main idea of this chapter is the transformation of his people from weak, afflicted, and wandering sheep to strong obedient kingdom citizens. Terrible shepherds caused us to be afflicted and to wander but the good Shepherd comes to make us strong.

Let's now investigate this idea together.

The Terrible Shepherds and the Troubled Sheep: Zechariah 10:1-2

Before Zechariah describes the future coming of the good shepherd, he describes the scary reality of bad shepherds (1-2). He begins with a command; a call for the people to ask the Lord for rain (10:1). The Lord has just described how he will come to his people so that they might flourish with grain and new wine (9:17). The images of grain and new wine describe an era where God's people will flourish, be without need, and live in peace. Rain is necessary for the growth of grain and for the production of new wine, the images that depict the future flourishing of God's people. The idea of "asking God" is repeated three times. Zechariah explains that rain comes "from the Lord" in verse 1 twice since he is the one who gives "rain" and makes the storm clouds (1). When we interpret Zechariah 9:17-10:1 we see that God's people are invited to turn to him for the provision they need for life and flourishing.

Although this idea is simple and straightforward – we should turn to our God for provision – Zechariah's audience and their past ancestors often did not. Notice how Zechariah compares the word of the Lord and Zechariah to the word of "household gods" and "diviners (2). Whereas the words of the Lord were life-giving, a promise to provide for our needs, the words of the household gods are nonsense and troubling (2). Similarly, diviners were false prophets who used magic and spells to manipulate the gods to provide rain. Their work was the work of lies, false dreams, and empty consolation (2). Zechariah didn't appeal to magic for divine blessings as if God could be manipulated. Rather, what is the bases for the appeal to the people to "ask for rain?"

It is not a magic spell or a list of religious duties. It is God's grace. The fact that God is coming to his people to protect them despite them (Zechariah 9) should motivate us to pray. A relationship with the God of this universe based on loyal love is the pathway to divine blessings, and this expresses itself in humble prayer. The people, however, have turned to worthless idols.

Now when we think of idols, we typically think of statues, but idols are more sneaking than that. Idols are anything that we would sin to keep or sin to get (definition provided in biblical counseling class at SBTS). Money, a nice house, family, and power are common idols today, and these things are not necessarily bad. They can be good, very good gifts from God. They, however, become bad when we would sin to get them or sin to keep them. Israel and their ancestor and us all turn to idols often even though the Lord calls us to pray to him for what we need for life and flourishing.

Tragically, the leaders of God's people often led God's people to replace a relationship with the God of the universe based on loyal love with a list of manipulative religious practices, and the consequences are horrific. Notice verse 2, "Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for lack of a shepherd" (2). This is the point. The people in Zechariah's day have wandered because they had no shepherd. Ahab and Jezebel are prime OT examples of this, as is king Ahaz. A foreign army was coming to destroy Ahaz, and instead of turning to the Lord, the invisible God, Ahab turned to Assyria: a country with big muscles and lots of money (see 2 Kings 16 and Isaiah 7). Turning to idols in our need instead of to the living good does not end in a Zechariah 9 vision of our flourishing; it ends with us weak, wounded, and wandering (10:2).

The Good Shepherd and the Obedient Sheep: Zechariah 10:3-12

Historically, God's people have had bad shepherds who lead them away from God, but Zechariah 9, 10, 11 all describe how the good Shepherd comes to us. Let's point out several details about the coming of our king according to Zechariah 10.

First, God comes to rescue us from bad shepherds (3). The idea of God bringing justice to those who harm God's people is not new in Zechariah. We saw this idea in Zechariah 1-2, but those abusers were foreign nations. Now, in Zechariah 10, God promises to punish the leaders who led the sheep astray wounder and alone (2-3). This is a warning to us, and to me in particular. You called me to be your pastor, and my calling is to guide you to the Lord, to protect and provide for you spiritually. Of course, I am not perfect at this calling. I need grace in this as you all have experienced these last three years, but this is a warning to me. What we all need is to be Shepherded to Jesus. So am I leading you to Jesus? What kind of spiritual nourishment am I providing you with? We all know stories, countless stories, of people being led astray by "bad Christians" and "bad pastors." This is a warning for me, and I ask that you would pray for me to excel in leading you all to the great Shepherd and overseer of our souls.

This is not just a warning to me, it is a warning to you. According to Zechariah 10, there are leaders of God's people and many leaders are worthless shepherds. The warning for you is to be aware of these teachers whose goal is not to lead you to Jesus. There are countless other alternatives and none are suitable replacements. Shepherds must lead us to Jesus or else they are worthless.

Second, God comes to establish a new era (3-5). The people of the community are sheep, but in verses 3 and 5, he transforms us to be like majestic horses and majestic soldiers in battle (3). The contrast between being a weak, afflicted, and wandering sheep (2) to being like a majestic horse (3) is significant and illuminating. When our future is shaped by our sin and by the sins of our leaders – in this instance, the people sought “household gods” and “diviners”, we are weak, wounded, and alone. Yet, the future of God’s people is not shaped by our past sins or the past sin of others, but by God’s grace. He is coming for us. Therefore, instead of continuing as weak, wounded, and wandering sheep, we are made into majestic horses and mighty soldiers victorious in battle (3, 5).

The leaders of the community are also transformed. Zechariah describes the new leadership of the new era in verse 4. There is a fourfold repetition of the phrase “from him” in verse 4. “The cornerstone,” “the tent peg,” “the battle bow,” and “every ruler” are all from the Lord. The images of cornerstone, tent peg, and battle bow refer to leaders, and the idea is that God comes to his people and gives us new leadership.

God is with us in this community (5). This new era is a picture of a new Eden where God walks with man: a new paradise. This is a new era where sin no longer threatens our communion with God. The separation that we experience from God in this life will vanish into the past for all eternity. Think for a moment of the glory of this idea. Now, even now, our thoughts, actions, and nature are tainted by sin, but this sin no longer threatens our communion with God because Jesus has made the sin go away, and one day soon, we will see God face to face. He will be with us in every way.

Verse 5 explains how God comes to us to establish a new era where citizens will be crowned with God's majesty (3), where new leaders will come from God (4), and where we will enjoy God's presence completely and fully (5). Isn't that what this world desperately needs? People who treat one another in godly ways; leaders whose leadership is shaped by love of God; and God's presence. We need it, and God will bring it about soon.

Third, God comes to establish a new era marked by complete joy (6-8). It is fitting in a passage describing something so personal as joy that God would start to speak in the first person. Notice how in verses 1-5 God is mostly described in the third person, but now God speaks directly to the people. The Lord says, "I will strengthen," "I will save," and "I will bring them back." The pronoun is repeated seven times in our English translation. Our God comes to bring us home; he doesn't send an angel, a mighty messenger from heaven. No, he comes to transform us from weak, wounded, and wandering sheep to become strong kingdom citizens. The reality of God coming personally for us gives us joy, and the idea is repeated three times in verse 7. Isn't it comforting that in our need, God draws near to us? We've all experienced it. The sadness of losing a loved one; yet, we are comforted that death is not the end for God's people. The sadness of sinning; yet knowing that God makes our sin go away. God comes to us personally, and this gives us joy.

Church family, the gospel, the good news about how God comes to us in our brokenness to bring us home must produce within us joy. It has to. No one looks at a picture of the Milky Way or the birth of a baby and is not joyful. You have to experience joy because these realities are awesome and awesome realities produce joy!



So it is with God. Our God comes to us in his compassion (6) and gives us a future shaped by his grace, not our sin (7). He transforms us from weak, wandering, and wounded sheep into majestic kingdom citizens. This reality is more awesome than the Milky Way or the birth of a baby so the joy it produces in us is infinitely better. God comes to establish a new era marked by complete joy.

Fourth, God comes to bring us home (10:8-11). Notice the repetition of this theme. God promises to gather his people (8), cause them to return (9), and bring them home (10). The idea in these verses is clear. God is coming to bring us home, and the result is restoration (8), life (9), and immense flourishing (10).

God works in patterns. This concept is important to grasp if we are to interpret the Bible properly. The pattern we see here is the exodus. Just as God saved his people in the past from Egypt to bring them to the Promised Land, so he will save his people from Egypt again and bring them to the Promised Land (10). Just as God brought his people into the Promised Land by parting a sea and by humbling Pharaoh, so God will again part a sea and humble Pharaoh (11). Just as God saved his people from slavery in Egypt, God will once more save his people from more profound slavery. God is coming to bring us home.

Now, let's be clear. God's people are already home. They are already in the Promised Land, so why then does God promise to once again bring them out of exile and home? Zechariah 10 is not a promise that God will end a physical exile – the exile they experienced for 70 years in Babylon, but a spiritual exile.



Zechariah 10 promises the end of the spiritual exile that began long before in an ancient, holy garden. There, our parents – Adam and Eve, the first humans – sinned and experienced deadly separation from our loving Shepherd King. The exile in Zechariah 10 that God brings us home from is the exile of Genesis 3 that is accomplished at the cross and the second coming.

Fifth, God comes to make us true kingdom citizens (10:12). In verse 12, Zechariah says, “I will make them strong in the LORD, and they shall walk in his name,” declares the LORD. God commanded Abraham to walk before him. The idea here is for God’s people to be God’s representatives. As we walk about, we are to represent God; we are his ambassadors! Currently, we walk about and represent our interests and even the interests of the devil. Our sin does not picture to the world our Lord, but the ancient serpent. Yet, there is a day coming when every sinful tendency of our heart and mind is gone, and we will walk about in the name of the Lord representing him perfectly. This is what we were made for, and this is the future of God’s people.

Application

Zechariah 9, 10, 11 describes how the Lord comes to us in our deepest needs. Zechariah 9-10 described how the Lord comes to us so that we might experience immense blessings. In Zechariah 9, our Shepherd king comes so that we might live in peace and have plenty of food (9:17) and in Zechariah 10, he comes so that we might walk about strongly in his name.

Zechariah began the chapter by inviting us to pray. Because our God comes to us to provide what we need for life and flourishing, we should pray to him. Let's be moved to be a people who pray to the Lord often this week. He hears us and loves to give us what we need for life and flourishing.

Perhaps there is a non-Christian here today. Would you come to Jesus? He is the Shepherd king who came to you in your deepest need. You come to him by confessing him as your Lord and by believing that he did what he needed to do to save you – die on the cross and rise again from the dead (Romans 10:9). Would you come to know Jesus today?

Prayer

God, move in us to live for you. Move us to pray to you more confidently for you love to hear us. Draw people to you today too. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen.

