

Handout Zechariah Lesson 4

Part II of the Book of Zechariah is composed of two sections of undated prophecies in Chapters 9-11 and 12-14. The statement “A proclamation” (*massa* = burden, also translated as “oracle”) announces each section (Zec 9:1 and 12:1). This lesson concerns Part II, section 1, and prophecies that appear to refer to:

1. The Greek invasion of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC
2. The Jewish Maccabean Revolt against the Greek Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BC
3. Prophecies that look forward to Jesus and the Messianic Age
4. Events in Zechariah’s lifetime during his priestly ministry many decades after his last oracle in Part I in 518 BC

The focus of Chapters 9-11:

- Chapter 9 is a poetic prophecy that promises Yahweh the Divine Warrior’s judgment on Israel/Judah’s enemies and describes the arrival of a humble royal Savior to Jerusalem, riding a donkey, and inaugurating an era of peace.
- Chapter 10 is a poetic prophecy that describes Yahweh the Divine Shepherd coming to visit His “flock” and bringing the blessings of restoration to His people.
- Chapter 11 begins as a poetic prophecy and condemnation against Judah’s Gentile neighbors and then continues in a prose condemnation the failed shepherds of the covenant people in Zechariah’s time and ends in a poetic prophecy of disaster for those leaders who abuse God’s people.

Historical dates relevant to this lesson:

Persian King Cyrus the Great conquered the Greek Ionian cities of Asia Minor in 547 BC

Zechariah’s last dated vision and series of oracles was in 518 BC

Ionian Revolt against Persia in 499-493 BC

Greco-Persian Wars from 499 to 449 BC

Conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great began in 334 BC

Death of Alexander the Great and division of his kingdom in 323 BC

Maccabean Revolt against Greek Seleucid Kingdom in 167-160 BC

Judah’s independence and rule by Hasmonean priest-kings 160-63 BC

Significant Old Testament and New Testament verses related to Zechariah 9:9 and Davidic heir Jesus of Nazareth’s triumphal ride into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday:

Genesis 49:10-11 ~ Jacob-Israel’s blessing for his son, Judah: *The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute be brought him, and the peoples render his obedience. He tethers his donkey to the vine, to its stock the foal of his she-donkey. He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the blood of the grape.*

Jacob blessed Judah’s descendants with:

- Dominion: *Judah, your brothers will do you homage: you grip your enemies by the neck, your father’s sons will do you homage.*
- Conquest over his enemies: *Judah is a lion’s whelp; you stand over your prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, a mighty lion: who dare rouse him?*

- Kingship: (eternal kingship) *The scepter shall not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute be brought him (until shiloh come*) and the peoples render him obedience.*
- Prosperity: *He tethers his donkey to the vine, to its stock the foal of his she-donkey. He washes his clothes in wine; his robes in the blood of the grape.*
- Health: *His eyes are darkened (sparkling) with wine and his teeth are white with milk.*

1 Kings 1:32-34 ~ *Then King David said ... "Take the royal guard with you," said the king, "mount my son Solomon on my own mule and escort him down to Gihon. There Zadok the priest and the prophet Nathan are to anoint him king of Israel; then sound the trumpet and shout, 'Long live [Hosanna = Save us] King Solomon!'"*

Matthew 21:21:4-5: *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: Say to the daughter of Zion: Look, your king is approaching, humble and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.*

John 12:12-15 ~ *The next day the great crowd of people who had come up for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took branches of palm and went out to receive him, shouting: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel." Jesus found a young donkey and mounted it, as Scripture says: "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion; look, your king is approaching, riding on the foal of a donkey.*

Matthew 27:9 quotes Zechariah 11:12-13 but ascribes the verses to Jeremiah, applying the verse to Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The Gospel of Matthew 27:9 ~ *The word spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was then fulfilled: "And they took the thirty silver pieces, the sum at which the precious One was priced by the children of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, just as the Lord directed me."* Attempts to find an explanation for this apparent error include:

1. Some argue that since the Jewish Talmud places Jeremiah at the head of the collection of the prophetic books, any prophetic quote might be considered as belonging to Jeremiah's tradition.
2. Others suggest that Matthew initially attributed the quote to Zechariah, but scribal error contributed to the problem which was perpetuated in other copies.
3. The most likely explanation is that Matthew was quoting Zechariah but referring the reader to the prophecies found in Jeremiah 19:1-13 and 32:6-15. He intended to recall the entire passages from both those prophetic books and for the reader to put them together.

In Zechariah 11:12-13, Yahweh complained that, in the person of his prophet Zechariah, He had received from the Jews a wage that was nothing but an insult. The sale of Jesus for the same small sum by Judas, thirty shekels (Mt 26:15; cf. Ex 21:32), appears as a fulfillment of this verse combined with the idea of the purchase of a field by Jeremiah in 32:6-15. This is in addition to the fact that Jeremiah spoke of potters in Jeremiah 18:2ff who lived in the Hakeldama district (Jer 19:1ff) and explains how Matthew might apply the whole text to Jeremiah since the "blood money" Judas took was also used to purchase a field (Mt 27:3-8; Acts 1:18).

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