

- We've taken a long break from the prophet Zechariah, but tonight we renew our study as we begin the final portion of the book...
- To begin, let's briefly review the structure and content of the book...
- Following the prologue of 1.1-6, this book contains three distinct sections: the eight visions (from 1.7 through 6.8), beginning with "and I saw"...three contemporary event narratives (6.9 through 8.23), beginning with "the word of the Lord came to me"...and finally, the concluding section, the oracles (9.1 through 14.21), beginning with "the oracle of the word of the Lord"...those key themes are on the slide...to review chapters one through eight, go to www.messiahbible.org, click on "Teachings," then Old Testament, and look for the series "The Twelve"...
- While the oracle passage is incredibly rich in theological meaning and insight, especially as it relates to the Messiah, it has also been called "perhaps the most problematic six chapters in the Bible."¹ I wouldn't disagree with that assessment...
- The word "oracle" renders the Hebrew 'massa' or 'burden'...it's an uncommon word in the OT, and is only used in prophetic writings regarding severe judgment...used here in 9.1 and 12.1 and also by Isaiah and Jeremiah...it means something to be borne or carried, a heavy weight which the prophet must bear and speak, and that's what it means here...these six chapters speak of judgment, first of the Gentile world powers, then second, of Israel itself...
- Also as we begin, I want to share with you a comment shared by David Baron and Dr. John MacArthur, who note that in the OT we see two principles regarding prophecy: one, that there is little sense of perspective of the NT...OT prophets don't directly address it, which can compress our understanding of time, as the first and second advents of Christ are addressed without a break between them, making prophecies of shorter-term events

¹ George L. Klein, [Zechariah](#), vol. 21B, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), 253.

appear in close proximity to those of longer-term events...also, when God gives a prophecy regarding a longer-term event, He very often speaks of one or more nearer-term events as signposts which, as they are fulfilled, affirm the faith of God's people, and assure the fulfillment of the longer-term prophecy...we see that in this chapter, and it's why tonight is entitled "signposts"...let's begin...

Signpost #1: Alexander the Great, 334 to 331 BC

- The first signpost is God's protection from Gentile world powers, typified by Alexander the Great...this nearer-term prophecy, likely written sometime around 470 BC, predicted Alexander's conquests as he defeated the Medeo-Persian Empire in 334 to 331 BC... Alexander stormed eastward from Greece, through the ancient near east from north to south, through Egypt, then turned eastward, and continued all the way to modern-day India, crushing the Medes and Persians, including the city of Babylon...verses 1 through 8a are an exact description of the campaign from Assyria to Egypt, precisely fulfilling the prophecy given almost 140 years before...

¹ **The oracle of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place.**

For the Lord has an eye on mankind

and on all the tribes of Israel,

² **and on Hamath also, which borders on it,**

Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

³ **Tyre has built herself a rampart**

and heaped up silver like dust,

and fine gold like the mud of the streets.

⁴ **But behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions**

**and strike down her power on the sea,
and she shall be devoured by fire.**

- These verses describe the first half of Alexander's sweep southward down the coast...
- The "burden" I mentioned earlier is against the land of "Hadrach," which Baron notes is a city in Syria, and against its surrounding villages, but it's said to have its "resting place," the focal point of the prophecy, in Damascus...the capital city was conquered by Alexander in 332 BC and provided a base from which to assault the coastal cities of Phoenicia and Philistia and, ultimately, Egypt...
- Zechariah reminds us in verse 1 that this prophecy lives within the sovereign authority of God, as His eye remains "on mankind" but particularly on the tribes of Israel, for whose sake He arranges the affairs of men...the eyes of all humanity will be on the events of Alexander's campaign, but only Israel will see it as the work of their God...
- As Alexander approaches Phoenicia, the primary city, Tyre, is named, along with Sidon...verses 3 and 4 are a short summary of a fascinating military defeat of the city fortress of Tyre...the once-destroyed but rebuilt city was constructed on an island at a distance of about a half mile from the mainland...this nearly impregnable merchant city was called the "queen of the sea" with walls 150 feet high...Shalmeneser, King of Assyria, besieged it for five years and failed, and Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Emperor, failed in a siege of thirteen years to defeat the city...but in a matter of seven months, Alexander's forces built an earthen causeway to reach the island and crushed the token resistance...despite her unmeasured wealth, with silver as dust and gold compared to mud in the streets, Tyre fell, as foretold by the Lord 140 years before... **behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions and strike down her power on the sea, and she shall be devoured by fire. ...**

- But make no mistake: while Alexander the Great was the instrument, the scripture is clear that it was the Lord who struck down Tyre and her great wealth... great military and economic power cannot deter the Almighty God...

- Now Alexander turns south toward the Philistines...

⁵ **Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid;**

Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish;

Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded.

The king shall perish from Gaza;

Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;

⁶ **a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod,**
and I will cut off the pride of Philistia.

⁷ **I will take away its blood from its mouth,**
and its abominations from between its teeth;
it too shall be a remnant for our God;
it shall be like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.

- Verses 5 and 6 describe the next phase of Alexander's battle plan: the conquest of Philistia...four of their royal cities are named here...after what Alexander had done in Syria and Phoenicia, especially to Tyre, the Philistines had no hope of escape or mercy...most of these cities are not mentioned in historical records of Alexander's conquests, but the exception is Gaza...the very word means "strong," but it was not strong enough to withstand Alexander...and he made a statement about the futility of resisting him when he took the king of Gaza, a Persian commander named Betis (or Babemeses), inserted leather thongs through the soles of his feet, and dragged him to death through the city behind a Greek chariot...even this vicious detail is foretold in Scripture in verse 5...

- There is, surprisingly, a ray of hope for the Philistines in verse 7...the text says that ultimately God will remove the abominations from the Philistine people, and they will be part of the **remnant for our God**; even to the point of being received as some of the Jebusites were, those Canaanites defeated by David as he took Jerusalem; for more on that, see **2 Samuel 24**...
- Now we reach the point that Alexander approaches Jerusalem, and Zechariah describes God's purpose to protect the city...

**⁸Then I will encamp at my house as a guard,
so that none shall march to and fro;**

- God pledges that He will personally protect His house, guarding Jerusalem for the sake of His name...no one, including Alexander the Great, shall march to (north to south) or fro (south back to the north, after conquering Egypt) to harm Jerusalem...
- Alexander intended to conquer Jerusalem on his way to Egypt, but he did not; the Jewish historian, Josephus, records that as he approached the city from the north, the High Priest, other priests, and townspeople met Alexander outside the city walls, and found favor with the conqueror; Alexander came into Jerusalem itself, and offered sacrifices to the Lord...the High Priest then showed Alexander the prophecies about him in Scripture, particularly the references to Greece as a powerful male goat in **Daniel 8.5-8**...as he left, Alexander granted the Jews to live under their own laws, and did not demand tribute in the seventh year...for more details, see Josephus, volume 11, chapter 8, sections 3 through 5...after this encounter, Alexander withdrew from the city and proceeded south to Egypt, which he conquered without military action...
- Quick summary to this point: the first nearer-term prophecy signpost was Alexander the Great's conquest of the ancient near east, including his unexpected sparing of Jerusalem...God worked his will through the nation of Greece while protecting His capital

city in the process from the Gentile world powers...this prophecy was fulfilled only 140 years after Zechariah wrote it, and the people of God in the days of Alexander would have seen the fulfillment of God's word through Zechariah and Daniel as an assurance of the fulfillment of the rest of the prophecies to follow...

The Prophecy of the Messiah: The Triumphal Entry

- Now we come to the main prophetic point, which Zechariah places out of chronological order, as we'll see, but it is the key to the chapter, and it is the longer-term prophecy to which both signposts point...the prophecy of Messiah's triumphal entry into Jerusalem...verses 8b through 10 tell the story...

**no oppressor shall again march over them,
for now I see with my own eyes.**

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your king is coming to you;

righteous and having salvation is he,

humble and mounted on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰ I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall speak peace to the nations;

his rule shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

- We begin this section in the middle of verse 8 because that's where the time jump happens...verse 8a deals with Alexander, but verse 8b was not, and indeed is still not fulfilled, for oppressors attack and harass Israel to this day...but as God says, He has seen with His own eyes, and He's seen enough...He promises that the day is coming, closely linked with the coming of the Messiah, when there will no longer be any enemies of God's people, for He will see to it, and it begins with the entry of the Lord Jesus Christ into Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday...
- I see seven main points in this brief prophecy of the coming of Messiah...
 - The Precursor: Joy...never before has there been a moment more worthy of scream-out-loud joy as the coming of the Messiah...Zechariah repeats the call to joy he gave in **2.10**: ¹⁰ **Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord.**
 - The Purpose: As verse 9 says, "Behold"...look, pay attention...the Messiah is coming to His people as their King and Savior, as the Son of God, but He is also coming from His people as David's greater Son...He is the King of Kings, but He is also uniquely the King of Israel... God is fulfilling the promise of a Redeemer who will **"save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1.21)**...finally the One prophesied in **Genesis 3.15** as the conquering victor has come to His people and to the world...
 - The Character: Jesus Christ comes as the righteous King...He will not be like the deeply flawed kings and princes of Israel's past, but He will be completely holy in every respect...He will also come **having salvation**...Jesus Christ is the only Deliverer from the power, penalty, and presence of sin...as we read in **Acts 4.12, And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**" ...forgiveness, deliverance, and eternal life are

found only in and through Jesus...and He is **humble**, as we see in **Matthew 11.29**... the One who came that day declared Himself to be **gentle and lowly in heart**...

- o The Method: Christ entered Jerusalem in a most unexpected way...**mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey**. Today, we might not make much of the distinction between a donkey and any other way to enter the city, but there is great meaning and symbolism here...in OT times, riding on donkeys was reserved for rulers and wealthy people, but beginning with Solomon, horses replaced donkeys as the preferred ride for kings...by Jesus's day, kings rode not just horses, but white horses...this prophecy speaks two messages: it emphasizes the humility of Christ, but it also emphasizes His peaceable mission...
- o The Action: Building on the symbolism of entering on a colt, the foal of a donkey, God declares that He will eliminate the weapons of war, because the need for war will be no more...the verb means to stop, to end, to separate, translated here as "cut off"...there will be a day when Christ will bring peace to the world...it's not yet, but there will be that day...no weapons will be needed or tolerated...God Himself will cut them off from humanity...
- o The Speech: The message of Messiah will be peace...today, there is peace within the hearts of those who belong to the Lord, as we see in **John 14.27**...²⁷ **Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you**. But the day is coming when His peace will extend even further...
- o The Domain: For **his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth**. This is another way of saying that the peace of Jesus Christ will one day extend throughout the universe...a Jew would have understood this globally, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth...there will be no place on earth where Jesus will not reign and rule, bringing God's peace to a broken world...

Signpost #2: The Maccabean Revolt, 167 BC

- The second signpost is God's overthrow of Gentile world powers, typified by the Maccabean Revolt...this prophecy is also related to conflict in the ancient near east, specifically involving Judah in 167 BC...let's set the stage...
- Judah remains in their land and while Greece is the dominant power in the region, Alexander dies suddenly in 323 BC, about 9 years after sparing Jerusalem...Daniel predicts in chapter 8 verse 8, and history records, the fracturing of the Greek empire following Alexander's death into four parts, each given to one of his four senior generals; of the four, the one reigning over the land of Judah and the Greek lands to the east was Seleucus, giving his name to the Seleucid Empire; all were Greek in leadership and culture, and the empire endured until Macedon finally fell to Rome in 146 BC...why does all this history matter? Because God included in His word a prediction of an historical event in Judah called the Maccabean Revolt...it is the second signpost and part of this passage where the Lord begins to promise the ultimate restoration of His people...

¹¹ **As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,**

I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹² **Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;**

today I declare that I will restore to you double.

- God's assurance is based on "the blood of the covenant" ...but which covenant? There were many, but it seems likely that the reference is to the first covenant involving blood, the covenant God inaugurated with God on behalf of Abraham and his children, recorded in **Genesis 15**, when God promised Abraham the land later to be occupied by the children of Israel after their deliverance from bondage in Egypt; significantly, we hear the phrase "blood

of the covenant” echoed in Genesis 24, the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, and doctrinally in Hebrews chapter 9...

- Because of that divine covenant, Yahweh will set the prisoners – the people of Israel and Judah – free from the oppression of Gentile world powers that began with Assyria and continues to the present day, a period of time Jesus calls “the times of the Gentiles” in **Luke 21.20-24**...and the people will return to God, their stronghold, in their land...though they have received a double portion for their sins according to **Isaiah 40.2**, they will again be restored, returning in the hope of God’s grace, and the restoration will be double, befitting Israel’s identity as God’s firstborn nation (see **Exodus 4.22** and **Jeremiah 31.9**), see **Isaiah 61.7**... ⁷**Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy.**

- As a signpost pointing to the eventual overthrow of the Gentile powers, Zechariah prophesies a most unlikely military engagement...

¹³ **For I have bent Judah as my bow;**

I have made Ephraim its arrow.

I will stir up your sons, O Zion,

against your sons, O Greece,

and wield you like a warrior's sword.

- God pledges to wield Israel’s warriors as His sword, and the sons of Zion will fight against the sons of Greece...this event in 167 BC is known as the Maccabean Revolt...the Seleucid king desecrated the Second Temple and tried to force the Jews to violate the laws of sacrifice and circumcision... a priest named Mattathias and his five sons refused, and took up arms against Greece...fighting an insurgency war, they prevailed over the superior Greek

force, and won Jewish independence until Roman occupation began more than 100 years later in 63 BC...see Josephus volume 12 for more...

- This wildly improbable victory is a type of the overthrow of the Gentile powers that will precede the coming kingdom of Christ...Zechariah speaks in figurative language about the victory of God and His people, both in the days of the Maccabees and in the future...

¹⁴ Then the Lord will appear over them,

and his arrow will go forth like lightning;

the Lord God will sound the trumpet

and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.

¹⁵ The Lord of hosts will protect them,

and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones,

and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine,

and be full like a bowl,

drenched like the corners of the altar.

¹⁶ On that day the Lord their God will save them,

as the flock of his people;

for like the jewels of a crown

they shall shine on his land.

¹⁷ For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!

Grain shall make the young men flourish,

and new wine the young women.

- This passage describes the incredible blessing in store for the believing remnant of the Jewish people...while Israel, more than any other nation, has endured great persecution and suffering, they will also experience God's great salvation, and **like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land.**

- The chapter closes with a benediction of praise: **For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!**

Application

What can we learn and apply from this text?

- First, I want to call you – and myself – to be assured in your faith
 - Looking backward: God has proven His faithfulness as He has accomplished what He said He would do...
 - Looking forward: there is much left in God's word that is yet to be fulfilled...be assured that you can absolutely trust in the certainty of God's promise...He sees the end from the beginning, and as all the prophecies of Jesus's first coming were fulfilled, so all that He has said about His second coming shall surely come to pass...
- Second, the future of God's people is secure...more on that next week...
- Third, the Savior-King Who rode into Jerusalem on a colt will ride into our world again, this time on a white horse, conquering all His enemies...**Revelation 19.11-16**
- As verse 9 says, we can rejoice greatly, for our King is coming again!