

Lesson 16

Last week when we ended we were discussing Zechariah 9:12-13, and we talked about the prisoners of hope in verse 12. As we saw, those prisoners were the faithful Jews who were waiting for their coming Messiah. Yes, they were prisoners because he had not yet come. But they were prisoners of hope because he was coming to set them free. And how would they be set free? Through the blood of the covenant that we saw in verse 11.

We also looked briefly at the history between the testaments, and we saw how the great conflict between the Greeks and the Jews led to the first independent Jewish nation since before the Babylonian exile. That conflict was part of God's plan to ensure that Greek culture did not do to the Jews what it would later to do the Romans.

Verse 12 tells these prisoners to turn to the stronghold? What is that stronghold?

Some say it is Jerusalem, but I think the better view is that this stronghold is God. It was God who would send the Messiah to free his people from their prison. It was God who would protect them from Alexander and ensure their victory over the Greeks. God was their stronghold, not Jerusalem. If they were going to survive the very difficult times to come, their only hope was in remaining faithful and true to God. The walls around Jerusalem that would go up soon under Nehemiah were not going to save them.

Verse 12 ends by saying "even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee." What does that mean? This promise is directed to the faithful people of God. Yes, they have suffered, and yes they will suffer again, but God will more than make up for that temporary suffering. He will give them a double measure of blessings.

What would God do for them during their coming conflict with the Greeks? Verse 13 begins an answer to that question. For starters, God would bend Judah like a bow, and he would fill that bow with Ephraim. As we saw with verse 10, Judah and Ephraim are both mentioned to show that God's faithful people would be *unified*, and God would use their unity as a weapon against their enemies.

Now, when it came to Hellenism, as we have seen, the Jews were *not* unified. Some favored the Greek influence while others did not. But God's *faithful* people were unified! God's faithful people knew that the Greek influence was wrong, and they fought against it. Their unity gave them strength, and God used that strength as a weapon. There is a powerful lesson here for us about the importance

of being and remaining unified.

1 Corinthians 1:10 - Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

When the Lord's church follows that command, we become a powerful weapon in the hand of God.

The sons of Zion in verse 13 are the sons of the elderly priest Mattathias, known as the Maccabees, who stood up against the Greeks and successfully overthrew them. By their faithfulness and their unity, they placed a sword in the hand of God, and God used that sword to deliver them.

Zechariah 9:14-15

14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. 15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.

Verses 14-15 provide a further description of the Maccabean Revolt, which would occur about 300 years after these verses was written.

Verse 14 shows God fighting for his people. God is seen over them; his arrow goes forth like lightning; he blows his trumpet; and he travels with whirlwinds of the south. Each of these descriptions is an image of *warfare*.

God is like a storm cloud hovering over the battlefield, complete with lighting, thunder (the sound of the trumpet), and mighty winds. The most violent storms in this area were the storms that came from the south, and that is how God is pictured here.

Verse 15 tells us that God would be a shield as well as a sword. God would defend his people, and he would give them victory over their oppressors.

God's faithful people "shall devour" their enemies. The figure there is of a devouring lion that consumes its prey.

The sling stones remind us of another time when God gave the victory to one of his faithful servants over a much larger and seemingly more powerful enemy.

The end of verse 15 is a frightening image. The victory of God's people is shown in graphic terms. They would figuratively drink their enemies' blood like wine, and there would be so much blood that it would look like the sacrificial bowls and the altar in the temple. We see a similar image in Revelation, not with respect to Greece but with respect to Rome.

Revelation 14:20 - And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

God very often gives blood-thirsty people exactly what they want - blood, but it is their own blood that God gives them! That is what we see in verse 15, and in many other similar judgments in the Bible.

Psalm 58:10-11 - The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Yes, God's people are not to take vengeance, but that does not mean that there won't be any vengeance.

Romans 12:19 - Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

These verses are showing us the vengeance of God. They are showing us the repayment by God. And they are also showing us the victory of God's people over their enemies, and that victory was vital for the plan of God to continue. For Christ to come into the world as promised, there had to be a faithful remnant, and the fight we are seeing here was a fight for the survival of that faithful remnant.

Zechariah 9:16-17

16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. 17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new

wine the maids.

Yes, there would be a great and bloody conflict between God's people and their oppressors, but verse 16 promises that God would save them in that day as the flock of his people. And history tells us that is exactly what happened. The Maccabean Revolt was successful.

And had it not been successful, what sort of people would have been living in Jerusalem when Jesus came into this world? Would there have been any faithful people left, or would Greek culture have done to Judaism what it would later do to the Romans?

It has rightly been said that while Rome conquered the Greeks, Greek culture conquered Rome. Absent the faithful people of God remaining loyal and true to God, and keeping the world at bay, that same fate could have befallen all the Jews.

Once again, there is a lesson here for us - no matter how bad things get in the world around us, we must remain loyal and true to God. He is depending on us! Our great commission is to change the world - not to be changed by the world!

Notice the beautiful images in verse 16. First, Israel is God's flock. He is the good shepherd, and every sheep is precious to him. Second, God's people are as precious to him as jewels in a crown. They are glittering upon his land. The land is the crown in which the precious stones, the redeemed people, are placed.

Verse 17 shows us the reaction when God's faithful people are victorious and back in their holy city. "For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."

The subject of "his" in verse 17 is most likely Israel rather than God. Israel is once again prosperous and beautiful. The grain and the wine are symbols of prosperity and abundance.

God's people have been given a victory by God over a great oppressor, and now all is well with them. It is time to rejoice and be thankful to God. We see that same pattern in the book of Revelation - a prayer for deliverance, a terrible struggle, a mighty victory, and great rejoicing.

Zechariah 9 is one of the most remarkable chapters in the Bible. It accurately describes the battle plan of Alexander the Great, the protection of Jerusalem, and the Maccabean Revolt centuries before those things occurred. And Chapter 9 contrasts Alexander the Great with the perfect King who was to

come. And when that mighty king came into this world, he did not march in like Alexander, but rather he was born in a manger, and he rode into the city lowly, riding upon a colt.

The final six chapters of Zechariah have rightly been called the most challenging chapters in the Bible, and we have now finished the first of those six chapters. And it didn't seem that hard after we paid attention to the context, including the historical context, after we made sure we didn't depart from the clear teachings of the Bible found elsewhere, and after we looked for descriptions from the New Testament to compare with what we are reading here.

Chapter 10

Zechariah 10:1-2

1 Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. 2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

The first two verses of Chapter 10 continue the same thought that we saw at the end of Chapter 9 - things would all be different after the oppressor of God's people was judged.

Verse 1 says that the people would pray to God for "rain in the time of the latter rain," and God would give them that rain. The rain "in the time of the latter rain" refers to the spring rains that they needed for a successful harvest.

The key point in verse 1 is that the people would ask **God** for the rain rather than ask their false idols for the rain, as they had so often done before. Verse 1 is a promise from God - when his people turn to him and rely on him for help, he will send them that help. God had just delivered them from the Greeks, and God would deliver them again.

Verse 2 compares that current situation with how the people had acted in the past. Verse 2 glances back at those who did *not* seek help from God but rather from idols, and verse 2 shows how they were left destitute because of their lack of faith in God. They had relied on idols, but those idols were vain. They had relied on fortune tellers, but those fortune tellers had been liars. Neither the idols nor the fortune tellers had provided any comfort. Their promises of rain and prosperity were not fulfilled.

And what was the result of their faithlessness? Their reliance on soothsaying and idolatry had caused them to wander away like a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Because they had not relied upon God as their shepherd, they were left without a shepherd.

Instead, they went into exile and were punished for their faithlessness. Not only did they not have their heavenly shepherd, they also had no earthly shepherd. The only kings they had known for quite some time were evil kings of Judah prior to the exile and foreign kings during and after the exile. The last good king of Judah was Josiah, who had died almost a hundred years earlier.

But verse 1 is a promise that the sad situation in verse 2 need not be repeated. If the people would rely on God rather than on their false idols and their fortune tellers, then God would bless them.

Verse 2 includes a key word that we will see many times in these closing chapters. The word "shepherd" occurs thirteen times in Chapters 10-13. We will see the one true shepherd, but we will also see other shepherds, including a foolish and worthless shepherd in Chapter 11. "Shepherd" is a key word in these closing chapters.

Zechariah 10:3

3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

Who are the shepherds and the goats in verse 3? Most likely the shepherds are the evil Jewish leaders who tried to lead his people astray, and the goats are the evil Greek leaders who dominated Israel during the time between the testaments.

One of the very worst goats was Antiochus Epiphanes, whom we talked about earlier. He desecrated the temple under the Greeks, just as Rome would later desecrate the temple in the first century.

How would God punish these false shepherds and these goats? He would visit his own flock of sheep and turn them into a mighty war horse.

If you are a sheep dreaming of someday becoming a mighty war horse, then this is your path! Anytime we study God's word, we need to be on the lookout for themes, and there is a theme in this verse that

we have already seen in this book - the transformative power of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 - But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The beautiful image in verse 3 tells us two important things about the people of God. First, they are very powerful when they rely on God. And, second, they have a vital role to play in the plan of God. God uses his people to accomplish his plans on this earth. And, yes, those are also lessons for God's people today. We are very powerful with God on our side.

Philippians 4:13 - I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

And we are vital to God's plan to bless the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15). If we don't go into the world and preach the gospel to every creature, then who will? God is depending on us!

The brilliant figure in verse 3 accomplishes two things. First, it promises strength and courage to God's people. Second, it reminds them that God does not accomplish his work on earth without his people. The Maccabean victories over the Greek armies were a preparation for the coming Messiah, and God was relying on them to do what they did.

So with the old leaders removed, what happens next? God raises up a new leader!

I love this book! At every opportunity, God tells his people about Jesus. At every opportunity, God tells his people about the church of Christ. God wanted them to know what was coming. He wanted them to know all that he was doing for them and preparing for them. That is why we are seeing Christ and his church so often in these verses.

So who is this new leader that God will raise up next? Do we really have to ask that question?

Zechariah 10:4

4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Who is the "him" in verse 4? The last person mentioned by name was Judah in verse 3, so verse 4

could be a reference back to the Jews as a whole or to the tribe of Judah in particular.

Verse 4 is saying that out of Judah would come four things - the corner, the nail, the battle bow, and every oppressor together.

The translation at the end of verse 4 in the KJV is not very good: "out of him every **oppressor** together." The ASV is much better: "from him every **ruler** together." The ESV is also good: "from him every **ruler** - all of them together."

So who is this great leader that God would raise up to help his people? We know the answer to that question! Verse 4 is a description of Jesus, the coming Messiah!

Jesus came from the Jewish people, and in particular from the tribe of Judah.

Hebrews 7:14 - For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

Jesus is the **corner** from Judah.

Isaiah 28:16 - Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, **a precious corner stone**, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Ephesians 2:20 - And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being **the chief corner stone**.

Jesus is the **nail** from Judah. How so? What is the function of a nail? It holds things up; it holds things together.

Hebrews 1:3 - Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things** by the word of his power.

The word used for "nail" may also mean "peg," which is something fixed and immovable.

Hebrews 13:8 - Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Jesus is the **battle bow** from Judah. Jesus came to this earth to do battle against the enemies of God and against the enemies of God's people.

1 John 3:8 - For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

And remember the wonderful prophecy of Zecharias (*not* Zechariah).

Luke 1:68-75 - Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: **That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;** To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, **that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies** might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

And if anyone ever doubts that Jesus is a warrior, they need only turn to Revelation 19.

Revelation 19:11-16 - And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

Jesus is the **battle bow** from Judah. Jesus is the **nail** or peg from Judah. Jesus is the **corner** from Judah. But what about that last phrase? What does it mean that out of Judah came "every **ruler** - all of them together"? Who are these rulers - all of them together - who also came from Judah?

Some point to Matthew 19:28 and argue that these rulers are the apostles. They were all certainly Jewish, but were they all from the tribe of Judah? The short answer is that we don't know for sure. But, as we said, we may not need to show that they are all from the tribe of Judah because Judah here may be referring to the Jews as a whole.

I think a **better explanation** is that these rulers in verse 4 are a much larger group of rulers than just

the twelve apostles. These rulers may be **all** Christians. Why?

Romans 5:17 tells us that we are now *reigning* in life through Jesus. The church is a *royal* priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). Revelation 1:5-6 tells us that we became part of a *kingdom* of priests when we were freed from our sins by the blood of Christ. Revelation 20:6 says that we *reign* with Christ.

And for those premillennialists who are looking for a thousand year reign **of** Christ, they need to read the text more closely. Revelation 20:4 does not talk about a reign **of** Christ for a thousand years - it says that Christians "lived and reigned **with** Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). We are the ones who reign a thousand years, and we do so with Christ. And the number one thousand is being used there as a figure that describes the nature of our reign with Christ. It is *not* a literal one thousand years.

I think that **we** are the rulers in verse 4! Christians reign with Christ.

But how do Christians come forth out of him (Judah) as verse 4 says? Simple. Christ came from the tribe of Judah, and we became Christians through Christ. Also, we are blessed in Christ just as God promised to Abraham in Genesis 12, and that blessing came through Abraham's seed.

Galatians 3:7 - Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:29 - And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

I think that we in the church are the rulers in verse 4. Why do I prefer this view over the others? Because of the verses that follow. Verse 5 begins by describing this same group of rulers.

Zechariah 10:5

5 And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

That's us! We are "as mighty men!" We tread down our enemies! We fight because the Lord is with us! We confound riders on horses!

Do we see ourselves that way? Do we understand what it means to be a member of the eternal kingdom of Christ? Or are we being held back by an inferiority complex? If so, then the answer is to see ourselves as Christ sees us! We are the church of **Christ**! And that's not our name; it's our description!

Oh, but what can we do? The world is so big, but we seem so small. The world is so powerful, but we seem so powerless. Who is listening to us? What can we do? The first thing we can do is understand what the word of God has to say about us.

Matthew 16:18 - And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Notice that that verse does not picture Hell storming our gates, but more the other way! The gates of Hell are not an offensive weapon! I think the point there is the same we see in Jude 23 - "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."

Romans 8:37 - Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

1 John 5:4 - For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Hebrews 12:22-23 - But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

Ephesians 1:22-23 - And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Daniel 2:44 - And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Do we believe that or not? That is the question. Do we have any doubts about the power of the Lord's church?

Where is the church today? It is here and at other faithful congregations around the world. Where is the mighty Roman empire today? Long dead and gone. That mighty Roman empire tried to destroy the church of Christ in its infancy - that is precisely how that conflict between Rome and the church is pictured in Revelation. And what happened? The Roman empire is gone; the church is not. And what happened to Rome is the same fate that awaits ALL of the kingdoms of this earth!

That is what verse 5 is describing. "The riders on horses shall be confounded." Those riders thought they were better armed. They thought they would just mow us all down and destroy the church. But that is not what happened, and the promise is that it will **never** happen. The church is not just any kingdom; the church is the **eternal** kingdom. And there is room for only one eternal kingdom! That is what Daniel 2 tells us.

The church is the most powerful organization on earth, and it has been since the day it was established in Acts 2. The church will outlast all the kingdoms of this earth, and we in the church are reigning with Christ, our Messiah and King. That is the message of verse 5. Do we believe it? The more we understand how Jesus views his church, the more we will be transformed by that knowledge.

If we see the church as just another religious group in a block filled with religious groups, then that is all we will ever be. If we are being held back, it is likely not the world holding us back, but us holding ourselves back!

#Zechariah