

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
Lesson 18, Chapter 9 Continued

As we continue in the ultra-cryptic Zechariah chapter 9, let's briefly review our previous lesson. I'll begin by reminding you that in modern times, the Book of Zechariah is seen by most Bible scholars as consisting of 2 books by 2 authors (or 2 groups of authors) that at some point became unified into a single work called Zechariah. I don't know that I agree with that, but it has resulted in calling the first 8 chapters of Zechariah, First Zechariah. And, chapters 9 – 14 Second Zechariah. That is the terminology I will use merely as a means to define what part of Zechariah we're studying, and it is not that necessarily I agree with what modern scholarship thinks about it. That said, there is good reason to think these modern scholars have a strong position so to stand against it would be nearly as rigid as standing firmly for it. Such a determination cannot be conclusively made in favor of either way, because however it happened, it happened going on 2500 years ago and there is no actual historical record or evidence to prove it. So, we're not get hung-up on it.

Chapter 9 has changed the book's focus from the Judeans to the 10-tribe coalition that is alternately called The Kingdom of Israel or the Kingdom of Ephraim. Or, at other times, the House of Israel or the House of Ephraim. It all means the same thing. It means that after Solomon's rule, unified Israel became divided into two separate kingdoms: one of them in the south of the Holy Land (Judah) and the other in the north (Israel, or more accurately, Ephraim). Chapter 9 is about the one in the north.

Of course, by Zechariah's time, the kingdom in the north had long ago become dissolved and scattered all over Asia and North Africa at the hand of Assyria. Around 200 years had passed since then. Zechariah (as do other Prophets) verifies that although Judah has officially returned to the land from their exile to Babylon, the 10 member tribes of the northern kingdom have not. And yet, only about 5% of the Judeans returned, the remainder electing not to come back. A scattered handful of the 10 Lost Tribes no doubt straggled back to the land, too, but so few that is not worth considering.

Then as a general statement, what we see starting in chapter 9 is a focus on the eschatological future of Israel. That is, the End Times era. Naturally, for those of 500 B.C., the End Times could be near, or it could be far off. But I am quite certain that they never imagined that 2500 years into the future, only then would Israel and the world stand upon the End Times threshold, as we do today.

Immediately in verse 1, a prophecy of the End Times about what is going to happen to nations that surround the Holy Land is given. It begins with a nation that we know as modern-day Syria, then moves to Lebanon, and finally to what we know in our time as Gaza. Lebanon used to be called Phoenicia, and Gaza used to be called Philistia. What we must take notice of is that while this prophecy is certainly eschatological in nature, it doesn't preclude that some measure of its fulfillment happened in, or not long after, Zechariah's time. Much of it can be applied to the conquests of Alexander the Great in the mid to late 4th century B.C. However, its universally-wide scope and impact won't happen until the End Times.

With that as our background, let's pick back up at verse 6 of Zechariah chapter 9.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH 9:6 to end

Last time we dealt with the future fate (future to Zechariah) of the Philistine pentapolis of Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashdod and Ashkelon. Each of those major cities was prescribed a certain fate, none of it very good at least for 4 of them. While Ashdod was not foretold to be destroyed, it was destined to become a mixed city that overturned its Philistine heritage. I want to take a moment to focus on the word used to describe this mixed people: ***mamzer***. Using the English word "mixed" to translate it waters down what it means. It is a negative term that more means bastard or mongrel. It is an unnatural or ill-favored mixture. Thus, through all these various means (as the final words of verse 6 say) the pride of the Philistines will be ended. They will no longer have a nation. Of course, what we see happening in our time... the waning days of 2024... is that the modern representatives of the Philistines... the Palestinians... are trying to reconstitute Philistia as its own separate nation, on effectively the

same land it occupied long before Christ was born. And, from the biblical perspective, the inhabitants are ***mamzerim***... mongrels, an ill-favored mix. The Palestinians who live there today indeed are a mix of different Arab ethnicities. They are essentially the children of refugees from various Arab nations who moved into the area a few decades ago, and who knowingly or unwittingly have taken up the mantle of the Philistines. What is so ironic, is that even the name of their people group (the Palestinians) is but Greek for Philistines. This cannot be coincidence, especially as we read this prophecy of Zechariah 9. We have been witnessing their folly and the horror it has led to for Israel and for those Palestinians. Indeed, the pride they have been hoping to restore has not only be punctured, it has been run over by a truck and crushed. However, I promise you this story is far from being over.

Zechariah 9:7 is so startling, especially in light of our times, that I must read it to you again. This is continuing to speak about the fate of the Philistines (the Palestinians).

CJB Zechariah 9:7 *I will end their eating meat with its blood still in it, snatching the disgusting things from between their teeth." But the surviving remnant will belong to our God; it will be like a clan in Y'hudah; and 'Ekron will be like a Y'vusi.*

To put it in a nutshell, the prophecy is that the End Times residents of Philistia will turn to the Lord God of Israel. When we factor in that today these people are radical Muslims bent on destroying Israel and ending the Jewish race, it is hard to fathom such a turn of events. We can see this a little better when we take a look at the original Hebrew. Whereas the CJB says that God says He will "end their eating meat with its blood still in it", the word translated as "end" is ***cuwr*** (pronounced ***suwr***), and it more means to remove than to end. We find the same word used in the same thought pattern back in earlier chapters of Zechariah as regards the High Priest, where the instructions from God are to take the filthy garments off of him, which God then says, "Look, I have removed (***cuwr***) your iniquity from you..." God was purifying Joshua, and God will purify the Philistines (the Palestinians). In other words, those Philistines let go of their idolatry and become part of Israel.

When this verse talks about taking blood from the mouths of the Philistines (and, by the way, nowhere does the word "meat" appear, the CJB simply added it for what they deemed as clarity), this isn't talking about their own blood or human blood. It is speaking of blood in the ritual sense. That is, whereas in their religious sacrifices to their gods, the ancient Philistines consumed the blood of the animals (while the Hebrews were forbidden to do that), God will purify them from that sin and uncleanness and they will cease to sacrifice in such a manner.

For us, it is hard to gauge the impact these words would have had upon Zechariah's ancient readers. I assure you it is as powerful an image as can be imagined to explain God's ability to purify and to forgive; and also, the incredible... seemingly impossible... level of identity shift that the Philistines (the Palestinians) will undergo. As Believers, all we ought to do is to shout hallelujah at such a coming event!

By continuing to explain that the Philistines will also have detestable things removed their teeth, this refers to food. That is, eating food that isn't kosher... and nearly always this will be about meat. One of the things that makes meat unfit for a Hebrew to eat is to not properly drain the blood from it. So, the term "blood" does double-duty as speaking about consuming blood as well as not removing enough of it from the meat they cook and eat.

Let's be clear: just as at the End only a remnant of Israel will be left that finally worships the God of Israel as they should, so it is that but a remnant of Philistia will be left that finally abandons their false religion and worships the God of Israel. Please notice that the reference to the Philistines as "he" is merely a literary technique of personifying the Philistines. That is, an imaginary person becomes the representation for all the people, and the long and short of it is that this "person" throws off his idolatry for truth.

And, once again, we find in this verse a direct reference to "God". However, the word God (**yah** in Hebrew) is not there; rather it is **Elohim**. **Elohim** is a description or a title of one of the several functions or characteristics of God, as being the Chief Administrator over Heaven and Earth. Then the verse ends by saying that the association of the Philistines with Israel will become so close

that they will be like a clan of Judah. I think there are multiple levels of understanding this phrase. First, from a purely historical and geographical standpoint, Philistia bordered on Judah, so when they existed, it was Judah that had to deal with them as enemies. But second, Judah will absorb the former Philistia. The current nation of Israel is primarily the former Judah. To speak of the Philistines becoming like a clan of Israel means a much closer relationship than merely not being enemies is going to happen; it will be more like they become a family. So, the ultimate fate of Philistia will be very different from the fates of Syria and Lebanon.

And finally, we read: "...and Ekron as a Jebusite". That is, the city of Ekron's fate is going to be similar to how it was for the Jebusites. The Jebusites were the original and most ancient builders of Jerusalem... pretty much that earliest part of it that is called today the City of David. They seem to have been absorbed into the Judean residents of Jerusalem when the Israelites in their thousands moved into the area, probably starting as early as when Joshua led them from the exodus wilderness across the Jordan into the land God was giving to them. It is interesting that here in Zechariah, some 7 or 8 centuries since that happened, that such a vivid memory of the role of the Jebusites in Israel's history and society was brought up. Since later on in the Bible we don't hear any more about the Jebusites as a separate entity, then it must be that those who remained after Joshua's conquest had given up their ancient identity as Jebusites and joined with one or another of the Israelite tribes (likely mostly with Judah), and then assimilated to the point that their former identity was no longer considered relevant. They were Israelites, now.

Verse 8 begins NOT as the CJB has it, but rather, "I will encamp". That is, God will encamp around His house. His house means His Temple. Encamping around the Temple is sort of like when the Bible says that God will dwell at the Temple. God is not literally camping out nor is He residing in the Temple. It is a way to express His presence, His authority, and His ownership. Some Bible scholars say that we must understand the term "His house" as meaning all of Jerusalem at the least, and probably includes Judah as well. While that is a nice thought, but that is well outside the use of "His house" or "My house" throughout both Haggai and Zechariah. One the keys to correctly understanding God's Word at any point is to see the context for the use of the

same or very similar phrases in an epic storyline. Rebuilding God's Temple was an imperative, and is constantly highlighted, throughout Haggai and First Zechariah. So, that is how we are to understand the matter of the Temple here in Second Zechariah.

For many, many centuries Constantinian Christianity has downplayed the concept of a Temple for God needing to be built. The primary reason for that is that is just too Jewish for this gentile faith. Even more, when a Church doctrine is created that God's followers are the collective new temple, then (says their reasoning) it makes no sense for God to want another one built. The problem is, that doctrine defies the plain reading of many comments on the subject by the biblical Prophets. And it is why Christianity all but dismisses the final 8 chapters of Ezekiel, because it is all about the construction details of the so-called Millennial Temple from where Yeshua shall reign. A Temple that God supposedly doesn't want and even sees as rebellious to build it. Haggai and Zechariah, and Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekial all emphasize God's insistence upon a Temple being built for Him. The Prophet Malachi places his emphasis on the rituals and proceedings that are to happen in this new Temple.

God's presence at the Temple is promised to be the force by which enemy armies will be warded off. He will be a shield of protection for the Temple and for Jerusalem. This is all in the context of the turmoil and destruction that engulfs the former Phoenicia, Lebanon, Philistia and Syria. Israel will be protected by God's power. Those that pass through and return are referring to enemy forces, and God promises that at a designated time in the future, He will blunt the ability of any enemy from capturing or sacking Jerusalem. Saying that He will watch with His own eyes is no doubt in contrast to the 4 horses that were sent out to roam the earth and to bring back scouting reports to God of what they see. Rather than receiving reports, God will focus His own personal gaze upon Israel in order to protect them and to smite down any aggressor against them.

In verse 9, the order to rejoice is given to the "daughter of Zion", and for the "daughter of Jerusalem" to shout out (this is a joyful shouting). Daughter of Zion is often used when the literary context is Hebrew poetry. " A daughter of

such and such" is meant to indicate the inhabitants of a certain place, with the emphasis on the place. Why daughter and not son? Probably because place names are given in the grammatically feminine gender. Zion and Jerusalem together indicate the Holy City. Zion is usually referring to Jerusalem in its redeemed state, and in its earliest use probably also produced more the mental picture of the City of David section of the overall city. So, another sense of this is that the order to rejoice and shout is given to the older and newer parts of Jerusalem... all of it; the original and whatever is included in it in the now and in the future. But, the truly important essence of Jerusalem is as the place that God has set apart for Himself, and has made His name to reside there, and that is represented by the Temple.

Make no mistake, while this language is figurative and is more expression than it is intended to be taken as literal reality, it reflects ancient, traditional historical understandings of the need of gods for personal residences. For the pagan religions, usually a certain god literally is thought to reside fulltime in the Temple dedicated to him or her. In fact, they are practically imprisoned there. The Bible seems to demonstrate that the Israelites weren't entirely clear on the matter, because they could simultaneously speak of God's presence in His House, and yet sitting on His throne in Heaven. How can *that* be? Believers shouldn't balk at this. After all, did we ever think that as Yeshua walked on earth, that The Father also didn't watch from the vantage point of Heaven? But if Jesus is God, how can we speak of Him being in both of these locations at the same time? It is because we believe (with biblical backing) that God has more than one essence or manifestation of Himself, and each while representing a unity, also mysteriously can operate as separate entities. This is perhaps why when God is spoken of as existing in the Temple, it is regularly said that it is The Glory that resides in the Temple... with The Glory being a certain named manifestation of God that is different and distinct from the Holy Spirit, or Yeshua (The Son), or even the Angel of Yehoveh.

I just told you this so that the second part of verse 9 can be better understood in its fullness. The second part being: "Your king is coming to you! How is He coming? The next several words are prophecy said to be directly fulfilled by Christ... He is coming riding on a donkey. That is, this is a direct prophecy of

the coming of the divine Messiah... who Himself is a manifestation of God. And, Yeshua quotes this passage about Himself in Matthew 21.

CJB Matthew 21:1-7 *As they were approaching Yerushalayim, they came to Beit-Pagei on the Mount of Olives. Yeshua sent two talmidim ² with these instructions: "Go into the village ahead of you, and you will immediately find a donkey tethered there with its colt. Untie them and bring them to me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, tell him, 'The Lord needs them'; and he will let them go at once." ⁴ This happened in order to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, ⁵ "Say to the daughter of Tziyon, 'Look! Your King is coming to you, riding humbly on a donkey, and on a colt, the offspring of a beast of burden!' ⁶ So the talmidim went and did as Yeshua had directed them. ⁷ They brought the donkey and the colt and put their robes on them, and Yeshua sat on them.*

So, when Yeshua says that this is the quote of "the Prophet", the Prophet is Zechariah. This gives me an opening to revisit some of the modern claims about there being a First and Second Zechariah, with the second having a separate, or even multiple authors none of which are the original Zechariah. If that was actually the case, it sure doesn't sound like Yeshua thought so. He added complete legitimacy to the thought that all the writings of Zechariah come from a single Prophet, which sort of blows holes in any theory that discounts that while Zechariah 9 – 14 may be very different literarily than 1-8, nonetheless all the chapters were written by the same person. And, whatever editing might have been done to this book (and all the books had some level of editing over the centuries), it had certainly been completed long before Messiah was born. Zechariah in the form we have it today was in existence in Yeshua's era since He quoted from it, seemingly word for word. For me, there can be no better authority to confirm the authenticity of what we have undertaken to study... Zechariah... as the work of one man.

So, as regards this passage: from the view of Zechariah's day, the prophetic fulfillment, of course, was future; but for us, much of it is in hindsight. Even so, there is another fulfillment of the coming of Messiah ahead that is similar to this, but it won't include His entry on a beast of burden. Rather it will be on

a horse. And a horse all throughout the biblical period... Old and New Testaments... was an instrument of war, not something used domestically. It was anything but lowly. Think about this: He enters Jerusalem the first time coming lowly, peacefully, and sacrificially, riding on a donkey. The next time, He comes in fury and vengeance with the taking of blood on His mind, also riding on an animal... but this time it is upon a war horse charging into battle against the forces of darkness. What an amazing picture of the two opposing natures of Yeshua as The Messiah is presented in these two scenarios, using a donkey and a horse to help especially the ancients understand what was going to happen.

Let's take these two natures of Messiah a step further. Zechariah 9:9 says that Israel's king will be righteous and victorious. Note the order: righteous, followed by victorious. In His first coming, Messiah came in righteousness in order to save His people by imbuing those who trust in Him with a divine righteousness... a saving righteousness. In His second coming, Messiah is coming in victory... a military victory... to defeat the enemy, Satan, and all of His human followers who have caused such misery over the ages. The victory will be both physical and spiritual. I am more than certain that at first, none of Zechariah's readers would have deduced all this from what he said. But later, not long before Christ came, brilliant Sages had already begun to explore the possibility of a Messiah with a dual nature. It was expressed, quite early, as Messiah son of Joseph ... the peace-loving, non-military savior, and Messiah son of David... the most definitely military warrior savior. Both within the same person, or in some opinions, one followed by the other.

Not surprisingly, while verse 9 can be more identified with Messiah's first coming, verse 10 is more descriptive of His second. How would the people of Zechariah's time think about verses 9 and 10 of this prophecy? Because Zerubbabel (a member of David's dynasty) was ruling them as a Persian governor (something they were deeply conflicted over), their first thought had to be a joyous one of a prophecy of a restored Jewish monarchy with Zerubbabel shaking off Persian authority and advancing to be their legitimate and sovereign king. Of course, they would be disappointed as this never happened. Therefore, in time the Jewish people grew to accept Zechariah's prophecy as belonging to a much later era. How much later? Who knew?

Verse 10 says this:

CJB Zechariah 9:10 *I will banish chariots from Efrayim and war-horses from Yerushalayim." The warrior's bow will be banished, and he will proclaim peace to the nations. He will rule from sea to sea, and from the [Euphrates] River to the ends of the earth.*

The CJB's opening words of "I will banish", again waters down the meaning of the Hebrew word that is *hikratti*, which more literally means "I will cut off". To "cut off" is a forceful term that is more of a military nature than simply meaning to disallow or to send away something. We find this same word used a few times in Malachi, and it is about Yehoveh violently destroying armies. So, here this is about God destroying the primary equipment of war in Zechariah's era: chariots and horses. Chariots and horses were what provided for military dominance, and thus the army with the most of these was nearly always the victor.

By using the terms Ephraim and Jerusalem, this is speaking of the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom... together meaning all of Israel. Just as horses and chariots were the preferred military equipment, so was a bow the basic piece of military equipment that is somewhat equivalent to modern times with each soldier carrying a rifle. Essentially, this is speaking about the end of an enemy's ability to prosecute war.

To put all this in more plain terms, we have here a picture of the King who came most lowly the first time. But, upon His return, He begins His rule by attacking and defeating all of God's (and by extrapolation, Israel's) enemies. It seems from the wording that while He will remove all these instruments of war from the enemies by means of force, Israel, too, will be disarmed... but for a different reason. Israel will no longer need a military for their defense, because God will be their security. And, the nations will have no means to make war, because God has destroyed it all. This brings us once again to a rather startling realization; it is that the human nature is to solve our differences through war. Even when Christ returns, there is no alternative but

to first go to war against these nations who are determined to continue this cycle of war as the ultimate means to get their way.

The good news is that once the King (the Messiah) has put down the militaries of the all the nations, He will announce peace on Earth. A 1000-year era of peace will begin. Some scholars insist that this peace must only be in Israel because of the phrase "from sea to sea". But in fact, that is but an expression that means the same as "to the ends of the earth". It is inclusive of the entire planet. And, when it speaks of the River (meaning the Euphrates) to the ends of the earth, we need to keep in mind that all anyone could speak of, or think in terms of, was the known world of that era. This is classic Hebrew poetry using a couplet... that is, two slightly different expressions as 2 ways of the saying the same thing. These ancients knew nothing of our great oceans, or Europe, or Africa (other than the most northern parts)... or of North and South America, Australia, the Japan's, etc. Their understanding of what the world was, generally began at the Euphrates River to the north, and ended at Egypt to the south. And from the south eastern part of what we call Europe, to perhaps the outskirts of China... and little else. They didn't deny that there was probably more, but it's all Middle Easterners knew anything about in those ancient times.

Verse 11 is fascinating.

CJB Zechariah 9:11 ***"Also you, by the blood of your covenant, I release your prisoners from [the dungeon,] the cistern that has no water in it.***

For the most part, this verse has been completely skewed and taken out of context by Christianity. The usual Christian take is that this is looking forward to the New Covenant with Christ. But, the reality is that in Zechariah's era only 2 covenants existed: the Covenant of Abraham and the Covenant of Moses. However, it is the Covenant of Moses that is called the Covenant of Blood, so this has to be what this verse has in mind. I cannot dismiss that this might indeed also have a future connection as Christ, too, is said to have set captivity captive. Luke 4:18 – 21 also speaks of Jesus releasing the captives. However... the context for this is "the acceptable year of the Lord", which is an

alternate title for the Year of Jubilee, something that comes in 50-year cycles. So, I cannot necessarily associate Zechariah 9:11 directly with Luke 4.

“The blood of the covenant” best fits with the Covenant of Moses, and therefore with the rules and consequences that the covenant spells out. Which is, of course, what Israel has been suffering under for so blatantly violating those covenant terms. So, the release of your prisoners from the cistern with no water in it, seems to be referring to Israel’s... Ephraim’s... exiles. This is primarily the exiles of the northern kingdom, which is whom this chapter addresses. What these prisoners from the cistern is meaning is not literal, but is a metaphor. It expresses the condition or state of the exiles, and not their actual circumstance. Ezekiel used the metaphor of these exiles as being dried-up bones. Both metaphors are expressions of hopelessness, if not misery. To be clear: this cannot be speaking about the Babylonian exiles, because by Zechariah’s time they had already been freed, and those who wanted to return to their natural homeland, did. But, not so for the 10 Lost Tribes. Rather, this part of Zechariah’s prophecy is happening right now... right under the world’s nose... and few have even noticed it.

Therefore, says verse 12:

CJB Zechariah 9:12 *Return to the stronghold, you prisoners with hope! This day I declare to you that I will grant you double reparation.*

While it would be tempting to think that this is referring to the 95% of Jews that had elected to not return to Judah (in essence acting as an encouragement to do so), I’m troubled because this is addressed to “you prisoners with hope”. Jews at this time were free, and in no way hopeless. Again, I draw a comparison to Ezekiel 37 that essentially calls for the same thing. But, this is an End Times calling. And, must be something that happens long after Ezekiel’s, Zechariah’s, or even Yeshua’s eras. Rather, I think “you prisoners with hope” plays off of the previous verse’s prisoners in a dry cistern (who have no hope). That is, those who once had no hope, suddenly do have hope, because God has given them this hope and a door to escape.

Therefore, while talking about the 10 Lost Tribes, it also includes the Jews of Judah... who are exiles from yet another exile long-future from Zechariah's day. These Jews are the exiles of the Roman exile of the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. The 10 Lost Tribes were merely continuing with their already 7 century-old exile.

The stronghold these Israelites are to return to is Jerusalem. Stronghold is another term with a military context. It is a fortress guarded by an army. So, the idea is that the exiles would return to a strongly defended Jerusalem. When we look again at Ezekiel 37 and 38, we see that a 2-stage return is called for. First, the Jews return and the new State of Israel is established. Israel begins to thrive and become strong. Next, later, the 10 Lost Tribes return. Surprise! That is exactly what has happened. It was European Jews that returned to the Holy Land after WWII, and then established the renewed State of Israel, recognized by the UN as a legitimate sovereign nation, in 1948.

Now, a few decades later, members of The 10 Lost Tribes... those exiles of the northern kingdom... are making their way back in ever increasing numbers to fulfill Zechariah's prophecy as well as the prophecies of others of Israel's Prophets. What awaits all of Israel is a double reparation. This means a God-caused abundance. Indeed; anyone who has been to Israel sees with you own eyes what an abundant land it has returned to. Mosquito infested swamps have become fertile fields. Dry deserts are full of greenhouses growing vegetables of every kind. God keeps His promises.

We'll pause here and continue with verse 13 next time.