

THE PROPHECY OF THE MESSIAH'S COMING ZECHARIAH 09:09–10:12

Introduction

The greatest promise ever given by God is the promise of the coming Messiah. God's Messiah would be the one through whom all the other promises of God would be realized. It would be through Christ that God would bring about all the wonderful promises of His Holy Word and fulfil His great purpose for the world. Note how the promises given in the earlier visions and in the present messages (oracles) build upon each other, escalating toward one central promise — the promise of the Messiah.

In chapters 1-8 Zechariah's proclaimed God's promises for the present generation to encourage them in rebuilding the temple. Now, he moves forward through time into the distant future, to the *first coming* of Christ. Next, he will move even further into the future and speak of the day when Christ will come again. It is this *second coming* of the Messiah toward which all the other promises are pointing. And it is the *second coming* of Christ that will be the culmination of Israel's long history, its *climax* — and not only of Israel, but also of the whole world. This is the subject of the present passage, *The Prophecy of the Messiah's Coming*, Zechariah 9:1-10:12.

- I. The preparation for the Messiah: a prediction that Alexander (Greece) would conquer and prepare the world for the Gospel and the New Testament by spreading the Greek language (vv. 9:1-8).
- II. The *first coming* of the Messiah: Christ would come as the humble King and Saviour (v. 9:9).
- III. The *second coming* of the Messiah: Christ will come as the exalted King and Conqueror — the Deliverer of His people (vv. 9:10-10:12).

I. *Zechariah 09:09 The First Coming of the Messiah: As the Humble King and Saviour*

Here in one short verse is one of the most astounding prophecies in all of Scripture. It predicts the first coming of Christ, the Messiah. He would come to Israel first as a humble King and Saviour. He would be gentle and peaceful and come riding on a donkey. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. Christ would be righteous (v. 9a). Israel was told to rejoice and to do so greatly. *Daughter of Zion* and *Daughter of Jerusalem* referred to all of Israel. Zechariah told them to rejoice because their King was coming (see Isa 9:5-7; Mica 5:2-4; Luke 1:32-33). This was their long-awaited Saviour, the Messiah. The prophet emphasized three facts about the Messiah. First, He would be *righteous* or *just* (*saddiq*). Righteousness has many shades of meaning, but primarily it suggests moral perfection. It also
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suggests that Christ would perfectly fulfil all of God's Law, His commandments, and all of His expectations for the human race. Christ would, in fact, be the perfect man and represent fully what man was supposed to be. Righteousness also implies right relationships with God and other human beings. In this sense, Christ would enjoy perfect fellowship with His Father and live in perfect obedience to His will. In relationships with His fellow man, Christ would be generous and merciful. Psalm 37 reveals this aspect of righteousness: "*The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous [saddiq] give generously.*" **Psa 37:21**

Christ would be the epitome of righteousness — the very embodiment of righteousness itself. He would be, and is, righteous in every way. He will also bring righteousness to earth in that He offers righteousness to every believer — every person who truly trusts Him. Then, when He establishes His kingdom on earth, Christ will rule the world in righteousness (see Psa 45:6-7; Isa 11:1-5; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16).

2. Christ would offer salvation (see Isa 62:11) (v. 9b). Zechariah actually declared that the Messiah would have salvation. Salvation would therefore be the possession of the Messiah — it would be Christ's to give, to offer to anyone He chose. Like righteousness, *salvation* (*yasha*) is associated with many things. It suggests deliverance, victory, help, safety, vengeance and preservation. (R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Bruce K. Waltke, ed., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 414). All of these were part of the salvation that Christ would bring. Christ would deliver His people Israel and all believers from sin and the power of Satan. He would give them victory over sin, death, Satan and the trials of life. He would provide security to those who trusted Him and would preserve them for all eternity. And in the last days, He will take vengeance against God's enemies — the persecutors of Israel and His Church. This was the salvation that the Messiah would bring to Israel and to all of God's people, all who would believe in His Name (John 1:12; 20:31; Acts 10:43).
3. Christ would be humble and peaceful: He would first come on a donkey not a warhorse (v. 9c). This is an astonishing prophecy, and all the more so because it actually happened more than two thousand years ago. It is amazing how God's Word predicted future events so precisely, in such detail. This alone should convince people of its truth and authenticity. Note that this prophecy was fulfilled when Christ rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, what most people refer to as the Triumphal Entry (Mat 21:1; Mark 11:1; Luke 19:28; John 12:12). Christ's riding a donkey communicated several significant truths about the *first coming* of Christ — who He was, and why He came.

First, the donkey was a symbol that Christ was a King. It was customary for kings in the ancient Near East to ride donkeys when they came in peace. They rode stallions when prepared for war. Thus, Christ's riding a donkey represented His royalty, His authority, His kingship. Zechariah's prophecy would have communicated this to

Israel. It told them that their Messiah would come not only as their Saviour but also as their true king. Note that today many people point to His riding the donkey as a sign of Christ's humility; yet, that was not the point. The donkey was not a lowly animal as we view it today. Rather, it was a royal animal that kings rode. Therefore, Christ's riding a donkey symbolized first that He was a king. He was Israel's true king.

Second, the donkey represented peace. It symbolized a king who would come in peace. When prepared for battle, kings rode war stallions rather than donkeys. For that reason, Christ chose a donkey because He was first coming in peace. He would also offer peace to His people, a multi-faceted peace. The peace that Christ offers includes:

- => spiritual peace, rest for our souls: freedom from the guilt of sin, spiritual comfort, and eternal security
- => spiritual peace, peace with God: reconciliation with the LORD through forgiveness of sins in Christ
- => practical peace, peace with other people: the unity of believers in the church (Christ's body)
- => world peace, peace on earth: justice and righteousness, which will be established in Christ's coming kingdom

All of mankind will one day recognize Christ as the epitome of peace. He embodies peace; He gives peace; He will rule in peace; and He is our peace. The Apostle Paul says it well in *Ephesians*:

Eph 2:14-16 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

Third, and most significant, the donkey Christ rode was in contrast to a warhorse. Note that Christ could have come first on a warhorse. He did not have to come in peace. He could have come to judge and conquer the world from the start. Nothing prevented Him from doing so — He had the power. He is the true King of all the earth, its ruler and judge. The world was made through Him and for Him (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6; Heb 1:2). Even when on the cross, Christ could have called the angels of heaven to intervene, but He did not. Neither did He come to earth on a warhorse — not the first time. Rather, He came in peace to offer salvation. This is the chief significance of the donkey. The donkey that Christ rode and the peace it symbolized were in the plan of God since before the world began. This is a dynamic picture of God's mercy — a love and mercy that are truly immeasurable.

Before moving on to the Messiah's *second coming*, take note of the remarkable contrast between Alexander and Jesus Christ. Zechariah made their differences

abundantly clear. Alexander came riding a stallion, a warhorse. He came conquering and destroying. Some historians believe that Alexander honestly wished to unite the world, possibly even for benevolent reasons, with good intentions to make the world a better place. Even if this was true, Alexander sought to unite the world and bring peace by force, using war, bloodshed and violence. Contrast this with Christ. Christ's method was bloodshed too — but not the bloodshed of others and not by force. The shedding of blood was His own, and it was by His free choice, His willing sacrifice of His own life so that others may live. Unlike Alexander, Christ came riding a donkey in peace. Furthermore, His plan for peace was not just peace between nations but also peace between God and man. Christ's method was actually the opposite of force. He would work from the inside out, through hearts and souls. He knew that forced submission and war would never bring about true peace — not lasting peace. War never brings peace. War only breeds more war. Consider the irony of the phrase, “the war to end all wars.” This is what was said of World War I. But war can never end war. Only peace can end war, and peace must come first to the human heart. This is the peace that the Messiah would offer His people: a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit, and a *New Covenant* with their God. This is in stark contrast to Alexander — and to every other conqueror the world has ever known.

Jer 31:33 “*This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,*” declares the LORD. “*I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*”

Thought 1. The first time Christ came to earth was not as a conqueror. Like most people, Israel wanted a conquering saviour, a king who would destroy all of their enemies. They wanted a king who would free them from their oppressors and from the suffering in their lives. Perhaps like many of us, they desired a leader who would rule the earth in power and might. However, this was not what Christ came to do — not the first time. That is why Israel and so many people today still reject Him — a suffering saviour, a saviour who died, who allowed himself to be mocked and spit upon and whipped. We want a king who conquers, who soundly defeats all our enemies. Yet this was not the LORD's plan. He had a far fiercer and more merciful plan. Mercy is fierce because it conquers the worst of sinners and brings them to their knees. It conquers the hardest of hearts and opens them to God's undying love. Mercy, once received, conquers entire lives. It breeds absolute devotion, total allegiance, and untiring obedience. In short, mercy conquers souls for God. How? Because those who are granted mercy are forever indebted. Their lives are no longer their own because they were bought with a price — the price of Christ's own blood. This is you and me, and we are truly forever indebted. God's Word has much to say about God's mercy shown to us in Christ:

Rom 9:23-24 *What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory — even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?*

Rom 15:8-9 *For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed. So that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Eph 2:4-8 *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.*

Titus 3:4-7 *But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

Jude 1:22-21 *But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

II. Zechariah 09:10–10:12 The second coming of the Messiah: Christ will come as the exalted King and Conqueror — the Deliverer of His people

Though the Messiah came in peace the first time to offer salvation, it will not be so the second time. Christ's Second Coming will be to conquer. He will come as exalted King and subdue the earth. His coming as conqueror is necessary because the human race has rejected Christ's offer of peace.

Today, and for several centuries, there has been much talk of bringing peace to earth. Many people optimistically think that with enough education, enough wise leaders, and enough negotiation and understanding between nations, we can work out our differences

and establish peace on earth. Truthfully, history has never recorded such. Neither has it happened in the modern-day world. Despite all of our education, our increased standards of living in much of the world, our advances in medicine, technology, agriculture, transportation, and a whole host of other so-called advances, the world is still largely at war. Not only do nations still war against each other, but also they are at war within themselves. Nations across the globe and in almost every generation have engaged in civil wars, uprisings and revolutions. Within cities themselves, civilians fight each other in political battles, drug wars, gang wars, class warfare and many other conflicts. A glance at any news source around the world will show that many streets are filled with violence and bloodshed somewhere — some constantly so. Truly, there is no universal or permanent peace on earth, even if and when nations choose to set aside their arms temporarily.

1. Christ will establish peace — God's kingdom — on earth (v. 10). A beautiful truth about Scripture is that it provides so much hope. In spite of the gloom around us and the havoc men wreak on earth, God's Word provides great hope for all of mankind. True hope comes from God's promises. And it is a great promise we are given in this verse. Zechariah had just foretold of Christ's *first coming* to earth and His riding on a donkey (v. 9). Now the prophet immediately jumps forward and speaks of Christ's *second coming*. Several astonishing promises are made in these predictions.
 - a. The first promise given is that Christ will end all war. He will in fact destroy all the weapons of war: the chariots of Ephraim, the warhorses of Jerusalem, and the bows of battle. Ephraim represented the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Jerusalem represented the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Both kingdoms will be united by Christ's kingdom and have no need for defence. They will be protected by Christ Himself. The weapons of war and war itself will be abolished forever. It will be the LORD Jesus Himself who speaks peace even to the heathen nations, proclaiming an everlasting peace that will overtake the entire world.
 - b. The second promise given is that Christ personally will rule over all the earth and that His dominion will spread from sea to sea. Zechariah's words convey that Christ's rule will be worldwide: "from sea to sea" and "from the river [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth." We know from other passages that Christ will not rule from a distance, from heaven or any other far off place. Rather, Christ will be present in this world to rule it personally from the new capital of the world. He will take up residence in Jerusalem and live among us. He will judge the nations and settle disputes, personally dispensing justice throughout the world. It will be Christ's righteous and just rule that will establish lasting peace on earth.
2. Christ will set His people free and restore them to the promised land because of the blood of His covenant (vv. 11-15). Zechariah spoke first to the returned exiles. "The blood of your covenant" referred to the covenant God established with Israel — first through Abraham and later through Moses. Both of these covenants had been confirmed by the blood of sacrificial animals (see Gen 15:8-21; Exo 24:8). Such

sacrifices were only a foreshadowing of the sacrifice Christ would make on the cross (see Heb 10). In this way, Zechariah's words looked forward to a greater blood sacrifice; they prophesied of Jesus Christ. His death would be the ultimate, eternal sacrifice — the only sacrifice that could bring lasting peace.

Note the reference to the blood covenant. God was promising to honour His Word. Because of His covenant with them, God would deliver His people from the waterless pit. The waterless pit pointed most likely to their recent exile or perhaps to an exile to come. Regardless of the timing, God's people would be freed from their captors — freed to return to the promised land. The LORD was going to deliver His people and set them free from all oppression. The prophecy also has spiritual application, pointing to the Messiah who would set all of mankind free from bondage to sin and death (see Rom 6:1ff; 8:6).

God made three additional promises in these verses, some of which have been partially fulfilled and others that are yet to be fulfilled.

- a. The LORD calls on all who are in exile to put their hope in Him and return to the promised land. If they would return, He would abundantly bless them (v. 12). Bear in mind that most of the exiles had not returned to Jerusalem and Judah. Many had stayed behind, choosing instead to remain in Babylon and other regions where they had been resettled. They had become comfortable and accustomed to their new way of life, preferring the luxuries of Babylon to the scarcities of Judah. Nevertheless, the LORD longed for all of His people to return. Therefore, He appealed to them again. He told them to return to their fortress or stronghold, a reference to Jerusalem and His loving protection. God called His people *prisoners of hope* because truly their only hope was in Him — in His deliverance and salvation. The people may have been living comfortably elsewhere, but they had no idea how much more the LORD longed to bless them. He proclaimed, in fact, that He planned to bless them twice as much as He ever had before. It was a promise to infinitely bless them. God made the promise, but it was up to the people to respond. They needed to trust God's promises and obey His call to return.
- b. The LORD will use His people to defeat His and their enemies, (v. 13). Again, Judah and Ephraim referred to all Israel. The specific enemy mentioned was Greece. This prophecy was partly fulfilled in the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucids. The Seleucids had gained control of one-fourth of Alexander's empire after his death. They were led by general Seleucus, from whom they took their name. The Maccabees were a priestly family who led Jews in revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes, one who would later become the Seleucids' king. The revolt began around 168 B.C. when Mattathias, a faithful Jewish priest, refused to offer sacrifice to Zeus. He died shortly thereafter, but his sons carried on the revolt for many years and won Jewish independence for a time (See *The Promised Deliverance*, Zec 9:13) .

c. The LORD will appear above His people to deliver them (vv. 14-15). In these verses, God continued His promise to grant victory to His people. Now, however, He made the promise even more detailed and concrete. The LORD made it clear in the words “the LORD will be seen over them” that it would be no mere human success. It would be He who brought about victory for His people — He would be orchestrating events from above and controlling them by His own sovereign hand (see Deut 3:24). The prophet provided two additional details:

=> The LORD will sound the trumpet.

=> The LORD will cause a terrifying storm to arise with lightning and whirlwinds or storms.

Keep in mind that the LORD was encouraging His people through these messages. He may have been calling their attention here to the former display of His power shown at Mount Sinai. There are many parallels between the day when the LORD gave His Law to Moses and the people at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19) and the words of Zechariah here in this verse (v. 14). On the day the LORD gave His commandments to Moses, there were blasts from trumpets, flashes of lightning and thunder, and the earth shook and trembled. Now the LORD was promising to be just as powerful in the coming day of battle against their enemies. Zechariah declared that storms would arise from the south, the same location as Sinai and Teman, where the LORD had proven strong once before. His arrows would flash like lightning, and the Sovereign LORD would blow the trumpet. He would march out against His enemies in a whirlwind from the south, just as He had before. What a glorious picture of the LORD's power and might! The LORD would exercise this same power to secure victory for His people against all their enemies. This prophecy was fulfilled for Zechariah's generation, and it will be fulfilled again in the last days when Christ returns. Next note the confirmation or assurance God gave His people in verse 15:

=> He will shield His people.

=> His people will subdue and overcome the enemy.

=> His people will shout in victory as they shed the blood of the enemy.

Not only would the LORD shield and protect His people in the coming days of battle, but He would also give them victory. His people would roar and shout as though they were drunk with wine. They would be full of the blood of their enemies. Zechariah compared the fullness of their victory to the overflowing bowls that collected blood from the altars of sacrifice (see Lev 4:6-7). Their victory would be sound and the defeat crushing.

3. Christ will save and glorify His people in *that day* (the end time) (vv. 16-17a). This promise of victory also pointed to the end times when God will miraculously deliver His people from the league of nations assembled against them. God called them His *sheep* to remind them that they would be totally dependent on Him. They were His special *flock* and He would protect them as a good shepherd. In the end times,

they will be all the more dependent on Him. At that time, Christ and His heavenly hosts will intervene — and they will do so with finality. Though thousands of troops will march against Israel and threaten them, God will deliver His people from these nations' wicked hands. No nation or assembly of nations — no matter how many or how strong — will be able to stand against Christ and His heavenly hosts. Christ will shield His people by the power bestowed on Him since the foundation of the world, and His people will be eternally secure. Thereafter, God's people will shout and revel in their victory, and it will last forever. So complete will be the victory of God's people on *that day*, that...

- a. They will sparkle like beautiful jewels in a crown.
- b. They will be a beautiful light to all nations.

The imagery of victory has now shifted from storms, feasting and sheep to that of precious jewels. The LORD has always loved and cherished His people — they have always been beautiful to Him. But they had not always acted beautifully. Throughout much of their history, the people had rejected the LORD and rebelled against His Word, bringing the curse of God's judgment upon themselves. Nevertheless, God had longed to make them a beautiful and righteous people — a light unto the nations. In *that day*, the end time, Christ will return to give His people victory. They will be made forever righteous by Christ's own righteousness. And they will be blessed with prosperity throughout the land. At that time, they will sparkle like jewels and shine as a beautiful picture of God's blessing and grace. They will finally be a true light, a beautiful light to all the nations of the earth.

4. Christ will feed His people and give them prosperity and physical health (see Deut 33:28; Psa 72:16; Amos 9:13) (v. 17b). God's people will not only revel in victory but also thrive and be prosperous. The LORD promised them grain (corn) and new wine, a picture of material blessings and health. Grain and wine will be so abundant that even young men and women will have plenty — not just the aged. The physical prosperity pictured here is a striking image of God's grace. It shows the riches of His mercy and foreshadows the abundance of spiritual blessings He will shower on all believers in Christ. How great is God's goodness!
5. Christ will destroy all hypocritical worship and false shepherds (religious leaders) (vv. 10:1-3). Note the reasons for this destruction and what is revealed about false shepherds.
 - a. The reasons:
 - => The LORD alone can give rain and harvests (v. 1). This is a transitional verse, and some scholars believe it belongs with chapter 9 because it can be seen to continue the theme of prosperity and victory. On the other hand, it sets the stage for the following verse (v. 2), which shows the sharp contrast between what only God can do (in this case, control nature) and what idols and fortune-tellers can do, which is

nothing. Regardless, in this verse, God reminded His people that it would be He and He alone who would save them and provide for them. He would create the storm clouds that would bring them victory (see 9:14). Or, the storm clouds might refer to those that bring physical rain. In other words, the people's prosperity and victory and fruitfulness would come directly from the LORD. The point to see is that Zechariah called the people to prayer, to ask the LORD for rain and to seek Him for the blessings He had promised. God is the source of true prosperity — both physical and spiritual. Therefore, His people must seek these blessings only from Him.

=> The idols (so-called gods) and fortune-tellers were fake (v. 2). The prophet draws several other contrasts as well. Unlike the true God, idols and fortune-tellers lie and deceive. Idols are false because they are actually a *lie*. Idols or false gods do not really exist; that is, they are created in peoples' minds. They cannot truly speak or think or take action. Whatever is believed to be spoken by an idol is, in fact, a lie. Such lies come either from the corrupt heart of the human race (we hear what we *want* to hear) or from Satan and his demonic forces. Fortune-tellers also lie. They say what people want to hear — and usually only for money or some other material gain. How can they be trusted?

Idols and fortune-tellers are fake because they give *false comfort*. Think how many times God's people had been led astray by false prophets. Such prophets prophesied peace when there was no peace. True prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah warned the people against this false peace prior to judgment by Babylon. Zechariah was reminding the people of this fact so they would not fall into the same errors again. Only the LORD could give real comfort. Only His promises and Word were to be trusted — not the empty words of fortune-tellers and false gods.

Idols and fortune-tellers caused the people to wander from God, who alone is the *true* God, the LORD. Zechariah noted that false leaders caused God's people to wander aimlessly like sheep — *lost* sheep without a shepherd. They led God's people away from the LORD and into all kinds of evil. The same thing is occurring today. People who seek answers and direction from false leaders, or fortune-tellers are inevitably led astray. They begin to believe all kinds of strange things, corrupt beliefs that distort the truth. Tragically, distorted truth always results in some type of sin, as does idolatry. A few examples are the sins of pride, greed, covetousness, self-glorification and self-righteousness.

b. The result: the LORD will punish the false shepherds and corrupt leaders (v. 3). In verse 3, the LORD Himself spoke. He pronounced judgment against false shepherds. The LORD's anger burned against them and He declared that He would punish them. In the same breath, He promised to care for His people...

=> He will care personally for the flock.

=> He will make them victorious in life — like a proud warhorse.

The false shepherds would be judged, but God's people would be protected and made victorious. The victory that God would bring would not only be victory over enemies but also victory in life. God's spiritual blessings — His grace, His forgiveness of sins, life through His Son and His Holy Spirit — would make His people victorious in life. Unlike the false shepherds who spoke lies that led to death, God would personally shepherd His people and bring them victorious life.

6. Christ will come as the model leader, as portrayed in three remarkable images in this verse (v. 4). These images are in sharp contrast to the deceit of the false gods and shepherds just discussed. Unlike those corrupt leaders, Christ would be the ideal, perfect leader.
 - a. Christ would be the cornerstone and foundation (see Mat 21:42; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:7; Psa 118:22-23; Isa 28:16). A cornerstone is used to join two walls of a building together. In this sense, the image speaks of Christ's uniting His people. Christ will unite Judah and Israel when He restores the nation in the last days. Christ also joins believers together by His Spirit and church and unites all believers to God. A cornerstone is also a foundational stone. In this sense, Christ would be His people's foundation. On Him, all the promises of God would be laid, and in His strength all His people would rest. Christ is the cornerstone because we can build our lives on Him; we can trust Him for all the needs of life and for eternal life. There is truly no greater foundation than Christ — no surer foundation for life.

Isa 28:16 So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be dismayed."

- b. Christ would be the source of security and victory. This is symbolized by the tent peg and the battle bow. In ancient times, tent pegs were used in two ways: primarily, they were used as stakes to secure tents, to ground the tents and keep them stable in the midst of strong desert winds. If a tent was not anchored, it would surely have blown away. In this way, Christ would be His people's anchor. He would make them stable, unmovable and secure. Believers in every generation who place their faith in Christ are also secure. They are not blown about by the winds of turmoil in life. Christ is their anchor, their firm footing.

The second way tent pegs were used was as a means to hang precious objects on the walls of tents (see Isa 22:20-24). In this light, Christ would be the nail upon which the hopes and even the burdens of His people would hang. God's own promises and blessings would hang on Christ and be secured through Him.

Christ was also called the *battle bow*. The battle bow was a weapon of war. Christ would fight for His people and cause them to be victorious. He would be their chief weapon against all enemies. Likewise, He is the chief weapon for believers today.

7. Christ will be with His people and empower them to be victorious (vv. 5-7). These verses speak of the victory that will be won during the great tribulation to come upon Israel in the end times.
- a. Christ will help His people overcome the enemy (v. 5). The LORD promised to be with His people, but remember that all of these promises were to be fulfilled by the Messiah, through the person of Jesus Christ. Because Christ will be with the people, they will together overcome the *horsemen*. God's people will be like mighty warriors that trample their enemies in the mud. This is a glorious picture of total victory — a victory that will be won by Christ.
 - b. Christ will strengthen, save, and restore His people. He will treat them as if they had never been rejected or judged (v. 6). Because of the people's sins, they had been rejected by the LORD. He had forsaken His people for a time, in part so they would learn what life was like without Him. Without the LORD's presence and protection, the people were easily conquered and oppressed by their enemies. Recall that the Assyrians had easily defeated and oppressed the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Moreover, the Babylonians had captured and oppressed the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As a result, all of God's people had been dispersed to foreign lands. Apart from God, the people had been truly helpless. In spite of everything, the LORD now promised to be with them, to strengthen and restore them. Note why:
 - ⇒ He will strengthen and restore them because He is compassionate.
 - ⇒ He will strengthen and restore them because He is their God.
 - ⇒ He will strengthen and restore them because He hears their prayers.God promised to show His people compassion and mercy. He reaffirmed that He was their God and they were His people. And He assured them that He had heard and would answer their prayers. His salvation, compassion and blessings would be so great that it would seem as if He had never rejected or judged them. His blessings would be so abundant and their joy so complete that they would forget all of their past suffering.
 - c. Christ will cause the Northern Kingdom (Ephraim) to be victorious and to rejoice (v. 7). Ephraim was often used to refer to the Northern Kingdom (see. Hos 10:6; 11:8, 12). Again, the LORD reminded the nation that He would reunite them. They would be restored as one nation and enjoy His protection. He would cause them to be strong and happy. Even their children — all future generations — would be strengthened and be glad. Israel would forever rejoice in the strength of the LORD.
8. Christ will call His people to return to the promised land (vv. 8-11). The people had already returned from one exile, the Babylonian Captivity. Even though many had not yet returned, the land of Israel was well-populated with Jews during Christ's lifetime. Nevertheless, while on earth, Christ prophesied that Jerusalem would be destroyed and her people scattered again (Mat 24). This destruction came in A.D. 70 at the hands of the Romans. This was the first fulfilment of a double prophecy,

since Mathew 24 also speaks of the end times. Although Israel was established again as a nation in 1948, most Jews are still dispersed. They have not returned to their homeland. But these verses also spoke of the end times. The LORD now promised that in the last days He would once again signal (hiss or whistle) to His people. He would call them to return and gather them together in the promised land. The LORD then proclaimed several additional promises:

- a. God's people will be *redeemed* (pada, v. 8a). Redemption suggested that God's people would be delivered and preserved. They would be delivered from the hands of all enemies and preserved by the hand of the LORD. Spiritually, through the work of the Messiah, God's people would also be delivered or ransomed from the power of Satan, sin and death. This promise was not only to Israel but also foreshadowed the redemption of all believers in Christ.
- b. God's people will multiply (v. 8b). God promised to increase their numbers and make them as numerous as before. Keep in mind that God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands of the seashore. The promise to Zechariah's generation confirmed this. It also foreshadowed the worldwide increase of God's people through the adoption of Gentiles into Christ's church. All who would believe in Christ would be adopted into God's family and given abundant life (John 10:10; Eph 1:5). Thus, the number of God's people would continue to increase — not only the Jews but also the Gentiles — through the church, Christ's body on earth.
- c. God's people will remember the LORD (v. 9a). The people had been scattered and exiled only recently. In view of that, Zechariah must have been prophesying of a future scattering. As mentioned, this dispersion would come at the hands of the Romans in A.D. 70. The Jews have also been scattered several times since. But the LORD promised His people that they would remember Him no matter where they were scattered and no matter for how long. This promise suggests that God's people will be eager and ready to return when the LORD calls them back to Israel in the last days.
- d. God's people will survive as a people and will always have the hope of returning home (v. 9b). Despite their being scattered in the future, they would survive. God would protect a remnant as He had always promised to do and deliver them through all adversity.
- e. God's people will return from Egypt and Assyria (v. 10a). These two nations represented all the nations where God's people would be dispersed. Wherever God's people were scattered, He would call them to return — and they would come back eagerly from all corners of the earth.
- f. God's people will live in all the land (Gilead and Lebanon) promised by God to Abraham (v. 10b). Gilead and Lebanon show that God's people will inherit all the land originally promised to Abraham (see Deut 30:3-5). Despite the fact that today

much of the land of Palestine is controlled by Arab peoples, God will one day give all the land to Israel. It will all be theirs as their eternal inheritance.

- g. God's people will safely pass through all obstacles and afflictions as they return (v. 11). No matter how great the world's resistance, no matter how heavy the oppression, and no matter how grave Israel's troubles, the LORD will eliminate all stumbling blocks. He will allow nothing to hold them back, to discourage or defeat them.

The LORD will smother the pride and enslavement of Assyria. He will crush Egypt's rule and dominion. These represent the purging of every obstacle and power on earth. Nothing will prohibit God's people from coming back to the land He has promised them — no nation and no force on earth.

9. Christ will strengthen His people for one reason: that they might walk in His Name (v. 12). The great promises given up to this point have been leading to one thing: the promised Messiah. The Messiah would come not only once but also a second time to strengthen and win peace for His people — an everlasting and worldwide peace. His first coming was to redeem and save His people for God. It had the cross in view. Tragically, this salvation was largely rejected by Israel. In the last days, however, many in Israel will at long last recognize their true Saviour. They will finally accept the One whom they have pierced (Zec 12:10). At that time, Christ will strengthen them to gain victory over all their enemies. Not only will they be victorious, but God's people will also walk in the Name of the LORD. This is the goal and climax of all God's wonderful promises — that Israel and all believers might walk in the Name of the LORD. To do so suggests that everything God's people do be done for the glory of God. It also suggests that God's people will live under His perpetual and everlasting protection, that they will enjoy His peace and presence forever. This was the great promise given to Zechariah's generation and to all of Israel. The same amazing promise is given to every believer today.

Thought 1. Think of the great mercy of God: Christ's *first coming* to earth was to offer salvation. Rather than coming in judgment, He came in peace — gently and riding a donkey. He came to offer God's salvation to thousands of generations. How many more of us will He comfort with His love or win by His grace? Millions? Billions? Only the LORD knows. What we do know is that Christ first came to us to offer His life so that we may live and live abundantly. Therefore, we rejoice not only for our own salvation but also for the untold billions of others whom He has mercifully sought and is seeking until the time of His return.

In contrast to His *first coming*, Christ's *second coming* will not be peaceful. For many, it will be a day of terrifying judgment. Believers rejoice now, but we also tremble. We tremble because we know the day of Christ's return will be fierce. That will be the day of the warhorse, not the donkey. There will be warhorses and darkness — the inescapable darkness of Christ's judgment. Imagine the power of Christ when He

comes. God's Word declares that He will come with all the hosts of heaven. He will come riding on a stallion with all the angelic armies of heaven. He will come in the clouds surrounded by thunderous bursts of lightning. All of His foes will then be vanquished. No army will be able to stand against Him. No empire will be able to stand. Nor will any man stand or any government, economic power or military might. Every power in heaven and earth and every last person will fall to their knees in submission to Christ — the one they pierced. They will at last submit to the true King, the Lion and the Lamb, the Suffering Servant, the Alpha and Omega, the Ancient of Days, and the King of all the earth. He is the King *for* whom all things were created and *through* whom all things were created. He lived and died for you and for me and for every person who will ever walk on the face of the earth. How heartbreaking, then, that so many still reject Him. To be sure, Christ's *second coming* will be a day of great rejoicing for believers. For those who have rejected Him, it will be a terrible day of judgment. God's Word graphically describes Christ's *Second Coming*:

2 Pet 3:8-10 *But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.*

Mat 25:31 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.”*

2 Th 1:8 *He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.*

Jude 1:14-15 *Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: “See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”*

Rev 1:7 *Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.*

Dan 7:9-14 *“As I looked, thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were*

allowed to live for a period of time.) In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. ■

ZECHARIAH 09:13
THE PROMISED DELIVERANCE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

*“I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, Zion, against your sons, Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword.” **Zachariah 09:13***

Although Zechariah's prophecy points ultimately to the victory that Christ will win in the end times, scholars are in general agreement that it likely pointed to the Maccabean victories as well. God promised to use His people to reinstate proper worship in the temple, and this is exactly what the Maccabees did. To understand this prophecy fully, it is necessary to refer to the book of *Daniel*. Then a quick glance at actual history will show how true and accurate the words were that were spoken by God's prophets (including both Zechariah and Daniel). A very specific prophecy was given by Daniel concerning Alexander the Great and the division of his empire upon his death. It speaks of a cruel successor to Alexander, one who would persecute God's people. This was a clear prophecy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who pointed to the antichrist in the end times. Note the interpretation given for Daniel's vision of the ram and goat.

***Dan 8:15-26** While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man. And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, “Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.” As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. “Son of man,” he said to me, “understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.” While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. He said: “I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power. In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise.*

He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power. The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true, but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future.”

Thought 1. Whatever success the Maccabean revolt achieved, it did not last for long. The LORD acted and protected His people in order to ensure their survival as a nation through these trials and many more to come. More important, however, He used Zechariah's generation and those that followed to reinstate temple worship. Sadly, this too, was very short-lived, so much so that it is possible Israel's return to temple worship took place for one chief purpose: to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Perhaps God was preparing Israel's national landscape so that when Christ did come, He would find the temple and temple worship intact. If this was the case, the LORD probably wanted His Son to connect His people to their past — to demonstrate in every way that He was the bridge from the past to the present and the future. Christ's worship at the temple and in the synagogues of His day demonstrated His obedience and reliance upon the Father. Yet the temple would only be a place of worship temporarily, which had been God's plan since before the world began. The temple, or Holy of Holies, would not be the only place where the LORD would dwell. The LORD's awe-inspiring plan had always been to dwell in the hearts of His people. The temple was only a foreshadowing of this and an introduction to the indwelling presence of God. It would be through Christ and the New Covenant established by His blood that the Holy Spirit would come at Pentecost. This is just one of the many ways Christ was a bridge from the past to the present, for on one day Jesus worshipped His Father in the temple and on the next He went to the cross and died. In dying, Christ reconciled all men to God. It was upon Christ's death that God's Spirit could at last move from the confines of the temple to the hearts of all who were willing to accept Him as Saviour. At the moment of Christ's death, the curtain that divided the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn apart from top to bottom, representing open access to God for the first time. Later, on the day of Pentecost, God's Spirit swept through the crowd and filled every heart that was open to Him. It was on that great day that the Holy Spirit of the LORD God Himself came to dwell and abide in His people — not just among them, but in them. This is the good news of the gospel, truly life-changing news.

Mat 27:50 *And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*

Mat 27:51 *At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split.*

Acts 2:1-4 *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Heb 9:1-14 *Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still functioning. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings — external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! □*