

**The Minor Prophets**  
**Lesson 31: Messiah, The Shepherd-King**  
**(Zechariah 9—11)**

In the last half of his book, Zechariah presents two oracles (“burdens”) that focus on the first and second advents of the coming Messiah. These six chapters comprise one of the greatest concentrations of messianic truth found anywhere in Scripture, but the truth is always related to God’s purpose for His people Israel. Zechariah reveals Messiah as the humble King, the loving Shepherd, the mighty Warrior, the gracious Savior, and the righteous Ruler who will reign on earth as King and Priest.

Bible students may not agree on the interpretation of each detail of these complex prophecies, but they do agree on the greatness of the Christ whose character and ministry are so vividly portrayed here. As we study these chapters, may our hearts burn within us (Luke 24:32) and may we love Him more.

**Messiah’s First Advent (9:1-9)**

The coming of God’s Son to this earth wasn’t heaven’s “Plan B” or a hasty decision by the Father after our first parents sinned. The plan of redemption was settled in eternity, before there ever was a creation. The coming of the Lamb of God was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20), for He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

**a. Preparation for the King (vv. 1-8).**

- i. These verses describe the march of Alexander the Great and his army through the area north and east of Palestine. Alexander defeated the Persians in 333 BC at the battle of Issus and then turned to conquer the leading cities in Phoenicia. Daniel had predicted Alexander’s success; he compared him to a winged leopard (Dan. 7:6) and a fighting he-goat (Dan. 8).
- ii. Hadrach was a region far to the north of Palestine, bordered by the Euphrates River, and Damascus was the capital of Syria. After defeating these nations, the Greek army then marched down the Phoenician coast, taking one city after another from Tyre and Sidon in the north to Ashkelon and Gaza in the south. God had indeed “cut off the pride of the Philistines” (Zech. 9:6) and put an end to their idolatrous worship (v. 7).
- iii. Alexander’s victorious march caused people to look to God for help, but it could also mean that God’s eyes were on the nation and especially His people Israel. The NIV margin says, “for the eye of the Lord is on all mankind, as well as on the tribes of Israel.”
- iv. One author suggests that as the people were watching Alexander, they were actually watching God at work, for history is His story.” After a two-month siege of Gaza, Alexander took the city and then went to Jerusalem.
- v. He was unhappy with the Jews because they had refused to pay him the annual tribute that they usually gave to the Persians. The high priest in Jerusalem called for the people to fast and pray, and he presented sacrifices to the Lord to seek His special protection.
- vi. The night before Alexander and his army were to arrive in Jerusalem, the high priest had a dream in which God told him to adorn the city, tell the people to dress in white

garments, and open the gates to their visitors. The high priest and the other priest would head the procession dressed in their holy robes. This they did, and Alexander was so impressed that he welcomed them in peace.

1. The priest told Alexander about Daniel's prophecies concerning him, and Alexander even offered sacrifices to Jehovah in the temple. Thus, the city and the people were spared.
- vii. But Zechariah had promised that Jerusalem and Judea would be spared. "I will camp around My house because of the army, because of him who passes by and him who returns" (Zech. 9:8 NKJV). God kept His promise to protect the city.

But why all this concern over the conquest of Alexander the great? His conquests helped to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ. By building Greek cities, encouraging his soldiers to marry women from conquered nations, and spreading Greek culture and the Greek language, he unified the known world, and when the Romans took over, they found an empire all prepared for them. Greek was the language of literature, and our New Testament is written in the common Greek language of the people of that day. The combination of Greek culture, and Roman government, roads, and laws was just what the early church needed for the spread of the gospel.

However, the promise in verse 8 goes far beyond the time of Alexander, for it states that God is always protecting His people and His house. No one can touch them without His permission. In the centuries since Alexander's conquer, the Jewish nation has suffered often because of invaders, and Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. But the day will come when Messiah reigns and no invader will be able to threaten God's people, let alone attack them.

#### **b. Presentation of the King (v. 9).**

- i. This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus Christ rode into Jerusalem on what we traditionally call Palm Sunday, and the event is recorded in all four gospels. This is the only public demonstration Jesus allowed during His ministry, and He did it to fulfill Scripture.
- ii. When Zechariah put this prophecy about Jesus right after his prophecy concerning Alexander the Great, he was obviously inviting the readers to contrast the two conquerors.
  1. Alexander's arrival brought fear to people, but the Jews were commanded to rejoice and shout because their King had come.
  2. Jesus was righteous in all He did, and His purpose in coming was to bring salvation to those who would trust Him. How different from Alexander!
- iii. Alexander rode a mighty steed and proudly led a great army from one victory to another, but Jesus rode a lowly donkey and came in humility. The people who welcomed Him were common peasants who laid palm branches and garments before Him on the road. The great people of Jerusalem didn't welcome Him, but little children sang to Him in the temple. Jesus could have brought judgment, but instead He brought grace and forgiveness (John 3:17).
- iv. Instead of making a grand oration, Jesus beheld the city and wept over it; instead of slaying His enemies, He went to a cross and died for them!
- v. What a wonderful Conqueror! Let's move now to the future and examine His conquests.

## Messiah's Conquests At His Second Advent (9:10—10:12)

The entire age of the church fits between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10, just as it does between Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and after the comma in Isaiah 61:2. The prophet is now writing about what will happen when Jesus comes to earth to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom. At His first advent, he rode a humble donkey, but at His second advent, He will ride a white horse and lead the armies of heaven (Rev. 19:11-21).

- a. **Messiah will proclaim peace (9:10-13).** At the beginning of World War I, British author H.G. Wells published a book called *The War That Will End War*. On November 11, 1918, at the end of the great war, Prime Minister David Lloyd George said to the British Parliament, "At eleven o'clock this morning came to an end the crudest and most terrible war that has ever scourged mankind. I hope we may say that thus, this fateful morning, came to end all wars." But Well's title proved wrong, and Lloyd George's wish was never fulfilled, for war is still with us.
  - i. However, when Jesus Christ comes again, He will "speak peace" (Zech. 9:10) which means "proclaim peace," for unlike authors and politicians, with Jesus, His words carry authority and make things happen (Ps. 33:9). His Word will go forth with power, and there will be a general disarmament around the world.
  - ii. Chariots and war horses will be demobilized, every weapon will be destroyed, and "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:4; see Mic. 4:3).
  - iii. Zechariah 12:1-9 teaches that there will be one last battle before Jesus establishes His kingdom, as the Gentile armies attack Jerusalem. But the Lord will use Judah as His bow and Ephraim as His arrow and defeat all His enemies (9:13). He will call all His exiled people back from the many nations to which they've been scattered during this age, and they'll return to their "stronghold," which can mean both God their Refuge and the stronghold of Mount Zion.
  - iv. In their land, ruled by their Messiah, the Jews will receive double blessing in return for all their suffering.
- b. **Messiah will march in triumph (9:14-10:1).** The image here is that of a storm, not unlike what we read in Psalm 18:7-15 and Habakkuk 3:3-15. Messiah will march forth with a voice like thunder and arrows like lighting, and His army will march with Him. He'll shield them from danger and death and will enable them to defeat their enemies.
  - i. In Zechariah 9:15, the image changes from a storm to a feast, and the prophet pictures the soldiers shouting like men who are drunk with wine (see 10:7). But instead of being drunk on wine, they're "drunk" with the blood of their enemies. Each man is "filled to the brim" like the bowls used at the temple to catch the blood of the sacrifices on the altar (Lev. 4:6-7).
  - ii. Again, the image changes (Zech. 9:16-10:1), and the army is pictured as a flock of sheep that the Messiah saves by His power. Sheep are the last animals you would take to war, but Israel has always been God's special flock (Ps. 100:3) and God "the Shepherd of Israel" (80:1). Zechariah will use the "flock" and "Shepherd" images again in his prophecy (Zech. 10:2-3; 11:4-16; 13:7).
  - iii. Once more, the image changes this time from sheep to precious stones (9:16). When the high priest Joshua was cleansed and clothed, he received the special holy turban that was his crown (3:5), and then he was crowned with a royal diadem that made him

king as well as priest (6:9-12). But now it's God's people who are like beautiful precious jewels, sparkling in the land and revealing the beauty of their God.

- iv. This section ends with a brief description of the land and the changes God will make for the joy of His people (9:17—10:1).
  - 1. There will be plenty of grain in the fields and fruit in the vineyards because the Lord will provide the rain in its time. How often in their history the Jews turned for help to Baal, the god of storms, instead of turning to the Lord who alone can send the rain (see 1 Kings 18). During the kingdom age, the land of Palestine will be fruitful and beautiful as God provides the rain that is so necessary for anything to grow.
- v. The promise of rain given in Zechariah 10:1 may have a spiritual meaning behind it, because the Holy Spirit is spoken of in terms of rain (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:23-32). God promises to pour out His Spirit on Israel (Zech. 12:10) and bring them to repentance and faith in Christ.
- c. **Messiah will strengthen His people (10:2-12).** Once again the prophet uses the image of the flock, this time a flock led by evil shepherds who cause them to wander and go astray (Matt. 9:36). The Jews were commanded to obey the priests, who would tell them God's will (Ex. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; Ezra 2:63), but too often the leaders turned to diviners and seers and used idolatrous divination devices which were forbidden by the law (Deut. 18:10—12). Israel in the later days will be like wandering sheep because their leaders will follow lies instead of God's truth (see Ezek. 34).
  - i. But Messiah will turn the sheep into warhorses (v. 3)! He will punish the evil shepherds (leaders) and give victory to his people. Several striking images of Messiah are given in verse 4.
    - a. The cornerstone speaks of Christ as the foundation for His people, the keystone that joins the walls. The tent peg (nail) refers to Messiah as one on whom the burdens may be placed with confidence (see Isa. 22:20-24), and the battle bow. He is the victorious Warrior who never loses a battle (Ps. 45:5; Isa. 63:2-4).
  - ii. Note that Messiah comes from Judah (Zech. 10:3), for God gave the messianic promise to Judah in Genesis 49:10. Every ruler of the nation since David came from the tribe of Judah, for it was with David that God made His covenant (2 Sam. 7).

The emphasis in the rest of the paragraph is on "strength" and "mighty men" (Zech. 10:5-7,12). Because the Lord will be with the Jews, they will trample their enemies down like mud in the streets, and they will go from victory to victory in the strength of the Lord. God will also call His scattered sheep back home from the many countries where they've been scattered.

What a day of victory! God's people Israel will be regathered, redeemed, reunited as one nation, and rejoicing in the strength of the Lord! But this same God can give the same blessings to His church today. We're scattered people, divided and sometimes distant from each other, but the Lord can unite us in Christ and bring us together. We're fighting battles against the enemy, but the Lord can strengthen us and turn His helpless sheep into victorious warhorses. How much He is willing to do for us, if only we would admit our failures and unbelief and turn to Him for help.

**Messiah rejected By His People (11:1-17)**

The two chapters we've just surveyed indicate that Israel will be in trouble in the last days until their Messiah comes to rescue them, cleanse them, and give them a kingdom. How did they get into this trouble?

During the time of David and Solomon, Israel was the most powerful nation on earth, with wealth and resources beyond measure. After Solomon's death, the nation divided into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Israel, the northern kingdom, began to deteriorate, so God sent the Assyrians to conquer them and scatter them. Judah had a series of godless kings, so God sent the Babylonians to take Judah captive.

Seventy years later, a small band of Jews returned to their land to rebuild their temple. Life was difficult, and the nation had none of its former glory, but over the years they persisted and restored the temple and the city. Then their Messiah Jesus Christ, came to them, and they rejected Him and asked their Roman rulers to have Him crucified. About forty years later, in AD 70, the Roman armies came and destroyed Jerusalem and the temple and scattered the Jews to the nations of the world.

This chapter explains the nation's rejection of the true Messiah and how they will accept a false messiah, the Antichrist, who will appear at the end of the age and deceive the whole world. The key image in the chapter is that of the shepherd, and three different shepherds are presented.

- a. **The wailing shepherds (vv. 1-3).** These brief verses describe the invasion of the Holy Land by the Romans. Key places like the Jordan, Lebanon, and Bashan are mentioned. The invading army is like a fire that burns the forests. The "wailing shepherds" are the rulers of the nation who have led the people astray and are now paying for their sins.
  - i. In the East, leaders and rulers were called "shepherds" because they led the people, protected them, and provided for them. Jeremiah saw a similar scene: "Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come" (Jer. 25:34 NIV). Usually, the shepherds gave the sheep for slaughter, but here the shepherds themselves are led to the slaughter.
  - ii. The high priest Caiaphas thought that by killing Jesus, he would save the Jewish nation from destruction (John 11:47-53), but just the opposite occurred. By rejecting their Messiah, they opened the doors of judgment and dispersal.
  - iii. It was true that Jesus did die for the nation of Israel, for He died for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:1-3), but their rejection of truth led to their acceptance of lies, and the result was the Roman invasion and the destruction of their temple and city.
- b. **The true Shepherd (vv. 4-14).** God commanded Zechariah to play the role of the true Shepherd. He became a type of messiah while our Lord was ministering on earth. The flock of Israel was destined for slaughter because of their wicked rulers, but he was to do his best to rescue them. The Jewish leaders weren't concerned about the sheep; they were concerned only about their own position and power. Zechariah didn't actually obtain a flock and become a shepherd. Perhaps he, like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, did an "action sermon" to get the attention of the careless people.
  - i. He carried the two instruments of a faithful shepherd, a staff (crook) to guide the sheep and a rod to ward off enemies, and he paid special attention to the oppressed ("poor") in the flock, those who needed special attention. According to verse 11, some of the "poor of the flock" were watching him, so apparently this was an "action sermon."

- ii. He called the one staff “Beauty” (Favor and Grace) and the other one “Bands” (Union). He fed the flock and even got rid of the unfaithful shepherds. Then one day he broke both of the staves! God’s favor to His people had come to an end; the covenant union between God and His people was broken. But so was the union between Judah and Israel.
  - iii. God is long-suffering and waits for sinners to repent and believe, but there comes a time when He has done all that He will do to reach them. (See John 12:37 NKJV and Matt. 23:37 NIV).
  - iv. Actually, the people wanted Zechariah to quit! He asked for his wages and they gave him the price of a slave, thirty pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32), an amount that he sarcastically called “a lordly-handsome-price.” So disgusted was he with his wages that he went to the temple and threw the money to the potter who was working there, perhaps supplying vessels for the priest.
  - v. Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, but Zechariah wrote it in his book. You would expect to find it in Jeremiah’s book. Perhaps the solution lies in understanding the way ancient authors used texts from other writers.
  - vi. Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, that were thrown down in the temple, and it was used to buy a potter’s field. All because the Jewish people rejected Zechariah the shepherd and Jesus the Good Shepherd!
- c. The false shepherd (vv. 15-17).** The prophet was then commanded to adopt the role of a “foolish shepherd.” The word *foolish* doesn’t mean “stupid” but “morally deficient, corrupt” because he doesn’t receive God’s truth. He’s also called “a worthless [idle] shepherd,” because he doesn’t care for the sheep. Unlike the Good Shepherd, he doesn’t seek the lost, care for the young, feed the flock, or heal the injured. All he does is slaughter the flock to feed himself! (see Ezek. 34).
- i. Because Israel rejected their true Shepherd, Jesus Christ, they will one day blindly accept and obey the false shepherd (Antichrist) who will lead them astray. Those who reject the light inevitably accept the darkness.
  - ii. “I have come in My Father’s name,” said Jesus, “and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (John 5:43 NKJV).

According to Daniel 9:27, the Antichrist will actually be able to make a covenant with the Jews for seven years. Probably, this is for the purpose of protecting them so they can rebuild their temple and resume their sacrifices. But after three and a half years, he’ll break the covenant, put his own image in the temple, and force the world to worship him (2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 13).

That God’s chosen people, who possess the inspired Scriptures, should reject Him who is “the truth” (John 14:6) and came from the Father, and follow one who is a liar and is energized by Satan, is incredible to comprehend, but it will happen just as the Scripture says. However, the Lord will judge this false shepherd by breaking his power (his right arm) and confusing his mind (right eye), and then the Messiah will come from heaven and confine him to the lake of fire for a thousand years (Rev. 19:11-21).

During that thousand years, Christ will reign in His glorious kingdom, Israel will receive the blessings promised by the prophets, the church will reign with Him, and all creation will enter into “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21 NKJV). Thy kingdom come!

Homework: Read **Zechariah 12—14**. Study title: Redeemed, Refined, and Restored.