

The Saga of Two Conquerers, Part 1

Zechariah 9:1-8

2164

Take your Bible, if you will, and look with me at the book of Zechariah. We have started a study in Zechariah and then we were off for a few weeks, or a month, and now we're going to get back to this marvelous exciting prophecy, the book of Zechariah. If you're not familiar where it is, it's right near the end of the Old Testament, Zechariah and Malachi, end the Old Testament. So it's two books back from Matthew...Zechariah. And we're looking at the ninth chapter. Zechariah chapter 9, a great, great prophetic word comes to us in this chapter.

One of the great proofs of the Scripture is that God knows the future. In fact, in the book that I finished on [Focus on Fact, Why you can trust your Bible](#) which incidentally will be out in the middle of October, I make the statement that perhaps the greatest proof of the truth of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. And this chapter will just leave you breathless as you see what God predicted that came to pass with such amazing accuracy.

As Christians, we're all committed to the belief that Jesus Christ, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world and the King of Kings, is going to return to earth for the purpose of establishing the kingdom promised to Israel and all those who have trusted in Him. We as Christians anticipate this Kingdom. We anticipate the reversing of the Adamic curse and the creating of an earth that is all that God ever designed it to be, where Jesus Christ reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now many of the details of that coming Kingdom and of Jesus Christ's return to establish it, are indicated to us in Scripture. And a major element in the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament deals with the coming of the Kingdom. The prophets talked frequently, for example, of how history is going to come to an end, of how the nations are going to be judged, of how God's King, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will come and reign supreme, how that He will fulfill the promise to David given in 2 Samuel chapter 7, how that He will fulfill ultimately the promise given to Abraham. This one will come and not only conquer the nations, the Gentiles who oppose God, the peoples who are set against God, but He will redeem Israel and into that Kingdom will go all the believing saints of all the ages. This is a great, great theme in the Bible.

And you know, sometimes I think that we're very close to the time when Jesus is going to come and do that. And I'm not alone in thinking that. I guess Christians have always felt that way, frankly. The New Testament is full of statements like "The coming of the Lord is at hand," "My little children, these are the last times."

Christians have always believed they lived on the end of the return of Christ. There are things that are happening today that make us convinced more than ever that this is true. Let me just give you an illustration. Going away for a minute from Zechariah chapter 9, I want to call your attention to a most interesting passage in the book of Ezekiel. Ezekiel has much to say about the coming of Jesus

Christ, and particularly about what is going to happen in regarding a great war that will occur. In the thirty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel, we find something of the aftermath of Armageddon. The great battle of Armageddon will occur at the end of the Tribulation, just before the Lord Jesus returns to establish His Kingdom. The battle of Armageddon, described in the book of Revelation as well as in Ezekiel and in Zechariah, will be a battle where all the nations of the world are at war. And Christ will come and defeat them all and establish His Kingdom.

There's some interesting things about the phases of that particular battle, and there are some phases of it. In 39 of Ezekiel, let me read to you, "Therefore thou son of man, prophesy against Gog...and Gog seems to be an ancient term designating Russia, or the Russian area...thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal," and some have associated that with Moscow and Tubalski(?), now known as Leningrad, so that this may well be the Russian army that descends upon Israel. "I will turn thee back and leave but the sixth part," in other words, God is going to destroy five/sixths of this great army from the north that descends upon Israel in the Tribulation and God is going to destroy them. And then you come to verse 4 and you find a most interesting thing, "Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy hoards, and thy peoples that are with thee, I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall on the open field for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God."

The first thing we read in this prophecy is that the birds, the ravenous birds will devour the carcasses of the five/sixths of the remains of this northern army. And if you are to compare with that Revelation chapter 19, we won't turn to it, verses 17 to 19, you find a similar statement, that after the holocaust that is Armageddon, God calls the birds of the heavens, the ravenous birds, to come and to feed on the flesh of the kings and the captains and the great men and the hosts of all of those that have been slain in this great battle. So there's a great feast of the birds at that time.

Further in this passage, you'll notice in a little further down that it says, "The weapons that remain," in verse 9, "shall be burned, the shields, the bucklers, the bows, the arrows, the handspikes, the spears, burn them with fire for seven years and they won't need any wood out of the field in order to warm themselves because they'll use the weapons to burn." Well, just as a little footnote to begin our thinking, it was quite interesting to me when I recently was given an article that stated two very fascinating facts. Number one, that there is an inexplicable appearance in the nation of Israel right now, going on this very year, of a certain kind of vulture that has never been seen before. And they are proliferating in an incredibly rapid rate. According to the people of Israel, a vulture lays one egg at a time and these vultures lay four eggs at a time, so there is a triple increase in the population of ravenous birds occurring in Israel today. It's interesting.

In addition to that, I was interested also to read in this article put out by the Roiter's News Agency, which is a Dutch news agency, that they have developed a new material called "lingostone(?)." And lingostone is a substitute for metal and it is made out of wood. How interesting. And that since the Russians know the tactical inadvisability of building tanks and other large guns out of metal because metal can be so easily detected by sophisticated scanning devices, they are designing their instruments out of lingostone which is wood which cannot be picked up by tactical devices. Well, that seems a little more realistic when you consider Ezekiel's prophecy because it would be a little difficult to burn that metal as fire wood.

There are many things that are occurring in our world today that make us wonder if Jesus isn't coming very very soon. And so we look at the book of Zechariah, not with a sort of indifferent eye,

but with a great amount of interest. And as we come to the ninth chapter, and we hear the prophet Zechariah--we can go back to that place now--begin to tell us what is going to happen when Messiah comes, it can have much more meaning if we understand that it could be well in our life time that this indeed occurs. We know it's coming, don't we? We believe it could be very near.

Now Zechariah in the ninth chapter writes about the overthrow of world power and the establishment of Jesus Christ as the King. In fact, from chapter 9 through 14, which is the end of the book, from 9 to 14, that whole section is prophecy related to what I call the downfall of the nations and the salvation of Israel. The whole end of the book, the downfall of the nations and the salvation of Israel.

Now let me set the scene for you by way of reminding you. Remember now that when Zechariah lived, the children of Israel had just returned from the Babylonian captivity. They had come back to a land that was just in rubble. It had been destroyed and it had been taken off for 70 years of captivity. They had come back and they had begun to rebuild but they had been halted in the process and their land was pretty well a shambles. It was in ruins. The former glory was only a memory. The nations all around them were not only indifferent but threatening because there was no way that they would be able to defend themselves against an attack. They knew nothing of what they had once known and so God wanted to encourage them to rebuild the city and to encourage them with the fact that He was still their God and He was still on their side and He would still take care of them and He would still protect them. And so He sent along two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, both of them were to encourage the people to return and continue the building. And both of them were saying to the people, "God will be with you, God will help you rebuild, the city will be restored, the nation will be protected, you will gain a measure of reputation back that you used to have. God will take care of you."

And so, Zechariah begins his marvelous letter in chapter 1 and verse 13 by saying, "And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comforting words." This book was written to be a comfort to Israel. And verse 17, "Cry yet saying, Thus saith the Lord of host, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad and the Lord shall comfort Zion and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

In other words, the message was a comforting message, like Isaiah 40 where Isaiah says, "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people Israel." God is comforting them in the confidence that though they've come back from captivity, though their land is a rubble, their great and glorious city of Jerusalem is in ruins, though this is true, God is going to comfort them in restoring all the things that are needful.

And so, all throughout those first nine chapters, we heard the message of Zechariah as he said, "God is with you...God will help you rebuild." And then as we move to the ninth chapter through the fourteenth chapter, that vision expands into a prophetic future. And what the prophet now sees is not the immediate rebuilding of Jerusalem in the time of Zechariah, but the great restoration of the whole Kingdom of God that comes in the end times. And so he just moves in one great giant step from history to the fulfillment of prophecy at the end of the age. And so, the emphasis here is that God loves Israel and that because God loves Israel, He will fulfill His promise. And His promise is not only to rebuild Israel historically, but His promise is to fulfill the promise of the Kingdom in the end time and that becomes the theme of the end of this wonderful prophecy.

So God...and I want you to note this in your thinking...God had promised them a temporal restoration. God had promised them a historical city that would be built, and it was built just a few

decades after Zechariah's time. God promised them that and He made it come to pass. But notice this, this was only designed by God...mark it...as a token or a pledge of what God was planning to do in the end. It was simply a way to prove to them that God meant His promises. So that every Jew from then on could say, "Well, when somebody asks me whether God will bring a Kingdom, I remember that He also said He would restore our city in history and He did that and if He kept His word then, I have confidence He'll keep His Word in the future." And we'll see this as we go through the text, but this is something you want to remember in studying the Old Testament. Very, very frequently whenever God gave a future prophecy, He also at the very same time gave an historical element to that prophecy so that there would be like a signpost along the way and when they saw the historical part come to pass, they would then believe God for the future prophetic element. We'll see that as we move.

Now the final section is divided into two parts. I'm just going to give you a little logistics here in about 15 seconds. Part number one is 9 through 11 and in that, the prophet deals with the political setting up of the Kingdom. He deals with the politics of it, the destruction of the nations, establishing of Israel in priority and prominence, etc. Nine to 11 primarily deals with the political element. Now, 12 through 14 is primarily emphasizing the spiritual or the salvation of the nation, drawing them back to God.

So, as we begin in chapter 9, although we'll see salvation here, the main emphasis is on the political picture. Now remember, God often when referring to a future promise or a future judgment secured people's faith and confidence that it would happen in the future by adding an immediate or more immediate historical fulfillment so that they could see tangibly a token of God's promise for a long long distant future.

In Daniel's case, an illustration. Daniel prophesied the Antichrist in the end time but he also prophesied the coming of a willful king not many years after he lived who did come and his name was Antiochus Epiphanes. He was the Greek who was prophesied by Daniel. So at one and the same time, you have Daniel picturing the Antichrist way at the end of history, and yet not so far from him predicting another man who came and desecrated the temple by the name of Antiochus Epiphanes. And Antiochus, you see, is given in the prophecy as a signpost so that when people say, "Well, that part came to pass," they'll say, "Well then the next part is also guaranteed by the token of God's fulfillment of part number one." So very often in prophecy, you have a localized or historical element which keeps us on the track and keeps our confidence up that what God promised for the future, He will also perform. So God connects us to the future with historical fulfillments.

Now let's look at chapter 9 and I want to just distinguish between two major points. This I have called "the saga of two conquerors...the saga of two conquerors." Conqueror number one is in verses 1 to 8; conqueror number two is in verses 9 to 17 in this chapter...the saga of two conquerors.

Now mark this, conqueror number one is predicted, listen, as the historical element of the prophecy to keep you on the track. The real message is conqueror number two. But God gives the first prophecy which we can look back at and know was fulfilled to the very letter as a guarantee or a pledge or a token that He's going to fulfill part two.

Now the first conqueror I call a "human" conqueror because that's what he is. Verses 1 to 8, his name is not given in the text but his name is readily obvious, Alexander the Great...Alexander the Great. And here is the whole idea. God predicts the details of the conquering of Alexander the Great and says this human conqueror will come and when you see him, you can know that you're on the

right track to seeing the fulfillment of part two. But there's a further element. It's this, Alexander the Great, now watch this, who was an unrighteous, ungodly pagan and he was only a human being was used by God as an agent to destroy the nations and to save Israel. Now mark that. A pagan godless apostate human being named Alexander the Great was a tool of God to punish or judge the nations and to save Israel. And in so doing, he is a picture of what the future Christ will be. And the message the prophet is giving is this, if God can judge the nations and save Israel, and do it through a godless pagan human being, imagine what He will do in the end time through God in human flesh...the divine conqueror when He comes. Now that's the thrust.

Let's look at verse 1 and see the human conqueror. "The burden of the Word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach and Damascus shall be its rest when the eyes of man as of all the tribes of Israel shall be toward the Lord." One thing about the Old Testament, you need me because some of it's really hard to find. You say, "That's a wonderful verse. You won't know what that has done in my life." Well, it does say something, let's see if we can understand what it says.

I always start by looking at each word. And the first word I looked up was "burden" and it's the word massa. And it means to take up or lift up and it was a word that was used as a burden, a heavy burden. You lifted up and you take it up. And it came to be used for something that was a great burden on the back of a prophet. And he would literally take up a cause and he would unbear his heart, he would unbear his burden, he would declare a woe, or a heavy judgment. And the word came to be synonymous with a prediction of a threatening act of judgment, a judgment oracle, a judgment prediction, a judgment prophecy. So here is the prophecy of judgment, the messa on the mind of Zechariah.

This particular judgment is coming from the Word of the Lord to the land of Hadrach. Now this is a very obscure place. We don't really know what this is. Archaeologically we can't really dogmatically identify Hadrach. Some think it is the ancient village of Hatarica(?) which is similar mentioned in the annals of the Syrian kings which was around Damascus in the Syrian area to the east and north of Palestine. From the Sea of Galilee you'd go east and north a little.

But there's another explanation that's very interesting. If you take the two terms, had and rach, had means sharp and rach means soft. And so it is the sharp soft. You say, "What does that have to do with anything?" Well, one of the finest Old Testament scholars Lupold(?) says that this is no doubt a reference to the dual kingdom that existed in that day which was the kingdom of the Medes and what? The Persians. The Medo- Persian Kingdom...you see, the Medes were sharp, they were like swords, they were the conquerors that produced Cyrus and Darius. And the Persians were the effeminate softies that turned the whole thing into a debauchery. In fact, the Persians became a synonym for effeminacy...something like we talked about this morning. And so it may well be that in a veiled way, you have the Medes and the Persians hidden in the Hebrew word Hadrach. And the reason it's hidden here is so that they don't start a war when Zechariah pronounces the prophecy. That's a possibility. So it's either a place or it's a title for the Medo-Persian area. But no matter what, it's talking about the area of Syria, the Medo-Persian area. It is either a name in general for that or a specific city Hatarica(?) which was written of in the Syrian ancient writings.

You'll notice also though that the center of it, the place where this judgment is going to rest, is in Damascus. Now Damascus is a famous city, maybe the most ancient city in the world. It's really a thrill to go there. I've been there. And the only city I know of, this is funny, but do you know that one of the funny things about Damascus is that the Arabs built a train station, a huge big train depot right

in the middle of town, great huge thing and they have no railroad in the entire country. Isn't that interesting? I thought that was interesting. I have nothing else to say about it, that's it, folks.

But Damascus is a very very ancient city. And that city was to be the seat where this judgment fell. Now this was one of Israel's worst enemies. Syria, in which the capital was Damascus, from the time about 900 to 721 B.C. was a terrible fearful opponent of Israel. And so the resting place or the target of judgment is going to be Damascus and it will hit Damascus and then it will spread.

Now this is precisely where Alexander comes into the picture. At the battle of Issus, incidentally, the battle of Issus is a very very famous battle, 333 B.C. This battle in southeast Asia Minor, Alexander defeated Darius, the Medes defeated the Persians and began to break the back of the Medo-Persian Empire. And immediately when he defeated them, that just threw open the door to Syria. And Alexander then moved east from Greece and he moved through Syria. And when he had knocked off Syria, Damascus and Hadrach in that area, he then swept to the coast and he got to the Phoenician countries and he swept through the Phoenician countries and he came to the south part of what we know as the land of Israel to the Philistine cities and he swept through there and he was on his way to Egypt...on his way to conquer the great powers of the world. Lightning swift conquests moving toward Egypt occurred after he had won the battle of Issus and broken the back of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Now the Holy Spirit here in this chapter reveals the whole plan to us...the whole battle plan is here. And incidentally, this is written centuries before Alexander was born. That's why it doesn't name him. He didn't exist. And yet every detail of his crusade is here.

Now first he defeats the Medes and the Persians and he knocks off this city of Damascus. And with it, notice verse 2, Hamath. And Hamath is also a very very important city. Hamath was like a territory within the Medo-Persian Empire which was like a kingdom state and Hamath was the capital city. It may be well that the modern village of Hama(?) is the place where ancient Hamath existed. So he comes in and for all intents and purposes, he just wipes out Syria, the great power of Syria, the great city of Damascus.

Now you'll notice at the end of verse 1, it says, "When the eyes of man as of all the tribes of Israel shall be toward the Lord." Now he says, this judgment is going to come and when it comes, the eyes of mankind, in Hebrew...in other words, human kind, people, the eyes of people, the eyes of mankind. This is a collective thing. As well as the eyes of the tribes of Israel shall be toward the Lord. Now you say, "What does that mean?" Just this, that when Alexander began to sweep to the east, the whole world in fear began to fix their gaze on him. The Gentile countries, Syria, Phoenicia, the great sailors of the world, the merchants of the world, Philistia, the great army, those nations began to look at Alexander with fear and trembling, and even Egypt and Pharaoh was shaking in his boots. And the tribes of Israel were looking.

You say, "But, John, it says here they were looking toward the Lord." And that's the whole point here. The point is that in looking at Alexander, they were seeing the instrument of God, you see. They were seeing the Lord coming in judgment through this man. God throughout history has used ungodly men to act in judgment. Read the book of Habakkuk, God uses the Chaldeans, the ungodly Chaldeans as His instruments. And you remember how Cyrus, Cyrus who was an ungodly pagan was used by God to open the door to lead Israel back to its land. God again and again has used the ungodly. Do you know that even Herod became a servant of the Lord, didn't he? In his own unwitting

foolish rebellion against God, God used him to bring about what ultimately amounted to the death of Jesus Christ, the act that redeemed all the redeemed of all the ages. God has always used the wrath of men to praise Him, God has often used pagan people to bring about His judgment. And He uses Alexander the Great. Alexander the Great, before you want to give him all the credit, was a tool of God to accomplish God's judgment against pagan nations. He was simply God's servant.

And if you want to see a further word, look at verse 4. When he went down and did all of this, it says, "Behold the Lord will cast her out." It never mentions Alexander. The prediction is that God is going to do this. First Syria, then Phoenicia, then Philistia on the way to Egypt and so forth, and we'll see how it unfolds. And by the way, there is no Bible commentator that I read, and I think I read about 13 commentaries on this, that ever says anything other than this must be Alexander the Great because this is a chronicle of his massive march through that area. There can be no other explanation. The details are all here. But it's the Lord in judgment. And you can't help but feel that this is a foreshadowing of what Zechariah's going to get into when he talks about the final divine conqueror.

Verse 2, after he's done with Syria, it says at the end of verse 2, "He comes to Tyre and Sidon...Tyre and Sidon though it be very wise."

Now Tyre and Sidon...Sidon, incidentally was a small city, its only significance being in its proximity and attachment to Tyre which was the great city...and Tyre and Sidon were the capital cities of the country of Phoenicia. Phoenicia was the land of the great maritime accomplishments, great ships and ship building and merchantry went on in Phoenicia. This was a great empire. Tyre was the main city and Sidon was seen only as it accommodated itself to Tyre. But even though it was exceedingly wise, and even though verse 3 says Tyre did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver like the dust and fine gold like the mire of the streets, behold the Lord will cast her out and He will smite her power in the sea and she shall be devoured with fire.

Now, you see, this is a marvelous and amazing incredible statement. And we'll see how it comes to pass in a minute. But even though Tyre and Sidon were first of all very wise. They had all worldly wisdom. They really felt themselves invincible, incidentally. They felt nobody could conquer them. You see, years before Alexander ever got there, they had been conquered. And when they were conquered by the Babylonians, they proceeded to move their city from the mainland to an island a half mile off shore. And they had set up housekeeping on that island. And it was a very small island. And it was a fortress. It was literally a rock. And when it says there in verse 3, "Tyre did build herself a stronghold," that's a pun in the Hebrew. It would literally be "Tsuwar did build herself a matsowr--matsuw." "

In other words, it's the same word. Stronghold built herself a stronghold. The city was built on a fortified rock. And then in addition to that, they built a wall around the entire island 150 feet high. How high are these walls in here, Burt? Thirty feet? One-hundred and fifty feet high. That was the wall around Tyre. To say nothing of the fact that it was a half-mile off shore. And nothing to the fact that the Phoenicians were the greatest sailors with the greatest navies in the world to defend it. They felt they were invincible.

But they were evil. It was a vile evil city. To show that to you, look at Ezekiel 28 and I want to show you how bad this place was. You know who really ruled in Tyre? I can tell you. You know who really was the king of Tyre? You know who really was the prince of Tyre? Satan himself ruled Tyre. Ezekiel 28, verse 1, "The word of the Lord came again unto me saying, Son of man, say to the prince of

Tyre, Thus saith the Lord God, because thine heart is lifted up and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God in the midst of the seas, yet thou art a man and not God, though thine set thy heart as the heart of God."

Listen, the human prince really had an ego problem, didn't he? "I am a God, he says. I am invincible. I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the sea. Nobody can do anything with me." And he attacks this proud king.

But I want you to notice something in verse 11. All of a sudden there's a dramatic change and the Spirit of God goes behind the human prince to the real power. "Moreover the word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyre and say to him, Thus saith the Lord God, thou sealest up the sum full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God." Who was the most beautiful angel, the one that appeared in Eden? Satan. "Every precious stone was they covering..." and he lists them. Verse 14, "Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth and I have set thee so, thou wast on the holy mountain of God, thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire," he was in heaven. "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day thou was created till iniquity was found in thee." You see, this is Satan.

You want to know something? Satan is not omnipresent, he can only be at one place at one time and he chose to set up his kingdom in Tyre. That will give you some idea of how rotten it is. And before you judge God for judging these nations, you have to realize what they had stooped to. Satan was the king of Tyre. The man who was the human instrument was a possessed man, possessed by the devil himself. So corrupted, so God-opposing, so dishonoring, so debauched that God used Alexander the Great to judge. So though they were smart...and by the way, they were fortified...and by the way, they were loaded with money...they piled up silver and gold like the dust. Now that's a lot. There was as much silver and gold in there as there was dirt. Incredibly wealthy place. In fact, Isaiah 23:4 calls it the stronghold of the sea. They were proud, they were invincible and they were wealthy. But worldly wisdom and natural strength and fortification and material resources are absolutely useless when God comes in judgment, right? No defense.

Verse 4, "Behold, the Lord will cast her out and He will smite her power in the sea and she shall be devoured with fire." Want to know something? Every single detail in that verse was accomplished by Alexander the Great. He came there and he got very upset. He sent a boat out and said, "I want supplies from you," and they said, "Forget it, Alexander, who are you?" So he took all the rubble that was left from the city, the ancient city, threw it in the sea and he built a causeway, one half mile. He built a causeway, that's how serious he was about this. He got real irritated. He did it in seven months. And he marched his army out there and defeated the city. He also got all of the surrounding nations which he had conquered to get all of their navies together and used them to help in the effort...in seven months. Listen, Shalmaneser couldn't do it in five years. He did it in seven months. Nebuchadnezzar couldn't do it in 13 years. He did it in seven months because it was time for God's judgment, see. The city came crashing down. It was the end. Today there is absolutely nothing there of any significance whatsoever.

You see what God is saying here, He's saying, "Look, people, I'm going to judge the nations in the end. I'm going to come in judgment with My Messiah and just to show you I can do it with the Messiah, look what I could do with a pagan. I could knock off the most fortified impregnable invincible city in the world. Now when My Messiah comes, there will be no escaping." You see the point? And so when this came to pass with Alexander the Great, it was like a great big signpost saying, "You're

on the right track, God will keep His promise." He kept it here in part one of the prophecy, you can be sure for part two.

Now he's done with Syria, wiped them out. He's done with Phoenicia, wiped them out. Moving south, the next place he comes is to Philistia. Verse 5, "Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza shall see it and be very sorrowful, Ekron, for her expectations shall be ashamed and the king shall perish from Gaza and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines." Now stop there for a second.

By now the Philistines are shaking in the proverbial sandals. They have watched Alexander wipe out the Medo-Persian power in the battle of Issus. They have seen him sweep with lightning swiftness to the east. They have seen him do in Syria. And in seven months, wipe out an impregnable fortress and take for all intents and purposes the whole nation of Phoenicia. And now they see him coming south and they panic and they have well right to panic because he comes right to Philistia and accomplishes the same thing. He conquered them.

In fact, it's most interesting that history records something of Alexander's defeat of Gaza in detail. It says in this verse, "The king shall perish from Gaza," and do you know that in the annals of Alexander which we have, that is exactly what happened? You see, all the other cities kind of went down easy, they didn't want to get too involved in fighting Alexander, they did the best they could for a little while, they gave up. But Gaza tried to resist and it took him five months to get to Gaza. And by the end of the five months, he was very angry. And sort of to show his anger, he gave them no semi-independence which he did for nations that knuckled under. And he took their king, took great spikes and drilled holes through the feet of the king, wrapped thongs through the holes and dragged him through the streets of the city till he was dead. The annals of Alexander even give his name, his name is Batis, B-e-t-i-s, or B- e-a-t-i-s, either one, we see it in both ways. Exactly what verse 5 said...hundreds of years before Alexander was ever born. You understand the meaning of that?

And it says in verse 6, "and a bastard," a mamzer in Hebrew, a foreigner, a mongrel people "shall dwell in Ashdod." In other words, the Philistines would lose their country to some kind of scavengers, some mongrel people. Why? Because they were proud and God broke their pride with Alexander. They've never been anything since. Their name doesn't even exist.

But you know something? There's a little bit of grace in verse 7 because even in the terrible destruction of the Philistines, there was something good. Verse 7 says, "And the purging that occurs to the Philistines will cause this, I'll take away his blood out of his mouth and his abominations from between his teeth, but he that remaineth, even he shall be for our God, he shall be like a governor in Judah and Ekron like a Jebusite."

Now I want you to get the idea here. The Philistine nation in verse 7 is pictured like a man. Okay? Like a man. Now this man has blood in his mouth and abominations between his teeth. You say, "What's that?" Philistines in their pagan worship used to make blasphemous sacrifices. And they would drink the blood and eat the sacrificial meat. You know, like in 1 Corinthians 10, men offered to idols and drinking blood...Acts 17 talks about the pagans that did that. And so they were doing that. Literally drinking blood and eating abominating sacrifices. And he says here that this purging by God, this use of Alexander to wipe out their country will cause them to spit out their idolatry, to take the blood out of their mouths and the abominations from between their teeth, and he that remains, those who remain after this shall be for our God.

You know what it had? It had an actually a redeeming effect on a remnant of the Philistines so that at the time of Alexander, some of the Philistines turned to God. You know, in any time of God's judgment, there's always a place for the repentant remnant, isn't there? Yes. Remember in Malachi when God said I'm going to come in judgment and some gathered together and began to pray. And He said, "Oh, I haven't forgotten you, I have a book of remembrance for you and you shall be Mine in the day that I make up My jewel." God always remembers the repentant no matter what the circumstance of judgment. And so he says, this is going to have a good effect, they'll spit out their idols, they'll be taken out of their mouths and the remaining ones shall be for our God and they'll become like a...literally a chiliarch, like a thousand ruler or like a commander, a man who has authority over a thousand in Judah. They'll become like a ruler in Judah. They'll become, really what he's saying, important. They'll become like a big shot. They'll move into Judah...

You say, "Well, were proselytes in those days looked down on?" No, no, no. Don't you see what he's saying here? These Philistines, as pagan as they were, once they spit out their idols and come to God, they will be in Israel like a ruler, see. God exalts that. God didn't just say, "Well, I know you're a pagan, you can come in, you're not an Israelite, you can find a place in the back there..." No. He made them a ruler over thousands, as it were.

And he says they'll make Ekron, which is the symbol of the people of Philistia, from the city of Ekron like Jebusites. You say, "What is that?" You remember who dwelled in the city of Jerusalem when David took it? Jebusites. And when David took the city and made it the city of God, many of the Jebusites believed in the true God and they remained in that city. And he's saying the same thing here. They're going to be accepted just like the Jebusites. So literally there would be a revival there and there would be those who would be a part of Israel's life because they worshiped Israel's God and it would be not unlike 2 Samuel 24 where you have Araunah who was the Jebusite who became a respected and beloved friend of David.

So, judgment is coming, says Zechariah. And it's going to come in a marvelous way. It's going to come sweeping to the east through Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia and south to Israel. And nobody but nobody in history can fulfill that except Alexander the Great and he did. It's one of the greatest signposts of prophecy in the Bible.

You say, "Well, I've got a little hunch in my mind that I know who's next in line. See, if you go right south, Phoenicia, Philistia...next stop, Jerusalem." You're right...you're right. I'm not going to tell you to come back next week, let's look at verse 8. "And I will encamp about Mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by and because of him that returneth and no oppressor shall pass through them anymore for now I have seen with Mine eyes." This is God talking.

Now let me take you to the first part of the verse. The first part of the verse is amazing in that it precisely describes the exact advance against Palestine. If you want to check it, volume 11 of Josephus, section eight-dash-three. Jewish historian. Watch this...notice it says, "God will encamp about mine house." What would that be? Where was God's dwelling place? Jerusalem. And God would encamp and the army would pass by and then it would do what? Return. Most interesting. Alexander, and you notice this?, they would never conquer Jerusalem, God would encamp it and protect it. Says nothing about a conquering of Jerusalem. Mine house, God will encamp.

Here's what happened. Alexander sent word to the Jewish high priest at that time, whose name was Jaddua, J-a-d-d-u-a. And he said, "You must pay tribute to me." Well, Jaddua was caught between a rock and a hard place because he had his allegiance to Persia because Persia was ruling the world at that time and it was just in the middle of the conquering there. And so he refused to do that. Well, Alexander went in a rage and he said, "I'm coming and I'm going to destroy Jerusalem to its foundations as soon as I'm finished with the rest of these cities on the way."

So, after taking Gaza and dragging King Betis clear through town, wiping out that, he planned to go to Jerusalem. And the high priest called all the people of Israel together, according to Josephus, and he demanded that they all sacrifice to God and fall on their knees and pray for deliverance. And one night God gave the high priest a dream and He told him in the dream to go out and meet Alexander on the road and welcome him to the city...which would have been a little strange. So he did.

So, Alexander and his army were marching along to the city and the high priest went out to meet him. And he led a procession. The high priest put on his purple robes and his scarlet robes and his miter with its gold and the inscription, the name of God engraved. He had all the attendant priests and, you know, there were priests and priests and priests and priests and priests all over the place in Israel. So many priests that you could only serve, if you're lucky, once a year because you had to wait your turn...so many of them. They were all there, marching in white. And when he saw this, he was literally bowled over by it and he saluted with respect to God and he bent down and bowed and he said that he had recently had a dream while he was in Macedonia and in that dream he had seen this very priest and this procession. And as a result, he said, "I'll treat Jerusalem with kindness." He passed by to Egypt. He returned right back by again and never touched the hair of a head of anybody in Jerusalem.

Isn't that what it says in verse 8 would happen? "I will encamp about My house because of the army, because of him that passeth by and because of him that returneth. And no oppressor shall pass through them anymore. For now I have seen with Mine eyes." Isn't it interesting? Alexander..watch this one...judged the nations but he also was used to save the city of Jerusalem. And what God is saying in this text is, if God can use a pagan king in such a miraculous way to judge the ungodly and to save God's people, imagine what He can do with a divine King yet to come in the future. The judgment will be all the greater, as much greater as Christ is than Alexander and the salvation will be all the greater, as much greater as Christ is than Alexander. He was really the Lord...the "I will" here refers to the Lord.

Now in the middle of verse 8, and I have to note this, we bridge the centuries. We literally bridge the centuries because when it says "and no oppressor shall pass through them anymore," that can only refer to the Second Coming and there is the transition in the chapter. All of a sudden the Holy Spirit takes us in a huge leap from Alexander to Jesus Christ. And when Jesus comes and destroys the nations and saves His people, then no oppressor will ever pass through them anymore for God has seen with His eyes. In other words, the sight of God toward Israel, all of the affliction has been enough and God says, "I've seen all I'm going to see, it's all over. It's all peace from here on out. It's all the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Kingdom, the glory from here on."

And so, we see the human conqueror and he's just a signpost to keep our eyes on the fact that if that part of the prophecy was fulfilled, believe me, the second part will be also. Jesus will come and He will judge the nations in a judgment infinitely beyond anything Alexander ever dreamed with a might and a power beyond the conception of man so that the whole earth will literally fall in judgment. And

Alexander is a signpost of salvation, as we see him save and spare the people of Israel, so shall we see in the day that Jesus comes that He'll spare His people Israel. And the Bible says He'll redeem Israel and give them their Kingdom. And that's the story of the rest of the chapter and that's for next week. Let's pray together.

I think of the words of the Apostle Paul, Father, as we close tonight, that we have been translated from this evil world into the Kingdom of Your dear Son. We know He's coming. You know He's coming to judge the ungodly. We know He's coming to save His people. Father, we say with the Apostle John, "Even so, come Lord Jesus," we're ready. The vultures are circling. Israel is in the land. Evil seems to have reached its ultimate. The signs of the times are clear on the horizon. And sometimes we almost think we can hear the footfalls of the coming King. We pray, Father, tonight that there's no one in this place who is not ready for when He comes, who would be left out of the wonderful Kingdom, who would be food for the ravenous birds, fuel for the fires when in Your sweet grace as You called out to a repentant remnant in Philistia, You call out to any and all who come to You and You say, "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I'll give you rest." We know You've prepared Your Kingdom for all who will come. We pray tonight that some who have never yet come will come tonight, open their heart and their arms to receive Jesus Christ who alone can take them by the hand and lead them into Your glorious Kingdom.

Father, we thank You that it isn't just a Kingdom for Israel, but it's a Kingdom also for all the saints of all the ages to share. We pray that all of us in this place tonight will be there because we've put our faith in You. And, Father, too, if we have, we pray that You'll give us a fresh and a new commitment to speak boldly to those who will not be in that Kingdom if it were to happen now, because they have never received Christ. Thank You that we're Kingdom people, make us Kingdom witnesses that we may go out on the byways and the highways and compel them to come and feast with the King, to join the marriage supper.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment, no one looking around, just in your own heart, I want to close by saying this: If you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ tonight, the message that we've just given gives you from the Word of God a great message about the fact that God has history in His power. And history comes to its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ who will set up a Kingdom, an eternal Kingdom, for all those who love Him and for all who do not, He'll cast them out. If you've never invited Jesus Christ into your life, if you've never declared Him Lord of your life, if you've never received Him as Savior, right where you sit right now, why don't you do that? Just between you and God, the simplest prayer, the simplest call to Him and He'll respond. If that's the desire of your heart tonight, I trust you'll do it. And the rest of us, that we'll make a new commitment to speak of the Kingdom like Jesus went everywhere preaching and teaching the Kingdom...we might go to this world and announce that indeed the King is coming, call people to be a part of His Kingdom.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2017 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).

