

ZECHARIAH: GOD'S PRESENT DIRECTIVES AND FUTURE HOPE

XIII: God's Protection Of Israel From Alexander The Great

(Zechariah 9:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Zechariah along with Haggai called the returning Hebrews back to rebuilding the temple, and he gave God's directives and future hope. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Book of Zechariah," p. 1310)
- B. Zechariah chapters 9-14 present two "burdens" or oracles, with Zechariah 9-11 predicting Messiah's first advent and rejection by Israel and Zechariah 12-14 His second advent and acceptance by Israel.
- C. Zechariah 9:1-8 sets the stage for Messiah's first advent, foretelling God's guarding His temple from harm by Alexander the Great in preparation of Messiah's arrival. We view the passage for our insight and application:

II. God's Protection Of Israel From Alexander The Great, Zechariah 9:1-8.

- A. Daniel 9:25 had already predicted that Jerusalem would be rebuilt in preparation for the coming of Messiah, so the city and temple had to be protected by God for the Messiah to arrive at the rebuilt city itself.
- B. However, the coming world conquest by Alexander the Great with its catastrophic destructions presented a threat to the survival of a reconstructed Jerusalem, so the prophecy of Zechariah 9:1-8 addressed this threat:
 1. The sudden rise and ominous advance of Greece's world conqueror Alexander the Great in the Gentile nations near Israel is described in Zechariah 9:1-7 (as follows):
 - a. "Hadrach," what was ancient Hatarika, an Aramean country near Damascus and Hamath, fell to Alexander the Great in his devastating advance, Zechariah 9:1a; Merrill F. Unger, Zechariah, 1974, p. 152-153.
 - b. Next to fall were the key towns of Damascus and Hamath, what would cause the eyes of mankind as well as the eyes of all the tribes of Israel to look upon the Lord since the Lord was simply using Alexander the Great's conquests as punishment for the sins of these Gentiles, Zechariah 9:1b-2a; *Ibid.*, p. 153.
 - c. Tyre and Sidon, known for their arrogant wisdom, came under God's judgment, too, with Tyre being described as being dispossessed of her great wealth, having her power being smitten in the sea and being burned with fire, Zechariah 9:2b-4. In the historical record, when Tyre "resisted Alexander, he besieged it for seven months and, by building a mole out to it" since it had long been an unconquerable island, he "directed new siege engines against it . . . amassed a great navy from nearby city states" and "took the proud metropolis after a siege of seven months, doing what no one else had ever done," including Assyria's "Shalmaneser" and Babylon's "Nebuchadnezzar," *Ibid.*, p. 155. Zechariah 9:4a claims that God did this to Tyre by using Alexander the Great as His instrument to administer judgment against the city.
 - d. The Philistines in Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod would then face Alexander's devastating invasion by foreigners so that the pride of the Philistines, long-time foes of Israel, would be destroyed, v. 5-6 NIV.
 - e. God would take away the idolatry of the remaining remnant of the Philistines, what is figuratively noted in the removal of polluted idolatrous foods from between their teeth, and they would one day be incorporated in with God's people of Israel like Ekron the Jebusite in David's day who became a "distinguished citizen and friend of David (2 Samuel 24:15-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-29," Zechariah 9:7; *Ibid.*, p. 156-157.
 2. Yet, in great contrast to the plight of these Gentiles, God would "carefully protect and preserve His own people for the coming of Messiah their Savior and eventual World Conqueror," *Ibid.*, p. 157; Zech. 9:8:
 - a. God predicted that He would encamp around His temple to guard it from the army of Alexander the Great who passed by Jerusalem (to conquer Egypt) and returned (from having conquered Egypt), Zechariah 9:8a.
 - b. This prophecy was fulfilled in a dramatic way: Secular Hebrew historian Josephus wrote that Alexander had ordered the Hebrew high priest to pay him the tribute money he had been paying to Alexander's main foe, king Darius of Persia. However, the high priest refused, remaining loyal to Darius, so an infuriated Alexander threatened severely to harm Jerusalem. When Alexander approached the city, the high priest, led by a dream, walked out to welcome him, and when Alexander saw the high priest in formal attire, he recalled a dream he himself once had of a man dressed like him, so Alexander treated the high priest and Jerusalem well, *Ibid.*, p. 157. When Alexander returned from Egypt, he again did not harm Jerusalem!
 - c. This rescue signified God's final deliverance of the city at Christ's second advent, v. 8b; *Ibid.*, p. 159-160.

Lesson: *Though God used Alexander the Great to level severe destruction on other sinful Gentiles, He protected Israel from harm even though the high priest retained his loyalty to Greece's arch enemy, the king of Persia!*

Application: *May we trust God to guard His people and His interests in His people from even powerful civil rulers.*