

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 9

Judgment on Israel's Enemies

An Oracle

The word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and will rest upon Damascus— for the eyes of men and all the tribes of Israel are on the LORD—² and upon Hamath too, which borders on it, and upon Tyre and Sidon, though they are very skillful. ³ Tyre has built herself a stronghold; she has heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets. ⁴ But the Lord will take away her possessions and destroy her power on the sea, and she will be consumed by fire. ⁵ Ashkelon will see it and fear; Gaza will writhe in agony, and Ekron too, for her hope will wither. Gaza will lose her king and Ashkelon will be deserted. ⁶ Foreigners will occupy Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. ⁷ I will take the blood from their mouths, the forbidden food from between their teeth. Those who are left will belong to our God and become leaders in Judah, and Ekron will be like the Jebusites. ⁸ But I will defend my house against marauding forces. Never again will an oppressor overrun my people, for now I am keeping watch.

9:1–8 Probably a prophetic description of the Lord's march south to Jerusalem, destroying the traditional enemies of Israel. As history shows, the agent of his judgment was Alexander the Great (333 B.C.). (CSB)

9:1 Some interpreters question whether a different author wrote chs 9–14 because of dissimilarities in vocabulary and style. (TLSB)

An Oracle/The word of the LORD. The Hebrew for this phrase occurs only two other times in the OT (12:1; Mal 1:1), making it likely that Zec 9–14 and Malachi were written during the same general period (see Introduction: Date). (CSB)

burden. Hbr *massa* ' , may be translated "oracle." (TLSB)

Hadrach. Hatarikka, north of Hamath on the Orontes River (see v. 2). (CSB)

Not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible, but Assyrian military records identify Hadrach as a country near Damascus. (TLSB)

A term which seems to apply to the entire Medo-Persian empire, as the world-power opposed to the people of God. (Kretzmann)

Damascus. The leading city-state of the Arameans. (CSB)

Capital of Syria, c 60 mi NE of the Sea of Chinnereth. (TLSB)

its resting place. The “burden of the word” rested on Damascus. (TLSB)

eyes ... on the LORD. The thought may be that the eyes of men, especially all the tribes of Israel, are turned toward the Lord (for deliverance). (CSB)

The Lord’s vision was international, seeing all nations of the world. (TLSB)

Both the people outside of Israel, and Israel itself are being directed to the Lord at this evidence of His anger, when He goes about to establish a more equitable proportion between His people and the heathen. (Kretzmann)

9:2 *upon Hamath too.* Judgment will rest upon Hamath, just as upon Hadrach and Damascus. Hamath is modern Hama. See Am 6:2. (CSB)

City on the Orontes River, c 150 mi N of Damascus. (TLSB)

it. Damascus. (CSB)

Tyre and Sidon. Phoenician (modern Lebanese) coastal cities. Their judgment (vv. 3–4) is also foretold in Isa 23; Eze 26:3–14; 28:20–24; Am 1:9–10. (CSB)

Tyre. Important Phoenician city; port on the Great Sea, c 35 mi NW of the Sea of Chinnereth. Tyre was a trade center for goods from Persia, Greece, Egypt, and other countries. Resting partly on an island, Tyre built strong walls and was able to hold out against many enemy attacks. *Sidon.* Phoenician city on the Great Sea, c 20 mi N of Tyre. (TLSB)

THEY ARE VERY SKILLFUL – Or, “because their inhabitants were wise in their own conceit,” multiplying wealth and power and trusting in them. (Kretzmann)

Despite the earthly wisdom of these two prominent cities, the Lord’s “burden” fell on them. (TLSB)

9:3 *stronghold.* The Hebrew for this word is a pun on the Hebrew for “Tyre” (meaning “rock”). The stronghold was Tyre’s island fortress (Isa 23:4; Eze 26:5). It fell (v. 4) to Alexander in 332 B.C. (CSB)

rampart. Defensive fortification of strong, thick walls. (TLSB)

The city proper being on an island surrounded by a double sea-wall, which made it practically impregnable in those days. (Kretzmann)

silver like dust ... gold like the dirt. Cf. 1Ki 10:21, 27. Tyre was a center of trade and commerce, and her wealth was proverbial (see Isa 23:2–3, 8, 18; Eze 26:12; 27:3–27, 33; 28:4–5, 7, 12–14, 16–18). (CSB)

9:4 *strip ... strike ... be devoured.* Commerce had made Tyre a rich city (v 3), but such treasures could not spare it from God’s judgment. In 332 BC, Alexander the Great conquered and sacked the city after a seven-month siege. (TLSB)

God will seize her through the agency of some earthly conqueror, in this case Alexander, He will destroy her army and her navy. Everything on which her inhabitants depended was consumed and exterminated. (Kretzmann)

9:5–7 The Philistine cities were greatly alarmed at Alexander’s steady advance. (CSB)

These are four of the five major Philistine cities (Gad is not mentioned), all located near the coast of the Great Sea, between 20 and 40 miles W of Jerusalem. Hearing of the destruction of Tyre and Sidon, these cities would wither in fear, knowing that the Lord’s “burden” was coming on them. (TLSB)

9:5 *her hope will wither.* As the northernmost city of Philistia, Ekron would be the first to suffer. Her hope that Tyre would stem the tide would meet with disappointment. (CSB)

9:6 *Foreigners.* People of mixed nationality; they characterized the postexilic period (Ne 13:23–24). (CSB)

The Hebrew word is “a bastard.” It suggests an unstable, perhaps incestuous population; not upstanding citizens. (TLSB)

I. God. (CSB)

Philistines. See note on Ge 10:14. At one time their control of Canaan was so extensive that the land was eventually named after them (“Palestine”). (CSB)

The Lord begins a personal address. The people of Philistia, as well as the other places named, were proud of their power and wealth, which they attributed to their false gods. But the Lord had His eye on them, and His burden fell on them. Babylon conquered Ashdod and other cities in the seventh and sixth centuries BC. (TLSB)

9:7 *blood.* Of idolatrous sacrifices. (CSB)

This describes an idolater who is engaged in eating the flesh of his sacrifice, and striking him down while he is engaged in his idolatrous behavior. (Kretzmann)

forbidden food. Ceremonially unclean food. (CSB)

The Lord had commanded Israel to “eat neither fat nor blood” (Lv 3:17). Heathen nations like Philistia observed no such restriction in their worship of idols. The Lord promised to take away false worship. (TLSB)

like a clan in Judah. Judah was made up of many clans, or extended families. The day was coming when people of many different nationalities would become members of God’s great clan, the Church. (TLSB)

Jebusites. These ancient inhabitants of Jerusalem (see note on Ge 10:16) were absorbed into Judah (e.g., Araunah in 2Sa 24:16–24; 1Ch 21:18–26). So would it be with a remnant of the Philistines. (CSB)

The original inhabitants of what became the city of Jerusalem were absorbed into the population (Jsh 15:63), just as foreigners are absorbed into God’s kingdom. (TLSB)

9:8 *defend my house against marauding forces.* See 2:5. Alexander spared the temple and the city of Jerusalem. (CSB)

The Lord pictures Himself camping at the temple to keep watch over His people. (TLSB)

oppressor. The Hebrew for this word is translated “slave driver” in Ex 3:7; 5:6, 10 and elsewhere; thus it echoes the Egyptian bondage motif. (CSB)

keeping watch. See Ex 3:7; Ps 32:8. (CSB)

The Lord’s protective oversight comforted those He had called “the apple of His eye” (2:8). (TLSB)

This is not merely the Temple, but the renewed people, as representative of the Church which was to be established. Enemies will come marching to and fro, looking for an opportunity to attack but no enemy will dare to disturb the Lord’s people, His holy Church. He was exercising His providential control and the power of His mercy. Thus the Lord reigns in the midst of His enemies, overthrowing those who refuse to submit, but always gaining some also for His adherents. (Kretzmann)

The Coming of Zion’s King

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. ¹⁰ I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth. ¹¹ As for you,

because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. ¹² Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you. ¹³ I will bend Judah as I bend my bow and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword.

9:9 Quoted in the NT as Messianic and as referring ultimately to the Triumphant Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Mt 21:5; Jn 12:15). (CSB)

REJOICE GREATLY – Those words remind us of Advent. Here hidden in the words of Zechariah is of Jesus coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as King. It is also a reference for all Christians to the final fulfillment of prophecy when the Lord comes again victoriously with all of His angels. (PBC)

Daughter of Zion. A personification of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. (CSB)

God's people are called to welcome their coming King with joyful shouts (cf 2:10). This is a preview to the depiction of the new Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ (Rv 21:2). (TLSB)

Only the "daughter Zion/Jerusalem," that is, the baptized, the faithful, the elect, understand all this as a cause to "rejoice greatly." As saints we rejoice, even though as sinners still, we are identified with the original crowd in Jerusalem which, only a few days later, shouted "Crucify him." (CSB)

your king. The Davidic ("your") Messianic King. (CSB)

This King is unique, one of a kind, the Messiah. John Wycliffe: "Christ mounted these animals to condemn the riding of pope and cardinals, and of the inferior bishops too, who are wont to ride in superfluous pomp on war-horses decked out with gold and silk" (TT, 190). Luther: "Here there is no violence, no armor, no power, no anger, no wrath... Here there are only kindness, justice, salvation, mercy, and every good thing" (AE 20:94). In His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus gave public proof that He is this promised King (Mt 21:1–11). (TLSB)

It is translated "for you," dative of advantage: He comes for your good. (Leupold)

righteous. Conforming to the divine standard of morality and ethics, particularly as revealed in the Mosaic legislation; a characteristic of the ideal king (see 2Sa 23:3–4; Ps 72:1–3; Isa 9:7; 11:4–5; 53:11; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16). (CSB)

gentle. Or "humble" (cf. Isa 53:2–3, 7; Mt 11:29). (CSB)

Jesus will bring the rampant forces of evil to unconditional surrender. It takes faith to accept this King now. It will not take faith to believe in Him as King when He returns in the clouds of heaven to claim undisputed rule. (PBC)

riding on a donkey. A suitable choice, since the donkey was a lowly animal of peace (contrast the war-horse of v. 10) as well as a princely mount (Jdg 10:4; 12:14; 2Sa 16:2) before the horse came into common use. The royal mount used by David and his sons was the mule (2Sa 18:9; 1Ki 1:33). (CSB)

Israelites typically rode donkeys. Horses were reserved for military use. (TLSB)

This was no ordinary king and his kingdom is not of this world. Donkeys were not used in human wars, and gentleness and humility are not the stuff politics are made of. Christ establishes his kingdom first by dying, and later by rising and ascending. He establishes his kingdom in and among us today through the veiled forms of water, bread, and wine and through the foolishness of preaching.

9:10 *take away the chariots ... war-horses ... battle bow.* A similar era of disarmament is foreseen in Isa 2:4; 9:5–7; 11:1–10; Mic 5:10–11. (CSB)

War tools have no place in the Messiah's kingdom (cf Ps 46:9). (TLSB)

All apparatus of war will be removed, Messiah's rule not being established by physical force, or maintained by military defenses. (PC)

This state will as we know, be achieved in perfection only when the new heavens and the new earth shall have come into existence. (Leupold)

Ephraim.

The former the former represents the 10 northern tribes and the latter is the two tribes of the south (Judah). (PC)

peace to the nations. In sharp contrast to Alexander's empire, which was founded on bloodshed, the Messianic King will establish a universal kingdom of peace as the ultimate fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (cf. 14:16; see Ge 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). (CSB)

God's Word is the "weapon" by which He brings peace. (TLSB)

The peace (shalom) here referred to includes more than the cessation of warfare though that is primarily under consideration in a passage such as this. "Peace" is in itself a much broader concept. It includes that wealth of spiritual treasures which He alone is able to bestow, and which is referred to in the statement: "Peace I leave unto you." (Leupold)

His rule will extend from ... to. It will be universal (see Ps 22:27–28; 72:8–11; Isa 45:22; 52:10; 66:18). (CSB)

ENDS OF THE EARTH – He will extend this peace to all the world, teaching the heathen to receive his spiritual rule. (PC)

Christ’s rule is universal, not limited to geographical boundaries such as earthly kingdoms. We are to be His witnesses “to the end of the earth” (Ac 1:8). (TLSB)

9:11 AS FOR YOU – God gets personal. He makes it clear that he is talking to his chosen people. They are his because of the covenant he established and he intends to keep his promises. Throughout Scripture the covenant is often pictured as a marriage – an intensely intimate relationship. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

blood of my covenant with you. Probably the Mosaic covenant (Ex 24:3–8). (CSB)

The Lord will set Zion’s prisoners free because of His covenant with them, sealed with blood. We have eternal redemption by Christ’s blood (Heb 9:12). (TLSB)

prisoners. Perhaps those still in Babylonia, the land of exile. (CSB)

waterless pit. Cf. Ge 37:24; Jer 38:6. (CSB)

Symbolizes the hopeless condition of one under the curse of the Law. (TLSB)

This is a powerful image for at the time cisterns dug in the ground to hold water were sometimes used as cells for prisoners. The pit could also symbolize the hopeless situation of the exile, even death itself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

No dungeon is so terrible as that of sin, but Christ has power, through the blood of His covenant, to open its doors, and set free its prisoners. (CB)

9:12 RETURN – This is an imperative to go back to their former position, that is, the “fortress,” the place of safety and strength. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

fortress. Either (1) Jerusalem (Zion) and environs or (2) God himself (cf. 2:5). (CSB)

None need despair of relief, however desperate their case, who are willing to come to Christ for help; He is a “strong hold” to all who put their trust in Him, and will reward them with plenteous salvation. (CB)

hope. In the future delivering King (vv. 9–10). (CSB)

By grace, the Lord invites sinners to return to their stronghold, the Lord Himself. (TLSB)

Their hope is in abundance of God's grace, since he will restore "twice" what they had previously. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 12, Part 3)

twice as much. Full or complete restoration (cf. Isa 61:7). (CSB)

In place of despair, the Lord promises a double blessing: a secure stronghold and victory over all enemies. (TLSB)

The mind has trouble comprehending the goodness of God. Not only release from prison but the promise to receive twice as much good as we had previously received evil in our languishing. And it come to the people in similar tone to the Prophet Isaiah's words, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1, 2) (PBC)

9:13 See note on 10:4. The Lord compares himself to a warrior who uses Judah as his bow and Ephraim (the northern kingdom) as his arrow. (CSB)

bow ... arrow ... sword. The Lord wields His people as spiritual weapons against the devil and his angels, here represented by the sons of Greece. The sword of God's Word is effective in waging spiritual warfare (Eph 6:17; Heb 4:12). (TLSB)

your sons, O Zion. The Maccabees. (CSB)

your sons, O Greece. The Seleucids of Syria (after the breakup of Alexander's empire). (CSB)

The Lord Will Appear

¹⁴ Then the LORD will appear over them; his arrow will flash like lightning. The Sovereign LORD will sound the trumpet; he will march in the storms of the south, ¹⁵ and the LORD Almighty will shield them. They will destroy and overcome with slingstones. They will drink and roar as with wine; they will be full like a bowl used for sprinkling^a the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ The LORD their God will save them on that day as the flock of his people. They will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. ¹⁷ How attractive and beautiful they will be! Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women.

9:14 See Ps 18:7–15; Hab 3:3–15. (CSB)

the LORD will appear over them. Just as the Lord hovered over His people in the wilderness (Ex 13:21), so He appears over them as a divine warrior to protect and save them. (TLSB)

trumpet. Probably a reference to thunder (cf. Ex 19:16–19). (CSB)

The Lord's actions are described using the imagery of a thunderstorm. (TLSB)

south. In the region of Mount Sinai, where the Mosaic covenant was given (see v. 11) and where the Lord's dwelling was (see Jdg 5:4–5; Ps 68:8; Hab 3:3). (CSB)

9:15 The Apocryphal book 1 Maccabees (3:16–24; 4:6–16; 7:40–50) records a partial fulfillment of this verse. (CSB)

slingstones. Hurling at defenders on the city wall and onto the inhabitants inside. (CSB)

These will be treading down the enemy like pebbles of the brook, cp. Num. 23, 24. (Kretzmann)

them. The people of God; Zion. (TLSB)

WILL DRINK – Figurative; they will drink the blood of the enemy (cf. Ezk 39:17-20). (TLSB)

bowl used for sprinkling. See Ex 27:1–3; Lev 4:6–7. (CSB)

Figurative; they will drink the blood of the enemy (cf Ezk 39:17–20). (TLSB)

These were vessels in which the priests caught the blood of the sacrifices. (Kretzmann)

9:16 that day. This is the day of the deliverance of the Messiah's redemption. (Kretzmann)

flock. All believers. (TLSB)

JEWELS IN A CROWN – Zion's sons and daughters being like jewels of a crown which sparkles over Jehovah's land as He proudly marches through the territory belonging to Him. (Kretzmann)

Each believer brings God honor. (TLSB)

9:17 ATTRACTIVE AND BEAUTIFUL – the reference being to the blessings of the grace of God as bestowed upon His people through the Word of His mercy.

We have here another summary concerning the gifts of God given to His people in the Messianic era. (Kretzmann)

Praise for the Lord's salvation. (TLSB)

young men ... young women. Luther: "The people of the Gospel will be robust, energetic, and cheerful, both in spirit and in faith. After all, in Christ there is no old age but an everlasting bloom of youth" (AE 20:104).

Ch 9 The Lord's saving work on behalf of His people is foretold using illustrations based on OT history. God's enemies suffer defeat for breaking His Holy Law. They will learn that "the wages of sin is death" (Rm 6:23). But those who repent and cling in faith to the Messiah will be covered with His righteousness and enjoy His rule of peace. • King Jesus, accept my joyful shouts of praise for Your saving work. Rule in my life, now and always. Amen. (TLSB)