

ZECHARIAH

Chapter 9

Judgment on Israel's Enemies

The oracle of the word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place. For the LORD has an eye on mankind and on all the tribes of Israel, 2 and on Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. 3 Tyre has built herself a rampart and heaped up silver like dust, and fine gold like the mud of the streets. 4 But behold, the Lord will strip her of her possessions and strike down her power on the sea, and she shall be devoured by fire. 5 Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited; 6 a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia. 7 I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites. 8 Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.

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)

the burden of the word of God. 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. (CSB)

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)

eye on mankind. 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 *on 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 wise – 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 *rampart.* 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)

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 mud. 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 writher in fear, knowing that the Lord's "burden" was coming on them. (TLSB)

9:5 *hopes are confounded.* 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 *mixed people.* 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)

Philistia. 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)

blood from its mouth. 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 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 *I will encamp at my house as a guard.* 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)

see with my own eyes. 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, over-throwing those who refuse to submit, but always gaining some also for His adherents. (Kretzmann)

The Coming King of Zion

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. 11 As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. 12 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double. 13 For I have bent Judah as my bow; I have made Ephraim its arrow. I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece, and wield you like a warrior's sword.

9:9 Quoted in the NT as Messianic and as referring ultimately to the Triumphal 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)

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)

mounted 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 *cut off the chariot ... 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 shall be from sea to sea. 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)

stronghold. 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)

double. 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 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 Save His People

14 Then the LORD will appear over them, and his arrow will go forth like lightning; the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet and will march forth in the whirlwinds of the south. 15 The LORD of hosts will protect them, and they shall devour, and tread down the sling stones, and they shall drink and roar as if drunk with wine, and be full like a bowl, drenched like the corners of the altar. 16 On that day the LORD their God will save them, as the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. 17 For how great is his goodness, and how great his beauty! Grain shall make the young men flourish, and new wine the young women.

9:14 *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)

sling stones. 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)

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

full like a bowl. 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 of 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 *how great his beauty* – 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). (TLSB)

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)