

LESSON 9

You are defended by the Lord (Zech 9)

Zech 9-14 consists of two “burdens” marked by the word “burden” in Zech 9:1 and Zech 12:1. The original Hebrew word massa, carries the idea of a proclamation that weighs heavily on one’s soul.

This last section of Zechariah is very different from Zech 1-8. There is no date to clue us as to when these were spoken. There is no mention of any person by name. No mention of the temple too. But it is quite safe to say that the temple rebuilding was completed.

The nature of Zech 9-14 is more apocalyptic; meaning things concerning future events at the end of the world. This makes the study of this section more difficult and the interpretation more tentative. Nevertheless, it is a section where the gospel writers quoted the most with regards to the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ. This makes the study of this section exciting!

UNDERSTANDING

1. Refer to the enclosed map and identify the location of the following cities.

- Damascus
- Tyre
- Sidon
- Gaza
- Ashkelon
- Asdod
- Jerusalem

Notice Damascus, Tyre and Sidon are Syro-Phoenesian (Syria-Lebanon) cities North of Jerusalem. Gaza, Ashkelon and Asdod are three Philistine cities Southwest of Jerusalem; in an area given to the tribe of Judah.

2. Read Zech 9:2-4; how would you describe the characteristic of Tyre and what will happen to her?

3. In Zechariah’s day (about 500BC), Tyre was a 2,500 year old thriving port city of great wealth and stability, not unlike Singapore. It would have been difficult to imagine how Zechariah’s prophecy would come true because no empires were able to defeat her yet. But in 332 BC, Alexander the Great laid siege to the city for seven months, killed three quarters of her population and destroyed it. Tyre never regains her former glory since. According to v4, who is behind the destruction of Tyre?



4. What happened to the three Philistine cities when they saw what happened to Tyre? (9:5)

5. History tells us that the Philistine cities in the south were also overrun by Alexander the Great following his successful campaign against Tyre.

Zech 9:6-7 prophesied many aspects that will happen to the Philistine cities:

- a. "foreigner" (NIV) in v6 is the same word used in Deut 23:2 for illegitimate child. Ashdod will be filled with illegitimate child. That is why their pride will be cut off.
- b. Blood and forbidden food will be removed from their mouth signify that they will be delivered from idolatry.
- c. The remnant of Philistine will be assimilated into Israel just as the Jebusites were assimilated by King David and they shall call on the God of Israel.

As for the temple (My house) of Jerusalem, v8 tells us that an oppressor may pass by but will not disturb it. This could have been fulfilled in history when Alexander invaded the Syro-Phoenician cities and the Philistine cities, but he somehow spared Jerusalem. The historian Josephus recorded that Alexander was awed by the priests and the God of Israel. What does v8 say is the reason that the temple was spared?

6. Compare Zech 9:9 with Matt 21:5, what does the prophesy in Zech 9:9 refer to?

7. According to Zech 9:10 what does this Messiah come to do?

8. Zech 9:11-17 describes some poetic symbols of God's salvation coming to his people on the basis of the blood of the covenant (v11a). What are some aspects of this salvation?

a. v11b,12a (cf Lk 4:18)

b. v12b (cf Isa 61:7)

c. v13

d. v 14-15

e. v 16

f. v17

REFLECTING

9. God's salvation is multi-faceted and holistic. He:
- a. sets the captives free,
 - b. restores double of what was lost,
 - c. makes us a mighty force who defeats the enemy,
 - d. defends us against the enemies,
 - e. cares for us as sheep and values us like jewels of a crown
 - f. fills us with goodness and joy.

In what way has Jesus the Saviour fulfilled these, in His life, death and resurrection?

10. Zech 9:11a describes who are the beneficiaries of this salvation. Refer to Heb 9:18-22:
- a. How has Jesus' first coming made this salvation possible?

b. How do we partake in this salvation?

11. Reflect on Question 1 to 5 of this lesson. Imagine if you are one of Zechariah's original listeners, who was transported by a time machine to our day, how would you marvel at the Word of God and the works of God?

APPLYING

12. We still see in our world today many high and mighty powers who are doing things that God does not please, asserting values that are contrary to what God says. In view of your study in this lesson, how should you anchor your faith?

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next two chapters of Zech 10-11, God will contrast the failure of the worthless shepherd with the Great Shepherd who will come and care for the flock truly. God will not leave us as sheep without a shepherd.