

October 2

Zechariah 9-14

Today we read chapters 9-14 of the Book of Zechariah. It starts out like other passages in prophetic books with God's messenger speaking about the wrath of God that is going to be poured out upon the enemies of the nations of Israel. Then quickly it moves beyond Damascus and Tyre and Gaza to prophecies that you may recognize to be Messianic in nature.

The first is found in verse 9 of chapter 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, a fawn of a donkey. The reason we know that was a prophecy of the Messiah is three-fold. First, the writers of the gospel actually quote from Zechariah. Both Matthew and John quote this verse in explaining why Jesus chose to ride into the city of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey on Palm Sunday.

Secondly, Jesus must have seen the words of Zechariah as pointing to Himself. Why else would He choose to present Himself at the most critical moment of His ministry to enter as king upon a donkey's back.

Finally, the people of Jerusalem must have already believed this to be a prophetic passage because when they saw Jesus riding that donkey into Jerusalem they made the same connection and took His appearance and the manner of His entrance to be a claim of Messianic kingship. We can be absolutely certain that Zechariah's words in chapter 9 were meant to be a prophecy of Christ, even though Zachariah himself never knew that. What is difficult is that almost nothing else that accompanies this prophecy "fits" the first coming of Christ.

The immediate context speaks of a universal peace that will be introduced, and perhaps enforced by the king on the donkey -- "His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth." That will happen when Christ returns to establish His kingly rule, but it certainly did not happen at the time of His first coming. Once again we are looking at prophecies that are relating to different periods of time but which are all lumped together. It is confusing for us but if we wait humbly before the Lord, we will one day see how it all fits together.

The second famous prophecy found in our reading was in chapter 11. Judas, you will remember betrayed the Lord for 30 pieces of silver -- the amount mentioned in this passage, and when he realized what he had done, he returned the money to the priests and scribes, they took it and bought a potter's field with it. It is not easy to "see" how Zechariah's words were meant to apply to Judas, but it is very clear that Matthew took the words that way.

In the last three chapters of Zechariah, did you notice that 16 different times you encountered the recurring phrase, "on that day"? As we finish this Book, we are also finishing the story of life in this age. These chapters talk about what we have come to

call the battle of Armageddon. "That day," whenever it occurs, is going to be a very eventful one indeed.

The three most important segments of these three chapters are Messianic in character; two of the three are quoted by New Testament authors. Chapter 12:10 begins this way: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication." Then, these startling words: "They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son. On that day the weeping in Jerusalem will be great..." That passage is quoted by the Apostle John at the very beginning of Revelation: "Look, he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him even those who pierced him, and all the peoples on the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be. Amen."

According to the Book of Revelation then, Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ!

The second Messianic passage which figures in the New Testament is in chapter 13. "Strike the shepherd," it says, "and the sheep will be scattered." Jesus quoted this passage when He confronted Peter and the disciples with the fact that they would all abandon him in His hour of trial. That quote seems to indicate that not only was Jesus very familiar with the last three chapters of Zechariah, but that he had meditated deeply upon them. There can be no question about the fact that Jesus believed himself to be the promised "shepherd" of the Old Testament and the fulfillment of Zechariah chapter 13.

The third most prominent passage that we read today is important because it tells us where to expect the return of Christ. In the Book of Acts, the ascension of Christ into heaven occurred outside the city of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14 tells us that it is to the very same place that we should look for His return.