

BOOK OF ZECHARIAH
GOD USES A HUMAN CONQUEROR
ZECHARIAH 9:1-4, 13

Introduction

The first eight chapters of Zechariah had in view encouragement for God's people to finish rebuilding the Temple. We'll now see that the last six chapters deal with events far distant from the prophets day.

During the 70 years of exile, while Israel was under the rule of the **Babylonians**, **Daniel 5** records the defeat of the Babylonians by **Darius the Mede**. This occurred in the days of **Belshazzar**, who was the wicked grandson of **King Nebuchadnezzar**.

So at the time **Zechariah** is writing this, the people of Israel were under **Medo-Persian** rule. They were allowed to return to **Judah** and **Jerusalem** to begin the rebuilding of the Temple by the gracious decree of **King Darius the Mede** whose heart no doubt was moved by the LORD!

We will see how that Israel would next be under **Grecian domination (Chapters 9 and 10)** and then **Roman domination (Chapter 11)** and then their national history would be consummated in the last days (**Chs. 12 to 14**).

This first portion of **Zechariah 9** actually sketches the conquests of **Alexander the Great** in the **4th century B.C.** In fact, we will see how God uses Alexander the Great for His own purposes!

As we have seen in the last few weeks in our Wednesday night studies, God is the One Who **ordained and established government**—just as much as He **ordained and established the home and the Church!** Our Sovereign God raises up leaders and He brings down rulers—all for His own purposes!

And God holds rulers responsible for walking outside of His ways and outside of the boundaries that He has established, even when they bring about what is recorded in God's Word! In fact, our own President will one day be held responsible for walking outside of God's ways and outside of the boundaries that God has established! Now, it may not happen soon enough for us, but it will happen in God's time!

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I. WE SEE THE PROPHECY AGAINST HADRACH, DAMASCUS AND HAMATH.

Zechariah 9:1 begins with the words "The *burden of the word of the LORD*". A "**burden**" is "*a threatening prediction, a pronouncement of judgment!*"

"**Hadrach**", mentioned in **verse 1**, was long believed by critics to be a mythical region. In the late **19th century**, however, a number of references to "**Hadrach**" have been found in **archaeological records**.

It was an ancient **Syrian city**, along with the cities of **Damascus** and **Hamath** and, according to **Strong's Hebrew Dictionary**, there was even a **Syrian deity** associated with the name.

There are some expositors of God's Word who believe that the name "**Hadrach**", which only occurs this one time in the entire Bible, is related to the Hebrew word which means "**surround**".

Accordingly, they believe that the name "**Hadrach**" in addition to being a city, is representative of all nations that **oppose** God's people and **surround** them in hostility.

Ezekiel 28:26 mentions "*all those that despise them round about them*". And we only need to read current events to understand that it is still that way in the **Middle East!** Today it seems as though most everything we hear or read about in world affairs involves tiny little **Israel** in one way or another!

We know that **Israel** is surrounded by enemies that would love nothing more than to annihilate her! And if it weren't for the protecting hand of God, **Israel** and the **Jews** would already have been wiped off the face of the earth!

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If someone wants proof of God and the truthfulness of the Bible, they need only to look at the resilience of the Jews in spite of overwhelming persecution and opposition!

I believe God could be using what is recorded here in Zechariah as a **forewarning to any and every nation that stands in opposition to Israel!**

So, this weighty message of judgment from the LORD is pronounced against Israel's neighbors—including **Hadrach, Damascus** and **Hamath**. **Hamath** was a major Syrian city located in the interior of modern Syria across the Lebanon Mountains approximately 140 miles north/northwest of **Damascus**.

In addition to being a city, "**Hamath**" was also the name of the northwestern portion of **Syria**, which has been and still is a gateway for **Israel's** enemies to the north. **The Bible explicitly pronounces the downfall of these nations to the north.**

So, the area of **Damascus** is the initial **resting place** of the weighty prophetic burden. Though the strike would initially fall upon **Hadrach**, its ultimate goal was **the capital city of Damascus**. It is from there that it spreads itself out over the area which the passage goes on to describe.

The Syrians we know were long-standing enemies of Israel (**1 Kings 20:1; 2 Kings 10:32-33**), and there are other judgments yet to come that have been pronounced against it as we saw in our series dealing with the **Prophecy About Damascus, Syria**. (**Isaiah 17:1-3; Jer. 49:23-27; Amos 1:3-5**).

This particular **burden** or **weighty word** foretells the judgment against this area by the Greek armies under the command of the young Alexander the Great.

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Alexander did in fact conquer the city on his way south to Egypt. Damascus was full of Darius' riches and became Alexander's headquarters for a time.

[See Burns, Ross (2005), *Damascus: A History*, Routledge.]

Alexander's conquests had an effect to turn "*the eyes of man...toward the LORD*" for there was no possible way help could come from any other source!

So, the eyes of all men especially all the tribes of Israel were toward the Lord, looking to Him for deliverance.

It is also possible that the phrase could mean that while the people were watching the movement and conquering of Alexander the Great's Army, they were really looking at the working of the Lord's hand, for "*history is His story*." [Merrill Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory*, Zondervan, 1963, p152]

The catalogue of those on whom the LORD's word of judgment is rendered continues in verse 2. "*And Hamath which borders on it;*"

As we've said, Hamath (which Amos 6:2 calls "*Hamath the great*") was north of Damascus. Damascus and Hamath were both key towns in the land of Hadrach.

They both experienced the same fate of destruction by the Macedonian Conqueror. Having spoken of these two major cities, which represent Syria, the prophet proceeds to speak of the capitals of Phoenicia. (Located in present day Lebanon)

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II. WE SEE THE JUDGMENT AGAINST TYRUS (OR TYRE) AND ZIDON.

The cities of “*Tyre*” and “*Zidon*”, which are in close proximity to one another, are singled out in the latter part of *verse 2*.

Tyre's destruction is particularly emphasized here in **Zechariah 9** and note that this also refers to the destruction brought forth by **Alexander the Great** in 332 B.C. (**vs 13**)

Some also believe that *Tyre's* destruction is a prophetic picture of God's judgments upon the **rich and prideful** nations in the end-times. ***Tyre was an actual wealthy coastal port on the Mediterranean, and is a picture of the "global world."***

I want us to consider these verses in the context of Scripture and consider “*Tyre*” in a little more detail in order to better understand the historical situation here.

The most compact word of judgment over *Tyre* is found in **Ezekiel** chapters **26-28**. (**Turn to Ezekiel 26.**) These three chapters contain **God's wrath upon Tyre** because of both their ill treatment of Israel and their attitude toward the destruction of Israel by the Chaldeans!

Read Ezekiel 26:1-2

Three chapters proclaiming *Tyre's* judgment follow, and the message concerning *Tyre* ends with God's words in **Ezekiel 28:25-26**.

This prophecy shows that the LORD has not lost sight of His people! Let me remind you that one day God will judge ALL the nations in accordance with their attitude toward and treatment of Israel!

The nations that desire to harm Israel will perish, but the remnant of believing Jews, God's covenant people, will remain for eternity.

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(Look at Daniel 7:18, 27)

The Word of God stands as firm as a rock and will remain for all eternity! The nations may grit their teeth, but all enmity against God and His people will fail on account of this Word!

Someone wrote these words in connection with the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001:

"It should shake us up that it becomes clearer and clearer how closely the world-wide terrorist threat is connected with a tiny land which is not even as large as the state of New York and has far less inhabitants. The fact that Israel is continually being made the center of world politics is hardly to be explained rationally. And when it is revealed that the desired peace ultimately fails over the existence of Israel, the great union of states against terror could very quickly turn against Israel" (Cf. Zechariah 12:3).

A careful reading of **Ezekiel 26:1-14** explains that *Tyre* was a city in Lebanon, situated on the Mediterranean Sea.

The city was well known as the world trade center of that time. Trade routes from southern Arabia to the Orient passed through *Tyre*.

All shipping traffic in the Mediterranean, the gigantic fleet of Phoenician ships, was concentrated in *Tyre*.

There the wares were loaded and brought to Europe, among other places.

The Phoenicians possessed the colony of Tarshish in Spain, which we know from the book of Jonah. The entire Mediterranean trade was controlled by the city of *Tyre*.

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In the beginning, Tyre was on friendly terms with Israel.

King Hiram of Tyre sent carpenters, bricklayers, and cedar wood to build David a house. (2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Chronicles 14:1)

Later on he supported the building of Solomon's temple by providing both wood and laborers. (1 Kings 5; 2 Chronicles 2)

The mariners of Tyre also helped to steer Solomon's ships, which means they were very well acquainted with the sea and very advanced with regard to sailing.

Both Isaiah and Ezekiel describe prophetically the complete downfall of Tyre while it was in its heyday.

So, why did Tyre have to fall? Especially since she had never warred against Israel and had been friendly with both King David and King Solomon.

A. The Three Accusations Leveled Against Tyre:

1. Accusation #1 – They Delivered Up The Whole Captivity To Edom and Remembered Not The Brotherly Covenant. (Amos 1:9)

Here we see that they were guilty of buying and selling the prisoners the Philistines took in their plundering, being only interested in economic profit. (Amos 1:6; Joel 3:4-6)

The brotherly covenant spoken of here is believed to be referring to the previous treaty between Hiram (King of Tyre) and Solomon. (1 Kings 5)

Tyre terminated her friendship with Israel for that of the Philistines. Does that sound familiar?

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Today, Israel is being made to suffer for the sake of the Palestinians. Many nations have called for an economic boycott toward Israel until Israel returns certain lands to the Palestinians.

Israel is under constant, enormous pressure to make more and more concessions and to give up more and more land!

And let's not forget that a great number of missiles which are constantly being shot at Jewish territories without the world lifting a finger!

God judged Tyre for some of the same things that our own nation is now guilty of.

2. Accusation #2 – Tyre Saw Herself As A Rival Of Jerusalem, The City of God.

We looked at this briefly last week.

We saw that when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar's rule in 586 B.C., Tyre rejoiced!

Ezekiel 26:2 records Tyrus mocking Israel saying: *"Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste"*

The reason for their joy over Israel's misfortune was that the Tyrians profited from the downfall of Judah. (Joel 3:4-6)

Jerusalem lay on the trade route from south to north.

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So, she also played an important role as the "...*gates of the people.*"

Jerusalem's collapse meant more custom duty for Tyre on products coming from Arabia to the north and east: "*She is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste.*"

If there were no Jerusalem, more would take place in Tyre! Tyre could extend her markets! Tyre was controlled by her greed!

Tyre trusted in her economic power and strength!
(Ezekiel 27:3-4)

Today, in our world economy, almost all decisions are made on the basis of economic advantage!

No one asks what God says? People are **pro-Israel** if **it is to their economic advantage**, but they turn against the country as soon as it appears to be not in their economic interest.

3. Accusation #3: The King Of Tyre And His People Were Bursting With Pride And Arrogance.

In this they resembled the character of Satan!

In **Ezekiel 28:1-19**, Tyre is accused of becoming proud of her knowledge. In this context, Tyre illustrates Satan's fall. Actually, he is identified with Tyre. Satan ruled the world system at that time from within the city walls of Tyre.

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This example shows that while the nations strive after **riches, power, and knowledge**, they open themselves up to be led more by Satan than by God!

This sounds very much like what is taking place in our world today!

The Word of God as a measure for human relationships is constantly being rejected, and has been replaced by money! Well, who is behind that way of thinking? Who is behind the New World Order or globalization? I think we know the answer to that!

Paul warned about covetousness in Colossians 3:6 where he speaks of "... **covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience**"

All sins ultimately culminate in covetousness.

Covetousness is the main form of idolatry in our day that brings God's judgment! James wrote James 5:3—"*Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*"

As Tyre is put on par with Satan's character and actions in Ezekiel 28, it becomes clear that the sin associated with this city has not ended. It continues through many other nations until the LORD comes back!

Security, riches and intellectual achievements seem to count so much today—these make mankind so proud.

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In most cases, they lead to forsaking God, His Word and His people. Earthly splendors are usually in Satan's service and are offered by him to deceive mankind (Luke 4:5-8).

Satan is the invisible ruler over all the world system and worldly glitter, which leads to pride. Revelation 13 explains how the economy (buying and selling) will become the means of the Antichrist's control.

In politics, only that which brings advantage, security, and money count, even at the cost of others (for instance, at Israel's cost, or that of the unborn baby, the old or the sick).

B. The Message Of Judgment To Tyre. (Zechariah 9:3-4)

The first part of the message of judgment to Tyre describes how the catastrophe comes over the city through the nations in phases. (*Ezekiel 26:3-6*)

The second part describes the attack of the Babylonians by Nebuchadnezzar. (*Ezekiel 26:7-11*)

The third describes the attack by Greece. (*Ezekiel 26:12-14*)

The detail in which God's prophecies have been fulfilled over the centuries becomes apparent:

Isaiah 46:9-13—“Remember the former things of old: for I am God...Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure...I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it”

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1. Nebuchadnezzar Attacked Tyre!

The Babylonians went to work against Tyre ten years after the Assyrians attacked Tyre. Nebuchadnezzar came to Tyre and besieged it in 585 B.C., one year after Jerusalem fell, and shortly after Tyre mocked Jerusalem and rejoiced at her fall.

But the city was practically invincible. The siege lasted for **thirteen years**, until Tyre was finally destroyed in 572 B.C.

But when Nebuchadnezzar broke into the city, he found out that the inhabitants had fled to the island about a half mile away.

They had gotten away with almost all of their riches and had built a new city. Nebuchadnezzar was forced to give up because he had no fleet. Ezekiel 26:7-11 was fulfilled through Nebuchadnezzar's attack, but further prophecies in Ezekiel 26:12 and forward were not fulfilled.

The Babylonian warriors had given thirteen years of military service and hardly had any pay to show for it. This is also described in **Ezekiel 29:17-20**.

2. The Greeks Became Executors Of God's Judgment! (Zechariah 9:13)

Judgment came upon Tyre continuously: *Ezekiel 26:3 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up"*

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Tyre was finally destroyed and the Word of God fulfilled.

- The Persians came in 539 B.C. After they conquered the Babylonian Empire, they also conquered Tyre.

- A king of Cyprus fought against the new city of Tyre in 370 B.C.

- Alexander the Great finally came from Greece in 332 B.C. He fulfilled the still outstanding prophecy of God almost 250 years after Nebuchadnezzar.

In order to conquer Tyre, Alexander built a dam or causeway from the mainland. It was half a mile long, 65 yards wide, and up to 220 yards deep in places.

For the causeway, he used the remains of Tyre, such as the walls, stones, wood, earth, debris and even the dust:
(See Ezekiel 26:12 and 14)

History tells us that Alexander the Great conquered Tyre after seven months; 30,000 people were sold as slaves, 2,000 men were crucified and 8,000 were killed. The Bible is always fulfilled!

The pronouns *"he"* and *"his"* in Ezekiel 26:7-11 refer to Nebuchadnezzar. Yet, in Ezekiel 26:12, the pronoun is changed to *"they,"* which refers to the Greeks. We can only stand amazed at the precision of God's Word!

God's prophecies were literally fulfilled. Ancient Tyre had become a bare rock and was never rebuilt. Actually, ancient Tyre is hardly identifiable by archaeologists:

(Ezekiel 26:21)

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The surrounding nations were so shocked that they voluntarily surrendered to Alexander: *Ezekiel 26:18—"Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure"*

However, we must note that Ezekiel's prophecy sounds like one continual prophecy, as if judgment upon Tyre would be fulfilled within a few years and all at one time.

But there were various fulfillments before the main fulfillment actually took place. Again, two hundred and fifty years passed between Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander the Great.

When Nebuchadnezzar departed, the people of Tyre could have said and even might have said, *"We got away with it. Ezekiel's message was not literally fulfilled. Now we can carry on!"*

But the Lord's prophecy had to be fulfilled completely, only it took place in phases: *Isaiah 46:10—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"*

C. What Is The Message For Our Day?

Tyre is a picture that can very easily apply to many of the nations of the endtimes, including our own. The free world is characterized by power, knowledge and pride.

Just as Satan developed his power within a willing Tyre, he will develop his power in the nations of the endtimes.

A first warning, is that endtime judgments predicted by God will come upon us like waves (Ezekiel 26:3).

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Haggai 2:6-7 says: *"For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations."*

Jesus described deception, wars, the rising of one nation against another, disease, famines and earthquakes as *"...the beginning of sorrows"* (Matthew 24:4-8).

More and more the nations' have an increasing **hatred for Israel!** There is an increase of **lawlessness** in our world! There is **great distress** at every turn! There is a **great shaking of heaven and earth** that appears to be leading us up to the very threshold of the endtime judgments of the Tribulation period!

The waves of judgment will come upon our world with increasing severity. Luke 21:25 applies in this connection: *"...and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring."*

A second warning lies in the fact that we should come to see that God is Lord through His judgments! (Ezekiel 26:6 and 28:23-24 - *"...they shall know that I am the LORD."*)

God has brought cities, nations and empires to their downfall throughout history in order to establish His testimony. He has had kings appointed and dethroned — Pharaoh in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and Cyrus in Persia. Even Gog, from the land of Magog, will be led by God to the mountains of Israel in order to be destroyed!

May our world realize that there is a God!

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God says in: *Isaiah 46:9-10—"I am God and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done,"*

A third warning is that the God of Israel does not allow His people to perish.

After God ended His message of judgment to Syria, Tyre and the Philistines in Zechariah 9, we read of Israel in **Zechariah 9:14-17.**

We know that Satan will release his rage in a flood of waves against the Jewish people in the endtimes (Revelation 12:15 onward). He and those he works in want to exterminate Israel, God's holy testimony on earth! But he (and they) will never achieve this!

The fourth warning is that every person should surrender his or her rebellious heart to God's offer of salvation! *Isaiah 46:12-13—"Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry"*

God tells us to whom we should listen, and where our safety lies in these troubled times: *"Hearken unto me..."*

He also tells us where we stand by nature: Far from His righteousness, *"ye...that are far from righteousness."*

The Lord doesn't leave us where we are. He tells us that He has done everything so that we do not have to remain as we are: *"I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off."*

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He did this in the redeeming death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who grasp this by faith will experience that His salvation never comes too late: *"...my salvation shall not tarry."*

The people of Tyre had stubborn hearts where God was concerned. They felt safe, they had everything they needed and they were proud and arrogant. Satan dwelt within the walls of Tyre and had his way with the city's inhabitants. The people of the city were deceived into a false sense of security. They thought they didn't need God and only thought of an increase in material things. Satan won their hearts and made them rebellious.

Unfortunately, that's the case with many today! Being ruled by greed, selfishness and pride, living only for self? Those who do not surrender to Jesus Christ will perish!

There are only two possibilities where their life is concerned: They can be like Daniel, who used his wisdom, intelligence and position for God and His cause, or they can be like the King of Tyre, who only used his wisdom for the things of this world and excluded God from His life!

Ezekiel 28:3-4—"Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures"

They can put themselves at the disposal of the true God of heaven and earth, or serve the god of this world.

Have you made the right choice in your life?
If not, you need to do so now!