

# Pentwater Bible Church

*Zechariah*

*Message 19 Alexander The Great Conquers*

*September 8, 2013*



Alexander The Great in the Temple of Jerusalem by Sebastiano Conca 1680-1764

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# Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Zechariah

Message Nineteen

Alexander The Great is Prophecied to Conquer the Medes

September 8, 2013

Daniel E. Woodhead



Painting by Sharlene Lindskog-Osorio

ALEXANDER WILL COME

Zechariah 9:1-8

*<sup>1</sup> The burden of the word of Jehovah upon the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be its resting-place (for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Jehovah); <sup>2</sup> and Hamath, also, which bordereth thereon; Tyre and Sidon, because they are very wise. <sup>3</sup> And Tyre did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. <sup>4</sup> Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. <sup>5</sup> Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also, and shall be sore pained; and Ekron, for her expectation shall be put to shame; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. <sup>6</sup> And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. <sup>7</sup> And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also shall be a remnant for our God; and he shall be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. <sup>8</sup> And I will encamp about my house against the army, that none pass through or*

*return; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes (ASV 1901).*

## INTRODUCTION

With chapter nine we begin the last half of the book of Zechariah. Within it is a distinctly different style of Hebrew text. While chapters seven and eight are transitional between the two sections the scope of these last six chapters parallels the first eight chapters in the book. The change seen in this last section is one of mood, outlook, style, and composition compared to the first eight chapters. The Hebrew grammar, syntax and lexicography are more complex. As did Isaiah in the last portion (chapters 40 -66) of his book, Zechariah entered a new and more futuristic thought process being imposed upon him by the Lord of the universe. This section is highly prophetic and lacks any connection to the prophet's own time. This section is very eschatological and has many enigmatic references to unique cosmic, redemptive and messianic themes. Of prime importance to this section are the direct descriptions of the two advents of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua Hamachiach. This last part of Zechariah describes the overthrow of the Gentile world powers and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom on this earth.

## CONTROVERSY

It should not be surprising to genuine Bible students desiring to receive the pure sweet milk of the Word that there are disputes as to the authenticity of this Book or any other for that matter. The critics take particular exception to the prophetic books since they confirm God's providence. For only He is able to write history before it happens in time and space. It is not our intent to imbue ourselves into the claims of the non-literal Bible expositors that assign the last half of this book to a different author and some to a different date of writing. Most of the objections have a common basis of thought. They originate from a dogmatic assumption that the Biblical prophecies, in any book, are nothing more than the product of man's natural thoughts written *after* the actual events occurred. The critics also are unable to receive God's Word as a whole in order to explore the depths of the divine revelation, and to grasp either the substance or form of their historical development so as to realize God's divine plan for all of world history. The fact of the matter is that Zechariah was an older man and much more mature and experienced when he received the prophecies later in his life. There is no credible evidence to support the supposition of Bible critics who do not know God and therefore reject the divine nature of His Word, our Bible. Unfortunately many of these so-called experts occupy offices in large seminaries and pulpits in influential denominations. The apostle Paul dealt with this issue in his final message to the elders of the Church at Ephesus as recorded by Dr. Luke in the book of Acts.

Acts 20:20, 27-30

*<sup>20</sup> And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,*

*<sup>27</sup> For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. <sup>28</sup> Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. <sup>29</sup> For I know this, that after my departing shall*

*grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock*<sup>30</sup> *Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*<sup>31</sup> *Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (KJV).*

## THE RISE AND SUCCESS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

### Zechariah 9:1-2a

<sup>1</sup> *The burden of the word of Jehovah upon the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be its resting-place (for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Jehovah);*<sup>2</sup> *and Hamath, also, which bordereth thereon; (ASV 1901).*

This prophecy begins with the Hebrew word burden *massa* which comes from another Hebrew word *nassa* to lift up and carry. Isaiah uses this word in a threatening manner and announces judgment against the nations who have oppressed Israel (Isaiah 13:1; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1, 11, 13; 22:1; 23:1). Interestingly it precedes *the word of Jehovah upon*. This is a prophetic warning of impending doom, woe and disaster used by the prophets to adequately convey the depth of God's anger toward those who have violated His people, the nation Israel. As we will see in subsequent passages this begins the rise of Alexander the Great whom God used to defeat His Gentile enemies of the nation Israel.

The prophecy then immediately moves to discuss the location of doom, two Syrian cities, *Hadrach, and Damascus*. Hadrach has not survived, but Damascus a very ancient city, is still very much populated. The woe or judgment will come upon Hadrach first but its goal is Damascus. From there the judgment will spread itself over the whole district, which the passage goes on to describe. The text moves on to say namely, *for the eye of man and of all the tribes of Israel is toward Jehovah*. A clearer rendering might be "*for Jehovah has an eye (or 'to Jehovah is an eye') upon (or 'over') man and the tribes of Israel*" Another words God watches and protects the people of Israel and they watch Him as He carries out His prophecies. This *massa* or burden settles down upon this region until it is completed. Here we see one characteristic of God's prophecies, a stern warning that cannot be changed or deferred.

In 333 B.C. Alexander the Great was successful at the battle of Issus in southeastern Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) defeating the Medes and Persian king of Darius III, which cleared the path to attack Syria. So Zechariah, who was living in the days of the Medo-Persian Empire, predicted the coming Grecian Empire 186 years in advance. Later in this book he was given the prophecies of the coming imperialistic Empire (Rome) (11:4-14), and Israel's future in the Messianic Kingdom (chaps. 12-14). There two primary reasons for the Lord selecting these regions for judgment through Alexander. *One*, they inflicted great harm on Israel over the years (cf. Isaiah 7:1-7). *Two*, these regions were promised to Israel in the Abrahamic and Land covenants (cf. Genesis 15:18; Exodus 23:31; Numbers 34:2-12; Deuteronomy 11:24); and David and Solomon were victorious in these regions (II Samuel 8:6, etc.; 1 Kings 4:21; 8:65). Alexander's men plundered great wealth from Damascus. Plutarch of Chaeronea writes in his "Live of Alexander" that the take included almost 55 tons of gold and a great quantity of silver, which was used to mint coins showing the images of Alexander. This is typical motivation that the Lord uses to bring an army in judgment (cf. Ezekiel 39:12).



Coins Cir. 305-281 B.C. British Museum Room 22, The World of Alexander

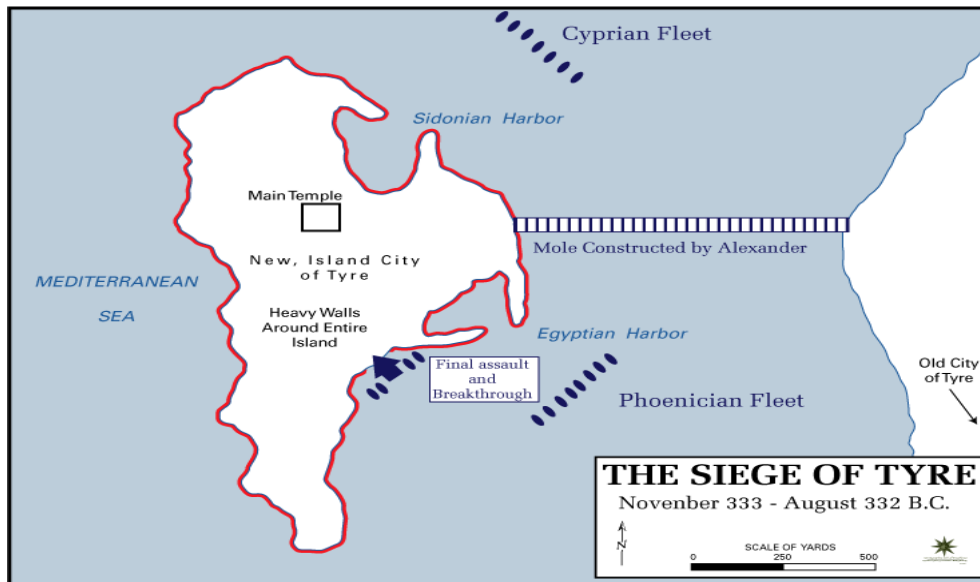
## TYRE & SIDON

### Zechariah 9:2b-4

*Tyre and Sidon, because they are very wise, <sup>3</sup>And Tyre did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. <sup>4</sup>Behold, the Lord will dispossess her, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire (ASV 1901).*

Tyre and Sidon demonstrated their worldly wisdom by amassing great material prosperity. Verse three says, “*And Tyre built herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the street.*” Sidon is regarded an annex of Tyre. Tyre was originally a colony of Sidon, but because of its growth rose to be the capital of all Phoenicia. Isaiah and Ezekiel give prophecies about Sidon, which is tightly connected to those concerning Tyre. They both suffer the same fate (cf. Isaiah 23:4, 12; Ezekiel 28:21). Sidon surrendered without making any resistance; but Tyre, after a feeble attempt at negotiation, strongly resisted. They were real confident that their fortification would protect them so the Tyrians mocked and jeered Alexander to destroy their city. Alexander the Great finished the conquest of Tyre by taking rubble from the ruins of the mainland construction and using it to build a road to the island so his armies could mount a sustained assault on the fortifications. He conquered it in a short siege of seven months. Ten thousand of its brave defenders were either massacred or crucified, the rest were sold into slavery, and none escaped except a few who were hid by the Sidonians.

But the prophecy of Zechariah had been fulfilled to the letter. It remains even to this day a monument of the execution of the Divine wrath upon the proud, luxurious, and idolatrous city. Therefore Tyre becomes the dominant object of this prophecy. Tyre was a great seafaring, naval, and financial power, the Wall Street of its time. Its core was on a highly fortified island, which made it practically impervious to attack. Ultimately, Alexander the Great completed the conquest of Tyre (332 B.C.) This conquest is written of extensively in history courses from the United States Military Academy. God gets His way always.



The Siege of Tyre, courtesy of The Department of History, United States Military Academy

Ezekiel 28:11-15 ties this earthly king of Tyre to Satan who is actually behind him exerting the resistance to the plans of God to extract vengeance on those who would harm Israel.

#### JUDGMENT MOVES TO THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES

Zechariah 9:5-7

*<sup>5</sup>Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also, and shall be sore pained; and Ekron, for her expectation shall be put to shame; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. <sup>6</sup>And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. <sup>7</sup>And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also shall be a remnant for our God; and he shall be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite (ASV 1901).*

So now the burden (massa) of judgment moves southwesterly to the Gaza strip. Of the five cities of the Philistines only Gath is omitted. Despite the terror caused by the overthrow of Tyre, Gaza resisted Alexander, and was conquered in five months. Its king perished, and Ashkelon lost its entire population. The prophecy said that the city would lose its native citizens. The dwelling of bastards or rabble in Ashdod expresses the deep degradation of Philistia. The pride of the Philistines shall be rooted out. Therefore everything will be taken from them upon which they based their pride. Namely this is their power, their fortified cities, and their nationality. Finally God says, *“I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; and he also shall be a remnant for our God; and he shall be as a chieftain in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite.”* In summation then He says that the blood and abominable things, which refer to religious perversions of the Philistines, will be removed. Eating blood was strictly forbidden to Israel under the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus 7:22; I Samuel 14:33-34). God then promises that the Philistines, like the Jebusites, shall be absorbed into the nation Israel. By the time of Christ the Philistines had ceased to be regarded as a separate nation.

## GOD PROTECTS HIS PEOPLE

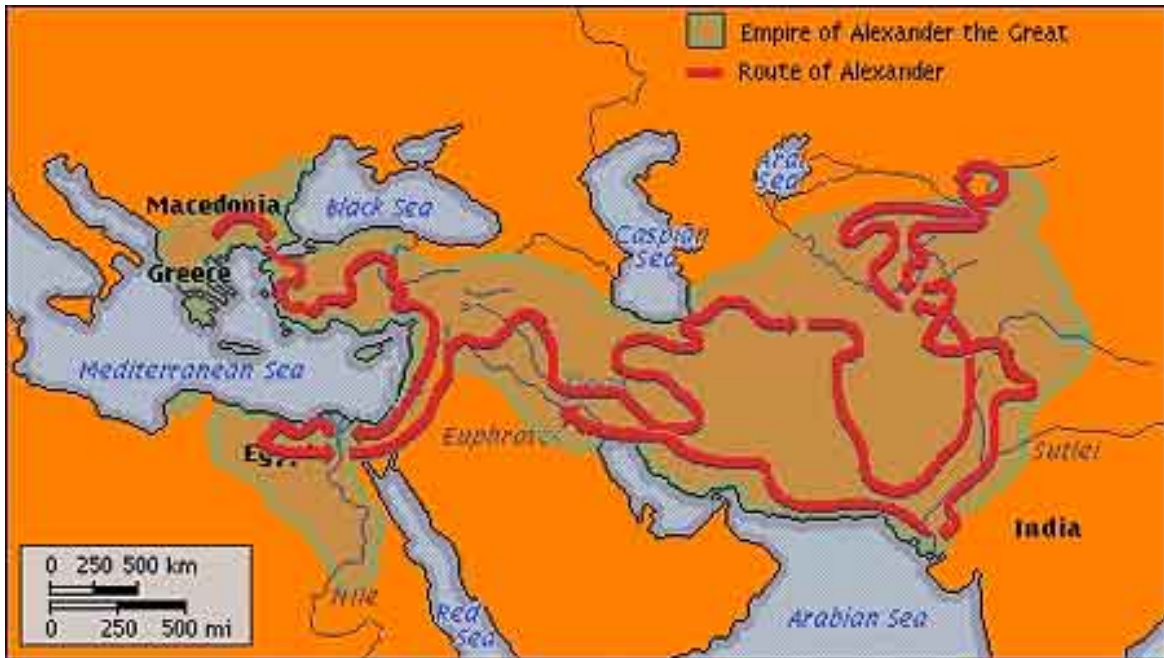
### Zechariah 9:8

*<sup>8</sup>And I will encamp about my house against the army, that none pass through or return; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes (ASV 1901).*

Israel's enemies tremble at the approach of the hostile army. God declares He would be the shield and protector of His people and His special dwelling place in their midst. "My house refers to the Temple and the protection of the house carries with it also the protection of the people. This is contingent upon them obeying His commandments. There was however a short term fulfillment of this prophecy during the campaigns of Alexander.

As soon as he started his campaign against Tyre and Sidon, Alexander the Great sent messengers to the Jewish high priest in Jerusalem demanding help from the Jews and the payment of the tribute, which they used to pay to the King of Persia. The high priest refused to break the oath of fidelity, which he had sworn to Darius. So Alexander threatened to inflict a severe chastisement on Jerusalem following the capture of Tyre, and the Philistine strongholds. Josephus' Antiquities of the Jews 11.8.3 describes the entire series of conversations. It is excerpted here.

The High Priest and other priests as well as the citizens of Jerusalem went out to meet Alexander. Then Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance in white garments, while the priests stood clothed in fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing—with his mitre on his head—having the golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest. He then declared his honor of the God of the High Priest who came to him in a dream giving him a vision of the High Priest instructing him to passover them because he would be able to conquer the Persians. Instead he gave the High Priest his right hand in friendship and accompanied him to the Temple to offer a sacrifice to God. They then showed him the book of Daniel clearly explaining that Alexander would conquer the Medes and the Persians. Jerusalem was spared (Daniel 2:32; 7:6; 8:1-8, 15-22; 11:2-4)



From <http://www.ushistory.org/civ/5g.asp>

NEXT WEEK: FIRST ADVENT OF CHRIST PROPHECIED

**Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments**

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